



what
philosophy
is for

MICHAEL HAMPE

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL WINKLER

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For Raymond Geuss

Philosophy is not a doctrine but an activity.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS*

It is not enough to open the window

To see the fields and the river.

It is also not enough not to be blind

To see the trees and the flowers.

Also, you must not have any philosophy at all.

With philosophy there are no trees, there are only ideas.

FERNANDO PESSOA, *THE COLLECTED POEMS OF ALBERTO CAEIRO*

What I said before: that I cannot afford to believe. That in my line of work one has to suspend belief. . . . That it gets in the way.

J. M. COETZEE, *ELIZABETH COSTELLO*

One has to react to the world. . . .

FRANÇOISE GILOT

The world is unique. . . . Classification is a condition of knowledge, not knowledge itself, and knowledge in turn dissolves classification.

MAX HORKHEIMER AND THEODOR W. ADORNO, *DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT*

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Preface to the American Edition

This book is about the relationship of philosophy to literature and the explanatory sciences. It distinguishes between doctrinal and nondoctrinal philosophy. The former is close to the explanatory sciences and, in the ideal case, establishes new programs of explanation. Nondoctrinal philosophy frequently transitions into belles lettres and, ideally, thinks about and criticizes circumstances that exist in the world behind successful explanatory projects, including the kinds of life in which they take place. These projects—doctrinal and nondoctrinal philosophy, literature, and scientific explanatory projects—are wonderful when they succeed. They can also fail. It is fascinating to visualize how, in a relatively short time, there arises from the success of doctrinal philosophical thoughts by Descartes, Galileo, and others what today we call the mathematical-experimental explanatory program of physics, a tremendously successful project that fundamentally changes the way humans live. Studying the literary finesse of writers like Plato or Sophocles, Kierkegaard or Dostoevsky, Nietzsche or J. M. Coetzee is no less fascinating. In particular, the uncompromising vigor with which these authors oppose widespread fundamental convictions of their times and develop new perspectives on what people think and do must impress thoughtful readers. It must appear nonsensical, however, to set these projects against one another.

The differentiation between doctrinal and nondoctrinal philosophy is not absolute. This book itself is not an example

of either kind of philosophy. Rather, it is above all a metaphilosophical text. After all, reflections on the relationship of physics and mathematics or drama and prose are not mathematical or physical investigations and in themselves neither dramas nor novels. But metaphilosophy and philosophy are closely intertwined. For this reason, the present book also contains philosophical assumptions and reflections, for example, about individuality, education, the nature of experience, and language, as well as other topics that are also investigated outside of metaphilosophical projects. When this book first appeared in German, both the metaphilosophical reflections and the hypothetical philosophical assumptions presented in this text attracted more attention than I had expected. I wrote this text to get a clearer understanding of two related issues: my thinking about the explanatory sciences, which is important for my teaching at the Swiss Technological University (ETH) in Zurich, and my affinity for literary forms in philosophy that I have tried to realize in publications like *The Perfect Life* and *Tunguska*. But this book can most of all be read as a critique of the current academic condition of philosophy, of which it actually is a part. For at present, I see much philosophical work go to waste in doctrinal projects that do not indicate, even in some small measure, that they will ever initiate any kind of explanatory project. Instead, they strike me as a *simulation* of explanatory science, hence of failing doctrinal philosophy. In my opinion, this is true of the philosophical landscape in the Anglophone as much as in the German-speaking world.

I thank Michael Winkler for his impressive translation, including the laborious task of seeking out the English equivalents of quotes and other sources, and I thank Elizabeth Branch Dyson of the University of Chicago Press for the excellent care she gave to the preparation of this book.

Michael Hampe, 2016

Asserting, Narrating, Educating

Suppose the world consists of individuals who sometimes form patterns. One can tell things about them. But one can also assert quite a lot about them in order to develop a doctrine. Narration seems *prima facie* to concentrate on the particular, on when something has emerged and how. Assertion, by contrast, is concerned with generalities that refer to many individual aspects. Narration can be personal: "Once, many years ago, I sat in this armchair." Assertion tends to be impersonal and to categorize: "This armchair is a chesterfield, made in 1920." The activities of asserting and of narrating something do not at first appear to exist in an obvious connection; they seem to proceed on parallel paths. From a simplified and psychological perspective, assertion is a serious and strict activity serving true knowledge of the world and the correct explanation of its phenomena. Narration, on the other hand, might be considered a relaxed diversion that takes place after the strictness of asserting and teaching, affording relief from its burden and at most providing something like moral insight so long as one is reading or listening to stories with a moral. Following Horace, one may characterize the art of storytelling along with all other art as at times morally useful in the sense of edifying, but for the most part no more than entertaining.¹ Assertive science teaches the strict and occasionally also unpleasant truth about the world. The art of narration, however, serves to divert the mind after its strenuous grappling with harsh reality and treats it to beautiful or exciting fictions. Even the

social circumstances change in the different communicative situations of teaching or narrating: a person who has to take note of an assertion, or is being instructed about something, takes on the attitude of someone learning and faces someone teaching who represents the authority of truth. In this case, the teacher confronts the learner and claims that he is entitled to assertions that his opposite has to accept. Whoever is told a story, however, is being offered diversions. The narrator seems to be providing him with fictions. The storyteller's authority apparently is upheld by nothing but his ability to captivate the attention of his audience or readers with his story.

Of course, this is rarely stated in such plain and simplistic terms. But to characterize disciplines such as physics or chemistry as "hard" sciences and to call epic, dramatic, and lyrical poetry "soft" ventures—characterizations one hears in schools or in college—appears to evince at least implicit estimations of these activities that tend in the direction indicated above. They derive support in part from the conviction that it is the principal purpose of education to impart knowledge of the things in this world that recur over and over again, which means, the world's general basic structures and regularities. These no doubt do exist. We experience particularities and similarities between individual beings. Many things occur again and again; others remain unique in our experience. What defines the purpose of education, however, depends on whether one believes that individuals produce general patterns among themselves or that the general patterns make the existence of distinct individuals possible. Can this question be decided, or is it a variant of the question about the priorities of chicken and egg?

I can't solve this conundrum definitively here—only a hypothetical answer is possible, which the following remarks will make clear. Depending on whether one's thinking and education concentrate on understanding individuals and on telling their stories, or on recognizing generalities and on understanding strategies with which to explain something, one will have a different knowledge of oneself and will live in a differently experienced world. I am not concerned here with asserting, narrating, and, finally, with educating per se, but I am interested in these activities *in the context of philosophy*. Consequently, I will distinguish between an assertive or *doctrinal* philosophy and a *nondoctrinal* philosophy. This distinction is different and more general than that between ideographic and nomothetic sciences or that between the processes of understanding and explaining, differentiations that are familiar from the methodological disputes about the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century.² (It's my tacit assumption

that proceeding from a unified concept of the sciences as such contributes nothing toward an understanding of the various disciplines.) My focus here is not the specific sciences and their possible categorizations; instead, my central purpose is an understanding of the philosopher's activity and its relevance for life.

Philosophers who work in doctrinal philosophy engage in this activity with the intent of educating other people through or on the basis of their assertions. They seek to convince other people to embrace their assertions as a doctrine. By contrast, those who represent nondoctrinal philosophy seek to assert as little as possible or nothing at all. Instead, it is their principal intention to find out and to make their assertive colleagues see why they think they have to assert something, and what the consequences of this attitude are. Sometimes philosophical enterprises of this kind are couched in a narrative, as in the Platonic dialogue in which Socrates questions Theaetetus who still has to be educated. The *Theaetetus*, surprisingly, includes passages that describe how questioning causes the person being educated to stop making assertions. It is a pedagogical text that demonstrates the futility of doctrinal philosophy. It is not simply an entertaining narrative but a canonized philosophical text. Because nondoctrinal philosophy uses a *narrative* to show students why it is better not to make assertions about knowledge and virtue, the relationship between philosophy, education, and narrative—the focus of this study—is complicated and unclear.

Educating with New Concepts

That philosophy makes assertions is obvious, even more so than the fact that there also exists a nondoctrinal philosophy. Aristotle asserts that the world is eternal. Thomas Aquinas states that it was created. Descartes claims that there exist two substances; Spinoza maintains that there is only one. Kant asserts that there is a clear difference between analytic and synthetic judgments; Willard van Orman Quine contests his assertion. This kind of list could be extended at will, indicating that such assertions are reactions to the world—a world of particularities as, in a seeming paradox, I am prepared to assert here. How people react to the world, if this reaction does not happen spontaneously, depends, among other things, on their education. It is this education that familiarizes them with the *general concepts* that they will have to make use of in their assertions. The people to be educated are being taught what can be asserted about the world and what cannot. Sometimes, though rather infrequently, they also

learn how to react to the world with a story. Philosophy has paid attention to these processes in great detail. In Plato's *politeia* (*The Republic*), for example, *paideia* (education) is a potentially lifelong process that in a few exceptional persons will culminate in their knowing the idea of the good, as the paramount general concept. Only philosophers, who have been appointed to serve as leaders of the state, can direct this process because they alone have comprehended these universals, and they alone know how to apply them in their judgments. Other prominent examples of educational philosophy are Rousseau's cultural criticism and Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysics. These thinkers aim either at a reeducation of human beings, who have been ruined by culture, or at a therapeutic philosophy that would educate philosophically warped adults. Individuals of this kind are people who have lost sight of the multifarious ways in which ordinary language functions and, for this reason, try to invent new conceptual terms or search for the supposedly concealed or difficult-to-fathom meaning of expressions like "understanding," "being in pain," "wishing," and so forth. It is above all Stanley Cavell who at present continues Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy as an education of adults, the roots of which extend to Kierkegaard's existential philosophy, which in turn is connected with Socrates.³

On the one hand, philosophy has to do with knowledge that may be given expression in assertions. But on the other hand, just like literature and different from the empirical sciences, many of the "great" doctrinal philosophical authors seem, as it were, to invent anew the conceptual language they use, thereby indicating that knowledge in philosophy does not simply accumulate in a thoroughly differentiating terminology. This is why any careful examination of a philosophical work that seeks to attain certain innovations in thinking may be compared with a process of education. One cannot learn philosophy like physics. Anyone who has learned to understand concepts such as mass, energy, force, charge, acceleration, and others has acquired a fundamental stock of knowledge that can be relied on. However, anyone who for the first time enters into a critical exploration of Spinoza or Whitehead after having studied Plato and Aristotle or Descartes and Kant has to learn a new language insofar as these kinds of philosophers change the meaning of the concepts they adopt from their predecessors because they react differently to the world than these predecessors or consider other experiences as exemplary for their thinking. To put it terminologically: they are *dissident* speakers. Inevitably, readers, even those who have philosophical preparation, on opening the books of an author who is new to them, begin their exploration without understanding a thing.

Sometimes philosophers even create new concepts. That means they don't merely take the liberty of giving different meanings to established words, of using them by deviating from customary practice. They go so far as to coin new linguistic formations such as "affection," "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*), "actual essentiality," "noematic correlative," and so on, all of which makes the "recipients'" learning process especially difficult. And finally, some philosophers recommend that their readers should simply drop certain concepts, such as that of the "absolute" or of "God," of "essence," or "soul." Nietzsche, for example, gave such recommendations in his critique of metaphysics. Therefore, readers will not only have to learn a different language, but they must also learn *new things* or *unlearn* acquired stuff if they want to understand these authors. Their respective texts may likewise subject to a process of reeducation those who try to find their way into the thoughts of a philosopher as yet unfamiliar to them. If one considers concepts to be habits of differentiation, then these educational processes aim at establishing new habits of this kind. To claim an expansion of knowledge through philosophy, so long as such a presumption addresses itself to only adults, is in the final analysis connected with the unreasonable demand of undergoing a conceptual reeducation, even though very few would put it in exactly these terms. If this reeducation is successful, it is meant to bring about a different way of speaking and thinking about the world and perhaps for once of acting differently in it.

Philosophical thinking does not as a rule reflect these processes of educating adults by having them acquire new conceptual tools.⁴ But stories can produce such a reflection. They can change the worldview of their readers with means other than those of conceptual variation. For example, one grants literature the ability to educate the emotions of readers (in an *éducation sentimentale*). But irrespective of this, literature can focus on the experiences that lead to certain conceptual decisions and reactions. Narratives can show what kind of experiences people need to have before they can consider the use of certain universal concepts to be the right reaction to the world, or why a certain person does not accept a certain habit of differentiation that is being recommended. This is why only a superficial point of view regards literature as little more than an entertainment program.

Focusing on education separates the deliberation of how doctrinal relates to nondoctrinal philosophy from the debate about skepticism. The nondoctrinal philosophy examined here does come close to skepticism, to be sure. But the present issue is not primarily the concept of knowing or the question of whether human beings can know anything to begin

with. Rather, the question is, “What is the teaching of philosophy?”⁵ Is there anything at all that philosophy can teach? One can consider the existence of knowledge to be a condition for teaching. But even the skeptics have something to teach; there is even a doctrine of ignorance, a *docta ignorantia*.⁶ But when attention is focused on teaching and educating, political and social dimensions of philosophy become part of the discussion that are not present in the cognitive debates involving skepticism. “There is no revolutionary social vision which does not include a new vision of education; and contrariwise.”⁷ The pragmatic perspective, in which philosophy has to legitimate itself by its relevance for human life, makes the question of whether and, if so, what philosophy has to teach much more relevant than a definition of the concept of knowledge and the problem of skepticism. Cognitive investigations into the classification of the concept of knowledge are concerned with nothing but doctrinal philosophy from within and with what some philosophers try to discover as the conditions that make science possible—an issue to which the sciences themselves hardly pay attention any longer. The social role of assertive philosophy (and science), however, has to do with its (and their) claim that they provide the kind of instruction that, if it is carried out with success, has an influence on how human beings react to the world, and that means in the final analysis what kind of a life people lead.

Also the art of poetry exerts influence on the way people react to the world, how they perceive it and act in it. It does not come as a surprise, however, that texts from Sophocles to Beckett, from Homer to Proust, and from Pindar to Celan offer insights about the world that include, as does many a philosophical discourse, a deviant manner of speaking. (Readers must “find a way into” Beckett and Celan as much as into Spinoza and Deleuze.) Aside from the superficialities of the academic division of labor, nothing speaks against calling Sophocles, Beckett, Proust, and Celan philosophers. But it is hardly a prevalent insight that poetry can be both entertaining and *also* philosophically relevant when its narrative reflections about philosophical thinking, for example, manifest new basic philosophical insights. And exactly that is what the present deliberations are all about. For, in contrast to philosophy, the art of poetry only rarely brings about changes in our view of the world through new or reinterpreted conceptual terminologies; it does its work differently. Concepts and arguments play a very minor role in poetry. The reason for this is that an argumentative dispute about the respective individual *beginnings* of philosophical thinking and engaging in arguments, about basic decisions effecting concepts, is no longer possible. But one can tell stories about them; it is possible to tell plausibly how a person arrived at

his or her basic conceptual decisions. A writer can do this by unfolding the inner world of a human being who perceives reality in a specific way that perhaps is impossible or very alien to one's own mind.⁸ A narrative fiction of the kind that J. M. Coetzee, for example, has written in his novel *Elizabeth Costello* (which I'll later discuss in detail) uses storytelling to disclose insights even into the beginnings of philosophical thinking. These stories present a clear picture of how a person can get to see the world in a particular way, which means with the help of certain universals, and to act in accordance with this way of seeing things.

Narrative representations of this kind are the individualistic mirror image of transcendental investigations inasmuch as transcendental philosophical research tries to find the preconditions for perceptions, assertions, and actions. The searches of cognitive philosophy concentrate, however, on the universal and assume a universal subjective or linguistic structure that all human beings share. And because human beings are alike in a good number of ways—for example, mathematics functions surprisingly well in all cultures—the foundational idea of transcendental philosophy postulates that there exists something that connects humans with one another and makes them recognize the things they have in common. Following classical tradition, which is to say Kant, it is *self-consciousness* that is seen as one starting point of such commonality. On the one hand, self-consciousness is said to make the very possibility of a nonempirical investigation of human commonalities possible; hence it is considered to be a general cognitive ability. On the other hand, it is also claimed to be the objective starting point from which the philosophical investigator can make the transition to those assertions that all humans who perceive, assert, and act implicitly presuppose but of which they are not explicitly aware.⁹

Such investigations of transcendental philosophy ordinarily encounter difficulties in justifying the assumptions of a general cognitive agency (of a transcendental subject or of a common discourse, or linguistic game) as well as those of the necessity for the supposed preconditions for all perceiving, asserting, advancing arguments, and acting. The degree to which spatial intuition had been determined by Euclidean geometry is paradigmatic for these difficulties. To be sure, Kant would still see Euclidean space as a necessary form of intuition that all subjects share, but the non-Euclidean geometries of the nineteenth century and above all their application in Einstein's general theory of relativity show, first, that assuming and accepting this necessity is either a mistake or that "intuition" (perception) in physics does not take place with the help of these geometries; second, that Einstein's theory "in reality" is all about

a primordial Euclidean space disfigured by masses; and, third, that the Kantian transcendental argument entails a much more general intellectual scope, which implies that his argument does not strictly demand that spatial intuition be based on Euclidean geometry. Similar problems arise when the category of causality is considered necessary in the intuition of nature. If quantum mechanics introduces changes in how we understand the fundamental reality of statistical explanations and coincidental occurrences, of which Kant was still completely ignorant, then this would also cast doubt on the necessary and a priori status of the category of causality, as Max Born, for one, assumed.¹⁰ Even the dualism of logic, its definition through the two truth values of “true” and “false,” was challenged by quantum logic in the course of quantum mechanical interpretations.¹¹ Kantians have, of course, responded to these objections. But the very existence of these objections shows that it is not quite so easy to clearly and definitively distinguish very widespread empirical conditions of perceiving, asserting, concluding, and acting that are subject to a historical drift, from the presumably unchangeable a priori conditions. The barely transparent complexity of many transcendental arguments (especially those of its originator), their presuppositions of a unified structure underlying its theory of subjectivity or of its aesthetics on the one hand, and the revolutionary scientific developments since the middle of the nineteenth century in mathematics and physics together with the prevalent domination of historicism on the other hand, have put the method of transcendental philosophy as a promising explanatory project of philosophy under enormous pressure.

However, as soon as human subjectivity is historicized—a process that began with Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* and continues into the contemporary history of knowledge—many transcendental arguments become historical narrations.¹² And it is only a stone’s throw from assuming the existence of historical universals on which assertions, conclusions, and actions are predicated, to assuming that individuals relate to these universal preconditions that exist in their time. The simple fact of a creative scientific idea that leads to a scientific revolution can be interpreted as the reaction of a single person to the unexamined historical truisms of his or her “epoch.” An insight of this kind has shortened the distance to writing a historical narrative about individuals. At any rate, this span is shorter than one might assume at first sight, given the argumentative rigor and discipline with which transcendental philosophy likes to keep at a remove from poetry.

Combining knowledge of life, education, and argumentation also establishes a link between the emergence of subjects and their *public* con-

clusions and strategies of justification. This combination of private experience and engaging in public arguments is a mixture that Richard Rorty in his variant of pragmatism considers to be lacking in good sense.¹³ A separation of self-description and the processing of one's own life experience from public speech is only possible on the assumption, however, that subjects can "create themselves" in fits of Romantic ingenuity. That does not appear plausible to me.¹⁴ Subjects, after all, arise out of worlds. An individual human being evolves from the genes, the nutrition, the perceptions, affects, and above all from the language to which he or she is being exposed.¹⁵ As soon as a person is able to react to all this, perhaps something like a "self-creation" begins. But the very competency for such a reaction to the conditions of one's own subjectivity must come about first.¹⁶

Even where philosophy is not transcendental as a theory of subjectivity or with respect to discourse theory, it makes assertions about the human mind (*Geist*). But in doing so, it maneuvers itself even more strongly into competition with the empirical sciences. What can philosophy in general assert about perceiving, speaking, thinking, drawing conclusions, and acting without taking into account the forms of evidence provided by empirical psychology and the physiology of perception, by the psychology of cognition, the sciences of language, proof theory, and computer science, by sociology and ethnology? Either its universal assertions will relate to the concrete researches in these sciences as a kind of propaedeutic heuristic procedure and collection of hypotheses, or it will itself dissolve into empirical research of the kind that some experts in the philosophy of mind and in that of language, whose work concentrates on consciousness, self-consciousness, and the nature of concepts, by now pursue even in Germany.¹⁷ But a doctrinal philosophy is in its own right unable to celebrate explanatory successes without turning into an empirical science.

Where philosophy does not make assertions with explanatory claims in the context of transcendental arguments and scientific heuristics, it operates as a rule *descriptively* or normatively. At that moment, it finds itself in a reactive attitude vis-à-vis the assertive activities of human beings. Where the assertion is made that this or that conviction is justified, a philosophical theory of cognition raises the question of whether this conviction is truly justified and, if so, whether it is truly *good* and justified *according to which standards*. Where an act is characterized as good or just, practical philosophy analogously asks by which standards this can be done and if the assertion about the act truly is justified. In this way, it participates in the continuous conversation about the norms of knowing and acting (let's hope, for the sake of its own legitimacy, with a higher

degree of reflexivity and a clearer historical awareness of the established or failed contributions to the normative discourse than its nonphilosophical participants). Hence, while transcendental philosophy seeks to explicate the conditions that *precede* the connection underlying an assertion, normative philosophy has its turn *after* the doctrine; *it reacts* to assertions or to whole doctrines as coherently connected assertions.

The *descriptive* tendencies that in philosophy take their place beside the normative inclinations manifest themselves in more recent philosophy above all in phenomenology and in descriptions of phenomena of consciousness and the use of language that follow Wittgenstein and Ryle. Even in this area, philosophy competes with the empirical sciences inasmuch as descriptions of how language is used are, of course, being produced also in empirical linguistics and are being justified through large-scale empirical procedures. Descriptions detailing phenomena of consciousness can likewise be found in the psycho- and neurosciences, which in part also make use of phenomenological insights.¹⁸ It is true, however, that the implicit cognitive interest of philosophical descriptions of language is focused on the discovery of the *paradigmatic*, that is to say, on the normatively significant use of language, which is not of primary interest in all linguistic scholarship.¹⁹ Philosophy does, after all, describe customary language use with the intention of *calling to order* those who deviate from this customary use of language because they do not adhere to the (semantic) rules.

But the fact that philosophy refrains from making explanatory claims and instead focuses on description (on what Wittgenstein calls “surveyable representation”) also moves it closer to literature.²⁰ Stanley Cavell has pointed out that Wittgenstein, Austin, and Ryle tell microstories.²¹ And by the same token, literature does, of course, produce assertions in connection with descriptions or in dialogues of fictional characters. In such passages, however, in contrast to the descriptions of experimental protocols, field studies, the results of phenomenological investigations of consciousness or the descriptions of colloquial language, the real-life experiences have been fictionally transformed and are being produced without normative intentions. (This transformation may be more or less strong and, for example, in authors like W. G. Sebald, come close to documentary description.) It is not the purpose of literature to demonstrate the supposedly official use of language so as to call deviants to order. Instead, literary works seek to show a connection between speaking and living or to give linguistic expression to experiences for which the right words had not been found before. If literature in its search for historical and individually experienced first-time evidences of sequences of per-

suasion and acts is heir to transcendental philosophy (without the latter's legitimating intentions), then descriptive philosophy, conversely, abandons customary language and approaches a "dangerous" proximity to the highly advanced descriptive techniques of literature. The question of whether one needs an elucidating philosophy of ordinary language, of affectiveness and of consciousness beside the literary descriptions of linguistic habits, patterns of emotion, and streams of consciousness is not an idle one. Can a phenomenology of love or of nature, for example, in the way its descriptions capture a concrete reality live up to the analogous literature, such as Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* or John Muir's travel descriptions of the California mountains.²² A negative answer to this question puts philosophy in a dilemma: as a doctrinal and explanatory project, it will hardly find a place beside the empirical sciences that emerged from it. As a descriptive enterprise, its relevance in the face of literature barely extends beyond academia unless, as for example Wittgenstein's aphorisms do, it transmutes itself into literature. Only its critical and normative projects can gain for philosophy a certain type of autonomy beside the individual sciences and literature. A philosophy that seeks to be successful in doctrinal and explanatory terms will transition into empirical science. A philosophy that seeks to describe the concrete world becomes literature. Wittgenstein's late texts are above all so significant as literature, as the right language in microfictions about our acting, feeling, and thinking, not because they presumably provide the early version of the doctrine that contains an inferential semantics. It is because of this intermediate position of philosophy between the explanatory sciences and narrative literature that Newton could bring about the transformation of natural philosophy into experimental philosophy and finally into physics, and that Hume's examinations of human nature gave rise to psychology and the social sciences, and that with Kierkegaard, Sartre, or Camus the descriptions of man's concrete existential situations turn into literature. As for the latter process, it is either the respective philosophers themselves, among them Sartre or Camus in their literary works, who sustain it, or it is others such as Walker Percy with books that closely adhere to Kierkegaard's example.²³

The Search for Concreteness

These remarks have revealed an important topic concerning the relationship of poetry and philosophy: the search for concreteness. That poetry, in focusing attention on the concrete individuals of the world through

language, is superior to philosophy should be beyond dispute. But even in philosophy, there exists the conviction characterized as “nominalism” that universals are linguistic artifacts and that nonlinguistic reality is a world of individuals. Some philosophers even go so far as to assert that the world is a process of coming and going particulars. They want to be serious about time. But which cultural activity takes time more seriously than telling a story? Therefore, would not a philosophy that looks at the world as a coming and going of particulars have to surrender and pass the baton of cognition to the art of narration, as was proposed in so-called Romantic philosophy when it tried to make art into the organon of philosophy?²⁴

But even telling stories makes use of a language that contains universals. The desire to escape the general habits of differentiation that threaten to disguise the newness of every experience (e.g., in the types of concreteness worked out in poetry as a web of metaphors) cannot, in the final analysis, be satisfied. How can philosophy and poetry make the concreteness of beginnings and endings a specific concern if language as a conventional control system of universal concepts is incapable of doing this? The answers to this question can lead to a variety of odd situations and attitudes: to the assertion of ignorance; or to the process of a narrative memory that is becoming ever more complex and infinitely self-corrective; or to a philosophical stance that prohibits making general assertions about reality even for orientation; to the paradoxical assertion that the world is a conceptually, hence assertively inexhaustible connection of individuals; or to falling silent. But one would hardly want to call silence a “thematizing” of reality. Instead, one may see it as a way that is very particular to human beings and only temporarily (more likely at life’s end) a realizable way of being in the world.

The special connection of philosophy and asserting, educating, and narrating outlined above makes it necessary to begin the first section about the Socratic ideal with fundamental thoughts that might read like a textbook introduction to philosophy. Such a primer cannot be written the same way as an introduction to physics or biology if the critique offered here of a solely assertive and doctrinal philosophy is to be relevant. Socrates will not be presented here, of course, as the originator of all philosophy but as the beginning of nondoctrinal philosophy that is already a reaction to acts of assertion. The “pure figure” of Socrates (to take up a formulation of Stanley Cavell)²⁵ manifests the characteristics of nonassertive philosophical activity.²⁶ Among these are the pedagogical *eros* that presents itself without a doctrine; the impetus of being driven to philosophy by the assertions of others while not formulating such assertions;

the consequent absence of an opus of which it may be imagined that it could have intensified into ultimate silence. All this differentiates what nondoctrinal philosophy does not only from assertive science but also from the art of storytelling. For it is hard to imagine a silent narrator, while it can be said of nondoctrinal philosophy that if “silence is always a threat in philosophy, it is also its highest promise.”²⁷ What exactly this could mean will become clear at the end of this book.

Types of Metaphysics

Even though the distinction between doctrinal and nondoctrinal philosophy (that I’ll introduce here on the basis of Socrates’s philosophy and its philosophical constellation) has a certain affinity to Peter F. Strawson’s differentiation between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics and resembles also the delimitation between pragmatism and metaphysics,²⁸ nondoctrinal philosophy is neither descriptive metaphysics nor pragmatism. For, unlike these, it ends in a paradox. In proceeding from the *experience* that the world is the coming and going of individualities even though this experience cannot be represented linguistically through assertions and arguments, it ends by asserting that in the final analysis nothing can be asserted with long-term validity and that all linguistic expressions, whenever universal concepts and not merely names and indexical and deictic terms appear in them, must lag behind the concrete experience of the world’s specific details. That is, of course, anything but an original insight. We know it as the position of Heraclitus from Plato’s *Theaetetus* or as the figure of sense-certainty in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind*.²⁹ These texts do not connect it, however, with the theme of silence, even though the end of *Theaetetus* comes very close to this conclusion.

Also, Rorty’s distinction between philosophical efforts aimed at improving our lives and conceptual endeavors that seek to impose regimentations meant to give to people definitive prescriptions about how to speak and especially about how they have to describe themselves, is important for understanding what here is to be called nondoctrinal philosophy. But it seems that Rorty is ultimately interested here in making it possible to arrive at an original self-description as a new form of Romantic self-creation. The reflections about how to develop the ability to react to the world (on which the following discussion will focus by following Dewey) have a different purpose, however, than advancing one’s ability to become the original creator-genius (*Originalgenie*) of one’s own life. Its aim is to sustain (or to regain) a concrete experience of particulars. This

is important because I consider the possibility of having this kind of experience to be a *condition for happiness*.

Even a hypothetically speculative metaphysics à la Whitehead that tries to escape the drift toward changes of meaning in ordinary and in scientific languages not through setting down definitive meanings but instead by merely participating in this drift by imitating *Begriffsdichtung* (conceptual poetry, or the poetry of aesthetic education through concepts) in blurring the boundaries between doctrinal philosophy and narration, is not commensurate with nondoctrinal philosophy as it is understood here. For, despite being revisable, this metaphysics still proceeds from the proposition that the *adequacy* of a general schema of concepts to capture concrete experience is a theoretical possibility, thereby attempting to evade the paradoxical considerations here to be demonstrated that aim at making it obvious that the assertive attitude is ultimately *inadequate*.³⁰ Whitehead is trying to find a general interpretative system for all human experience.³¹ Even though this interpretative schema remains *hypothetical* and in the sense of Peirce's fallibilism³² is meant to remain revisable because it can fail at any time during the interpretation of an experience, it aims at *homogenizing the interpretation* of the experience. This homogenization can be understood as the attempt to reconstruct rationally the connection of all experience, whose purpose leads to the search for a *system*. The need of a system arises wherever the world's particulars apparently do not *of themselves* amount to a sufficient coherence or where this coherence appears to be unclear. The connection sought here is one that is meant to go beyond the life stories of particular experiencing beings. But the philosophical system of this type is not an *explanatory* one, as is the system of the standard model in physics that aims at the explanation of certain experimentally produced experiences. Instead, it is an *interpreting* one. Interpretative systems have two functions: first, they critique the abstractness of certain scientisms, such as that of physicism, biologism, or sociologism, for wanting to apply all those vocabularies that were developed only to comprehend *specific* (laboratory) experiences to the *totality* of experience. The philosophical critique of these *isms* then adds other experiences to the discussion than the respective "basis experiences" from the lab: religious, aesthetic, or ethical ones.³³ In a second step, such philosophy tries to *systematize* all these experiences. In other words, it seeks to do justice to them through a *unified new terminology* and to produce a new, nonreductive "grand narrative." It is precisely at this point that the question arises of how to delimit philosophical narration and artistic-fictional story. How does a general interpretative schema of human experience dif-

fer from a novel that in its story gathers different human experiences, including those of different experiencing subjects, to form the constellations of a narrative? We may take Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities* as a good example of a novel that establishes entanglements among various people living at the turn of the nineteenth century with different scientific, religious, erotic, ethical, and political experiences and does so using multifarious linguistic means. What is the advantage of a philosophical system with a unified terminology when compared to an essayistic novel of this kind? Or why should many experiencing subjects try to understand their experiences in one single language, least of all that of *process and reality*?

A conceptual schema of Whitehead's kind is surely in a better position to *critique* the general tendency of turning scientific experience into the only one relevant to human life. The strangeness of the universalized philosophical terminologies vis-à-vis all ordinary and technical languages can for this reason more likely have a distancing and critical function than a novel. Furthermore, science would more readily accept the hypothetical systemic form as its critical opposite than a narrative story. This is not inconsiderable for the relevance of philosophy, insofar as it has largely lost this relevance nowadays among those who are active in the explanatory sciences. But what relevance can philosophy have for non-scientists? What significance can a terminology have for a religious and moral life outside the academy that it seeks to interpret even religious and ethical experiences through a philosophical system? Is there anything that a philosophy of this kind can teach nonacademics?

William James has developed a hypothetical pluralistic metaphysics and at the same time has augmented his speculations with a philosophy of *common sense* that is much more accessible than, for example, his ideas about a universe that constructs itself from droplets of experience. He proceeds on two tracks, relying on an esoteric hypothetical and on an exoteric philosophy that he expects to be effective outside academia. The plausibility of such a concept of philosophy depends on whether it succeeds in making the consequences of a plurality of experiences understandable exoterically. That means, making the fact that other people proceed in what they say and do from totally different experiences plausible. Isn't literature in a much more promising position here than exoteric philosophy? Or, in concrete terms: Is a phenomenology of love still needed beside *The New Sorrows of Young W.*,³⁴ and whom does it reach? Can a new phenomenology of consciousness focusing on the feelings of constriction and openness as fundamental human conditions replace or compete with Kafka's story *The Burrow*? Or is it a mistake to put the

discourse of philosophy into a competitive situation with literature? But what can the function of philosophy be if on the one hand it explains nothing and on the other hand it cannot surpass the precision of literature where it succeeds in explicating internal perspectives? Presumably, philosophy in this comparison is left with no other special mark of distinction than the schoolmaster's *attitude* that it manifests with a greater obtrusiveness than literature. Doctrinal philosophy that, unlike belles lettres, having the use of a tenured chair, seems willing to regulate language "from above," "top down" by means of a system or a theory of discourse. It is unable, however, to legitimate its proposals for regulating language with explanatory successes but "only"—like literary art—through the evidence that the "right word" for a specific experience evokes in the listener or reader. The failure of doctrinal efforts at imposing uniformity, the fact that philosophical doctrines barely find an audience outside academia has to do with the strength of the explanatory and narrative alternatives in science and art. So-called postmodernism with its putative insights about the end of the grand narratives is free of blame in this context.

Game Theory Instead of Postmodernism

For, contrary to the claim made by Lyotard and his various followers, the grand narratives have not disappeared at all.³⁵ But they do no longer dwell in philosophical systems. Rather, they have emigrated and are now sustained in other places and are above all nourished in other contexts than those of the philosophical academies. They are no longer legitimated by political movements of emancipation, universal speculative theories, and hopes for religious redemption, but through their integration into explanatory systems that have a *mathematical* form and that find their application in a global economy. Accordingly, one of the most important representatives of game theory, Ariel Rubinstein, has called its narratives, which originally had their proper place in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, an "accumulation of fables and proverbial sayings" that are useful not for the *prognosis* but merely for the *exegesis* of human behavior.³⁶ But they do present themselves as part of a science with supposedly successful prognoses. That it is possible to use models of game theory in foretelling the course of economic transactions is due to the fact, however, that these trades take place between machines that have been programmed according to the precepts of game theory and have been provided with the appropriate algorithms as instructions for how to act.

The behavior of human beings who do not agree to accept the models of game theory as the paradigm of practical rationality can also not be foretold by means of these models. It is this dialectic of description and education—something present only in human circumstances—that is of importance here for the success of prognoses: the planets do not act in accordance with Newton's laws of motion if only one describes them often enough using these laws. By contrast, humans do behave in accordance with, and relate to, certain paradigms as long as one succeeds in making these paradigms plausible to them as the "normatively correct" ones. An example of this may be the evaluative description of economic exchange relationships by "rational machines." Wherever the models of game theory have obtained prognostic strength, the underlying cause of this success is their normative or educational effect. This effect remains implicit, however. When, for example, in a prominent introduction to game theory, those who cooperate in the prisoner's dilemma are being characterized as either nice or dumb, while those who choose the dominant strategy are called evil or crafty, this may sound like a trivial pedagogical joke that is meant to loosen up the atmosphere in the classroom. But even if the teachers are unaware of it, the casual use of normative concepts like "reasonable," "smartly calculating the other guy's moves in advance," "successfully maximizing one's own advantages," and so forth in an educational context definitely establishes an evaluative connection. The students are not only given an introduction to a descriptive and prognostic theory, but they are also taught in no uncertain terms what it means to be "reasonable" and "successful." The fact that this mediation of norms is implicit makes it especially difficult to react to it. After all, there is no follow-up discussion.³⁷

Game theory derives its original scientific reputation from its mathematical formulation, not from its empirical validity or its implicit normative success. The semblance of mathematics is what makes this reputation possible in the first place.³⁸ This is the place of many small influential tales that ever since Hobbes's *Leviathan* are about the fact that human beings behave strategically toward one another, that normally they *compete* with one another for resources and find themselves in situations of social conflict in which winners and losers are to be determined, in which people evaluate and hunt one another. These tales that originally were stories about the natural state of war in Hobbes have entered nearly all areas of secular societies: the markets, politics, the educational process, gender relations, and the healthcare system. If grand integrative stories and systems that really concerned all human affairs equally as nowadays do the narratives about the competitive maximizer of profits, ever

did in fact exist, can remain an open question here. The interpretative patterns of game theory, whatever their integrative force may amount to, are at any rate truly ubiquitous. The people in these stories must at all times and everywhere *assert* themselves against other people. The grand narratives of man and woman as an image of their creator and as rational beings have been supplanted by stories that describe them as market participants. It is the market, and not as with Hobbes, the war, that provides the universal metaphor for the lives of men and women in a competitive world (*Konkurrenzmenschen*).

Markets really exist, and human beings do in fact move in them, but not always. While the other two grand narratives about humankind refer to transcendent beings that do not come and go (because God and intelligible reason are thought of as eternal), the narrative of man/woman on the competitive market requires no transcendence. It universalizes and ennobles one particular possibility of human existence—to compete with others for whatever—to be something that men and women supposedly *always* do and that defines their essence. The narrative of competitive man/woman on the market has produced a new anthropological essentialism that takes the place of religious essentialism with its vision of man/woman as rational beings created by God in His image. In this respect, it resembles the narrative of man/woman in existential philosophy as *mortal* beings. Also dying is a nontranscendent reality and an ultimate possibility of human life. But human beings do not die every day of their entire lives any more than they are in a state of competition every single day of their lives.³⁹ Interpreting all of human life from the vantage of death, in other words existentialistic essentialism, is likewise an exaggeration.

It is more than a coincidence that the lives of people who have to assert themselves against one another take place in a culture that predominantly takes its orientation from the *assertions* of explanatory sciences. Global capitalism, by employing scientific means in the creation of financial products and of the machines that use them in the conduct of commercial transactions, has turned these interpretative patterns into a reality. Charles Sanders Peirce has prophesied this development as long as over a century ago and has pointed out the danger that human beings will interpret themselves as nothing more than mutually competitive egotistical profit maximizers and then bring about a social reality that corresponds to this interpretation.⁴⁰

In the Bible, the stories of Job, of Solomon's judgment in the case of the two women who claim motherhood for the same child, the Good Samaritan, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and many other narratives pro-

vide interpretative models for human feelings and actions. They deal with overcoming sorrows, with justice and compassion. Psychoanalysis made use of the Oedipus myth in its explanation of psychosexual development. Likewise, game theory in its tales of strategic rationality provides analyses of human life that allow generalization: in the prisoner's dilemma, the coward game, the beauty contest, the ultimatum game, or the diner's problem. All these tales transport these general interpretations of human behavior without in any way being more cogent than the stories in the Bible or Greek tragedy.⁴¹ They identify situations in which human beings may actually find themselves for a time and raise them to the status of *paradigmatic* circumstances. But neither the story of Job nor the Oedipus myth or the prisoner's dilemma allow good prognoses of what will happen because neither of them encompasses the full spectrum of human acting. The reason that things seem different in game theory has to do with the fact that the appearance of mathematical formalisms easily leads some people to assume that empirically examined science is at work here and to all intents and purposes should prove to offer successful prognoses and be of general validity. But this impression is deceptive. Their mathematical apparatus notwithstanding, the tales of game theory are nothing more than possible analyses of human behavior.

Yet human beings who for a time interpret themselves in a certain way will behave in accordance with these interpretations and acquire *habits* that turn them into persons that fit these interpretations.⁴² The fables of game theory influence culture and social life the same way. By understanding themselves as acting strategically in a competition for resources, in the course of time, human beings turn into persons who above all act strategically and to whom everything appears as a scarce resource. This influence is especially conspicuous in the sciences. Many scientists by now see themselves as persons who within the system of "mental capitalism" are primarily concerned with exchanging and accumulating the resources of attention and reputation. Other forms of self-understanding—for example, that of investigators who pass their insights on to others as a gift—disappear into oblivion. This is where the educational influence of these grand narratives, whose authors don't recognize themselves as narrative educators, however, but misunderstand their role as that of prognosticating scientists, is to be found. Lyotard has overlooked these grand narratives because he was looking in the wrong places, where he found the theoretical constructions of doctrinal philosophy while missing those of the strategic sciences of war and the economy.

Nondoctrinal philosophy has, since antiquity, criticized such grand narratives again and again without replacing them with other grand narratives. Its intent is making it possible for individuals to *react* to these narratives. This means being capable of rejecting the suggestion that they should apply the universal concepts used in these narratives to their own situation. Just as homosexual, melancholic, and deaf persons reject being described as “sick,” individuals can disallow the proposition to characterize their lifetime as a “scarce resource,” their friends as a “network,” their education as an “investment in the future,” or a landscape as a “recreational area.” In order to be able to do this, they must first develop an awareness of what it means to decide in favor of or against the use of general concepts. In other words, they must first of all become *conscious speakers*. To a conscious speaker, it is evident that “science” has not determined that human beings are competitors for resources, that friends and education are a means to social advancement and that landscapes are facilities for mental regeneration but that scientific research operates with these concepts in pursuing certain (e.g., social-scientific) explanatory projects. A person who does *not* participate in these explanatory projects is as little obligated to go along with using these concepts, as is a married couple when it says that it has lost the strength (*Kraft*) to bring up one more child joins in using Newton’s concept of force (*Kraft*).

The fact that nondoctrinal philosophy has nothing to do with post-modernism (that has never existed if it consists in the absence of grand narratives) becomes apparent when one sees that it existed already in the intellectual constellation that created the environment conducive to the birth of the explanatory sciences and of asserting philosophy in Europe. I have in mind the constellation that existed between Socrates and his mental predecessors. Socrates is the first philosophical figure about whom we have evidence that he sought to educate his partners in conversation toward *semantic responsibility* and *autonomy* by asking them what they really mean when they use a certain concept, if they see what consequences such conceptual language has, and so forth.

For this reason, Socrates has to be considered first. Thereafter, the issue will be the practice of asserting and correlative, though much more complex, themes such as subjectivity, divergent speaking, and the possibility of philosophical theories. Next will follow ideas on education that derive their orientation from John Dewey and the notion that educational processes recommend certain ways of reacting to the world of which the act of asserting is only one. How is it possible to educate human beings who are capable of asserting new things about the world and

who no longer feel the need to make assertions but can tell stories about the world and criticize the way things are in it? As soon as one has arrived at this question, the relationship between criticism and narrative and of assertion and narrative must be clarified. The conclusion will consist of thoughts about the utopia of nondoctrinal philosophizing hinted at above: silence that is also of great importance in literature.

Maieutic and Academic Philosophy

Making assertions became a problem in philosophy very early on. To be sure, it is difficult to determine the intent of the so-called Presocratic epigrams when they were first uttered. But texts like the following can be interpreted as assertions: "From what things existing objects come to be, into them too does their destruction take place. . . ."¹ And, "This world-order, the same of all, no god nor man did create, but it ever was and is and will be: everliving fire, kindling in measures and being quenched in measures."² These maxims appear to assert that the conditions under which things came to be are also responsible for their demise and that the world has neither been created nor came about, but represents an eternal process. If one classifies such texts as the *beginning of rational thinking and explaining* and in turn considers thinking and explaining as a process of justifying assertions, then Thales and Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides did indeed make assertions about something and tried to give their reasons for it.³ Perhaps they had even already tried to explain something on the basis of their assertions and justifications. In this respect, they initiated a process that at first became known as the development of philosophical doctrines and today is above all considered as the process of the advancement of research and the explanatory sciences.

In the Platonic dialogues, even Socrates makes a number of assertions and encounters many people who do the same thing. But according to the self-assessment that Plato

has him express in the *Theaetetus*, he is himself not at all one who makes assertions in the sense of advocating a doctrine. He is only a person who comes to the aid of those making assertions, who scrutinizes those assertions and tests them. Using the familiar metaphor of midwifery, he characterizes his own intellectual activity as follows: "I'm unproductive of wisdom, and there's truth in the criticism which many people have made of me before now, to the effect that I question others but don't make any pronouncements about anything myself, because I have no wisdom in me. . . . So I'm not at all wise myself, and there hasn't been any discovery of that kind born to me as the offspring of my mind."⁴ Socrates sees his task not as making assertions but "to test, by every means, whether it's an imitation and a falsehood that the young man's intellect is giving birth to, or something genuine and true."⁵ He questions assertions without replacing them with supposedly better ones. To be sure, it is frequently said that the explication (or even the definition) of knowledge as true justified opinion goes back to the Socrates of the *Theaetetus*. But at the end of this dialogue he says, "And when we're investigating knowledge, it's absolutely silly to say it's correct judgement together with knowledge, whether of differentness or of anything else. So it would seem, Theaetetus, that knowledge is neither perception, nor true judgement, nor an account added to true judgement."⁶ Socrates "brought into the world" and examined all kinds of assertions about cognition or knowledge (episteme) out of Theaetetus's soul, acting as an artist of midwifery. All of them proved to be mental misconceptions, unable to survive.⁷ Even so, their conversation was not a failure because Theaetetus has nothing further to say about knowledge, no longer is "pregnant" with assertions, no longer "is in labor." It seems, then, that the *cessation* of assertive certainty can also be a result of philosophical thinking and conversing. That's why Socrates doesn't give lectures or write textbooks even though in some Platonic dialogues he talks at some length. He seems already to have overcome this need for making self-assured statements. Holding on to and spreading correct assertions is no longer the purpose of Socrates the maieutic educator.

To the extent that philosophy remained Socratic, it differs to this day from the project of the assertive and explanatory sciences that the Presocratics (intentionally or not) set in motion. It has become tremendously successful. No other project is known that provides better explanations than the experimentally proceeding empirical sciences. In their shadow, that type of philosophy that has not turned into explanatory science but remained doctrinal has largely vanished into cultural insignificance and lives on as not more than a purely academic exercise. Philosophical

explanations provided by doctrinal philosophy no longer refer to anything but self-created academic questions. In contrast to the science dealing with technology and the economy, the philosophical doctrines hardly reach the lifeworld of nonphilosophers any longer. The success of the positive sciences has rendered doctrinal philosophy superfluous as an explanation or has turned it into a merely secondary explication business. A relationship to the world (*Welthaltigkeit*) is something it can produce only through academic self-reference, which is to say that its world remains that of conference venues and seminar rooms. It no longer possesses, as Ernst Cassirer's diagnosis already has it, a theoretical frame that independent of the development of the individual sciences (much less providing a foundation for them) might relate to the nonacademic world as an instructional force.

But ever since Socrates, philosophy is also postdoctrinal. Those who have continued to pursue this project after him have, since the judicial murder of Socrates, as critics of prevailing morals, of political ideologies, of religious superstition, or of the scientific view of the world, advanced without doctrines what may be characterized as *the project of European enlightenment*. Their names are Pyrrho and Montaigne, Friedrich Schlegel and Lichtenberg, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, Rorty and Feyerabend. These postdoctrinal philosophers question the central cultural projects about their normative consequences and uncover at what stage their self-proclaimed avowals are not being fulfilled, at what time their intentions create consequences that nobody wanted. The critique of asserting as such and the critique of the generalization of scientific, religious, and political doctrines that go beyond the parameters of application for which they once had been created have been from Socrates until the present times an irreplaceable philosophical enterprise. It does, however, provide no economic benefits, even though the questions of nondoctrinal philosophy as a critique of religion, science, and the general culture also concern nonphilosophers. Socratic questions addressed to the neurosciences if they really understand by "free will" what is customarily meant by this phrase, or to politics, if the increase of the gross national product has anything at all to do with justice and happiness and what politics, beyond the slogans of election advertising, basically means by justice and happiness, but also questions put to the pedagogical institutions into what kind of adults their teaching is really designed to educate the children: is it especially competitive or especially just or happy human beings—such questions are relevant not only in the university. The ability to raise these questions at all defines the intellectual freedom of European civilization. Nondoctrinal philosophy tries to keep human

beings from losing their freedom to religious, political, economic, or scientific dogmatism.

The difference between philosophical doctrine and non-doctrinal philosophy, then, is not the difference between theoretical and practical philosophy, even though one may say that Socrates, according to the standards of contemporary philosophical disciplines, was above all a moral and political philosopher. For even in practical philosophy one can be preoccupied with constructing and refining doctrines as, for example, that of utilitarianism, of deontological ethics, and of moral idealism in order thereafter, in an academically approved form, to “apply” them. Surprise often ensues when such polished and refined doctrines don’t encounter the expected response in the world outside academia. Even Plato is said (perhaps, as we shall see, in reacting to Socrates) to have expressed such a doctrine, at least orally, when he gave a lecture about the good and then let it turn into a lecture about the One (*das Eine*), putatively without making any reference to accepted ideas, not even to his philosophical predecessors, but instead explicating only his own hard-to-comprehend convictions.⁸ Whoever attends philosophical conferences about contemporary *philosophy of mind* or theory of knowledge knows this obliviousness toward history and the world that is a hallmark of doctrinal philosophizing even in our own time.

It is the lecture scripts of Aristotle that irrevocably establish a monographic style of presenting philosophy: a text that collects earlier opinions and assertions about a topic, examines and critiques arguments and counterarguments, and then arrives at assertions that, in contrast to the Presocratic collection of epigrams or the Platonic dialogue, can unequivocally be attributed to its author *as his theory*.

The works from Thales to Aristotle that have come down to us can be represented, so far as asserting is concerned, as the movement of a pendulum. This movement starts with the utterance of in part very poetic axioms of the so-called Presocratics that can be interpreted as assertions. Then it proceeds to the questioning and probing in the Socratic dialogues that often end in aporias. Next it goes back to the systematic ordering of assertions in contexts one can identify as the theories of Aristotle that in turn were challenged by the negative knowledge of Sextus Empiricus.

This pendulum motion in European philosophical tradition has never come to a standstill. It has always remained alive: as Horkheimer’s contrast of *traditional* and *critical* philosophy, as the difference of systematic and therapeutic thinking in Hegel and Kierkegaard or Russell and Wittgenstein, of constructive and skeptical thinking in Descartes and Montaigne or Kant and Hume. The constellations between the doctrinal and

the nondoctrinal are manifold. It is not always the case of a negative (skeptical or critical) philosophy critiquing philosophical doctrines. Rather, there are also doctrines answering doctrines (such as Spinoza taking issue with Descartes or Hegel with Schelling), nondoctrinal philosophies responding to their nondoctrinal predecessors (for example, Cavell to late Wittgenstein, or Deleuze to Nietzsche), doctrines to nondoctrinal philosophizing (such as the Heidegger of *Being and Time* to Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*, or Brandom to late Wittgenstein). But even the original constellation that appeared with the nondoctrinal answers of Socrates to the teachings of Anaximander or Heraclitus repeats itself again and again in the history of European thought: in Jacobi's reaction to Spinoza, or Kierkegaard's confrontation with Hegel, or Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer. The reactions of nondoctrinal philosophy to philosophical doctrines frequently question philosophy as a whole and point, as in the case of Jacobi and Kierkegaard, to religion as the authentic alternative to the presumably untenable philosophical doctrine.⁹

Because circumstances are as complicated as that, survey lecture courses and textbooks that are not only about philosophy but also about history amount to an oddity, even though they exist in large numbers. In actual fact, something generally valid can be reported neither about uncontested teachings in contemporary history nor about a history of philosophical doctrines and their critiques because the philosophical doctrines and the nondoctrinal philosophies develop together in processes of mutual rejections and acceptances in the course of which they each construct their own histories. Any intrinsically philosophical and not merely philological report about these developments would itself have to react to them and would be drawn into these developments because such a report would either have to come up with a doctrine of its own or offer the rejection (negation) of a doctrine or of the doctrinal in philosophy per se, which in turn would provoke a critical response to the report itself. Surveys of physics, biology, or electrical engineering and their histories, however, work altogether differently because these disciplines operate in a purely doctrinal way and its experts for the most part see the history of their discipline as a progressive movement from the false (wrong) to the correct (right) assertions.

Teaching and Being Active in Reflection

Even after 2,500 years of Western philosophy, there are no *generally valid* philosophical doctrines to lecture on, the way presently valid doctrines

exist both in physics (such as Einstein's theory of gravitation, quantum mechanics, and the quantum field theory) and in biology (the theory of evolution, or genetics and, more recently, epigenetics). We do have, to be sure, a *canon of philosophical texts*, but it is more likely that Heraclitus, Plato, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida are studied in one department and Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Frege, and Dummett in another. One can consider this either to be the normal state of affairs of that philosophy which is not *necessarily* an academic discipline or look at it as a deficiency that would have to be "remedied" in the further development of academic philosophy. The purpose of such an initiative would be to turn philosophy into a "correct" teaching discipline, so that students who are interested in philosophy can be given a "correct" philosophical education.

That philosophy does not "function" like physics or biology can be derived from so simple a fact as its name, which after all is not "sophology," is not a doctrine of wisdom but a *love* of wisdom: "philo-sophia." But one's love for something is hardly an apt topic for a public presentation in a lecture hall or a field of inquiry about which one can easily collect assertions in a textbook—love obviously being something *personal*. And even though etymological derivations do not have the power of an argument, I believe the "sophy" in the title of our discipline indicates that in fact it still remains connected with something personal. This is to say that it should be pursued even in our academic institutions with an *existential commitment* and that it ceases to be philosophy when it is being presented *without* this existential commitment as an obligatory doctrine.

Even so, this personal aspect can be of interest and concern to anyone. This is why philosophy should above all be taught as an *activity of reflection* that individuals pursue, just as is painting and the use of brush, paint, and canvas. But to teach a reflective and creatively shaping activity does not consist in passing on a doctrine, a collection of assertions by which "everyone" *has to abide*. Rather, what is called for is the communication of *proficiencies*, which, by the way, is true also of mathematics whose designation as a discipline, not coincidentally and in purely etymological terms, does not refer to a doctrine of something. The Greek word *mathematikos*, rather, refers to *that which concerns learning*, which is why Leibniz translated "mathematics" as "*Wisskunst*," the art of learning to know.¹⁰ Most of all, it must be *learned through (regular) practice*, like a language, until one is capable of thinking in it, as one would for an artistic performance, whether it be painting a picture or playing the piano. One also has to practice the arts until one is proficient enough to produce the musical and visual figures in such a way that they become

one's own expression. Philosophy must likewise be practiced until the consideration of premises and their consequences, the interplay of argument and counterargument bring about those ideas that in fact coincide with one's own life experience—though without thereby becoming generally valid assertions like those of science.

If philosophy is indeed something personal and calls above all for the commitment of individual persons and, furthermore, if it represents a *reflective activity of loving* something, then it becomes understandable that any textbook-like publication is out of place here and that a survey lecture course is an oddity. So long as a lecture or a textbook “demonstrates” the activity of philosophizing, those in attendance, listening and taking notes, do not really *participate* in this activity, no more than does somebody who watches a contest in the boxing ring, the swimming pool, or the bicycle track and keeps notes is a boxer, swimmer, or cyclist her- or himself. Even those who *give* a philosophical lecture or *write* a philosophical textbook are not necessarily engaged in the activity of philosophizing as understood here. Instead, they talk and report on texts of people who have at one time pursued this activity. This would in effect be equal to suggesting that a swimming lesson (to keep our example) consists in giving a report on what a great swimmer, respectively many great swimmers have written down about their experiences.

Philosophy and the Academy

The objection may be raised at this point that philosophy has *developed*, that circumstances nowadays are no longer what they were when Socrates lived—that they have become thoroughly academic. This is true—on the one hand. On the other, Socrates already took issue with a type of academic philosophy when Plato has him quarrel with the Sophists about training young people for money by imparting to them certain doctrines, principally those of speaking persuasively—the skill of rhetoric.¹¹ And after all, I must likewise imagine a response at this point, which means, I must in a way behave in the Socratic manner even though I'm not Socrates, must quasi in writing move in an (apparent or a fake) dialogue in order to advance a line of thinking that itself is meant to become philosophical. Hence, even if contemporary circumstances are no longer Socratic, and present-day academic philosophy, while almost exclusively practiced by public servants with or without job security, is not simply the continuation of sophistry, if, in other words, the “ancient circumstances” relevant to the pursuit of philosophy are barely

comparable to ours, it is also true that a *Socratic impulse* pervades the development of philosophy even to our academic present. I would like to call this the *critical impulse* and *agonistic trait* of philosophy. Even the test requirements and the canonized collections of texts that define a modern course of studies have been unable to eradicate this impulse completely.¹²

Because Socratic philosophy did not emerge from the academy (even though Plato was the founder of the philosophical academy and drew the liveliest portrait of Socrates that has come down to us) and because to this day philosophy has not domesticated itself in the academy with perfect ease, one may surmise that it would live on beyond the universities, should these at some time decide to eliminate it from the curriculum. This is probably not true for other academic disciplines. Very many of the philosophical writings that form the contemporary academic canon are the work of authors who did not make their living as university teachers. Descartes was an officer, Leibniz a court scholar and librarian, Locke a physician, Spinoza an optician, Hume worked as a diplomat and acquired wealth as a writer, Marx worked as a journalist and a private scholar, Kierkegaard had received an inheritance, and Nietzsche philosophized as a philologist specializing in ancient texts and had taken early retirement. They all were not, in contrast to Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Husserl, and Heidegger, professors of philosophy. The recalcitrance of Socrates (who perhaps earned his living as a sculptor or as a shoemaker) kept him from being a “professional philosopher,” as was for example Hippias of Elis, that is, from earning his money with his philosophy even though his rhetorical talent could have easily made this possible. If nowadays universities were to shut down all philosophical studies (perhaps because it is uncertain what they contribute to an increase in the gross domestic product), this would not mean the end of philosophy. It would, just like *belles lettres*, continue to exist thanks to the successors of Socrates, Hume, Kierkegaard, and Marx.

Two factors show, however, that the Socratic impulse is present even in the universities. First, there exists within academic philosophy a potent anti-academic attitude that perceives the degree to which writing and teaching in philosophy follow the example of other academic disciplines as a threat to its creativity—that is to say, to its legitimate interest in making a topic of discussion what cannot fully be expressed in assertions and conclusions. The publications of the Berlin “private” (i.e., untenured and unsalaried) lecturer in philosophy Arthur Schopenhauer or of the professors of philosophy Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Adorno are explicitly conceived to be anti-academic: no carefully arranged construction of an

argument, few footnotes or none at all, no or insufficient documentation of quotes, no reports on the so-called status of research (*Forschungsstand*). Heidegger's characterization of scientific and scholarly research as "*Betrieb*" (busyness) explicitly sets the "methodology" of philosophy as "thinking" off from the institutionally pursued sciences.¹³

Second, philosophy does not succeed in homogenizing the official canon of those texts that are listed, analyzed, and then made the material of tests in its lectures and seminars to such a degree that "philosophy" really means the same thing at all places where philosophy is studied, the way, for example, "thermodynamics" or "the physiology of plants" in fact has the same meaning wherever physics or biology are studied. Even though analytical philosophy strives for such a homogenization, the above-mentioned differences in what is taught from one department to the next are (still) in place. These differences have to do with the personal preferences that as a rule exist among the teachers of this subject. They also reflect the agonistic movements within the history of philosophy. One side—as individuals and as a group—"stylistically" (in the sense of *Denkstil*, style of thinking) favor Heraclitus and Heidegger, the other prefers Aristotle and Dummett and considers the respective other "*Denkstil*" to be "lacking in seriousness" or "trivial," and seeks to "fight against it" by emphasizing appropriate aspects of their own educational programs. Thus, Spinoza and Hegel are presently important as precursors of inferentialism, whereas Locke and Hume were previously required reading for anticipating logical empiricism. These fluctuations in the current validation of historical authors can be attributed to the fact that certain philosophical traditions are closer than others to the personal thinking of present-day teachers who find themselves involved in certain philosophical controversies. Also, only *certain* authors are suitable as "authoritative sources" for certain basic philosophical positions and as starting points. In contrast to these authorities, the teachers themselves are not always capable of systematically organizing and expressing their thoughts, which is why they fall back on tradition. This manner of making use of tradition has always existed—for example, in the early modern age when the "new" atomists referred to their predecessors in antiquity. For this reason, the activity of loving wisdom is also pursued with the help of reading Heraclitus and Heidegger, Aristotle and Dummett, just as one may engage in one's love of music by performing Bach and Wagner or Hindemith and Chick Corea when one lacks inspiration for music of one's own or considers one's own output to be inferior to that of others, the "great ones." And just as the performance of "great" music from past eras has its justifications, so also has the "performance" of old

texts in analytical presentations so long as one does not confuse the one thing—independent thinking—with the other—interpreting.

Above all, from the position of a nondoctrinal philosophy propelled by the Socratic impulse, it seems out of place to believe that the preoccupation with philosophical tradition, with the “old authorities,” amounts to approaching the “front line” of research. To assume that a thorough study of Spinoza’s, Hegel’s, and Brandom’s work conveys the “philosophical state of affairs,” the way one can become acquainted with the status of research in physics or biology, is as erroneous as the attendant supposition that this will show the direction to be taken into the future of philosophy.¹⁴ For it is the very characteristic of philosophical innovation to indicate that the old historical lines can no longer be drawn. Other authors from tradition will then emerge as authorities. Whoever reads Heraclitus, Plotinus, and Hölderlin as “predecessors” of Heidegger, Hegel, and Spinoza and understands Wittgenstein as anticipating Brandom simply fails to learn how things could go on philosophically after Heidegger and Brandom but merely picks up which historical stage setting Heidegger and Brandom required for their performances.

Things take an especially curious turn when the reception of a nondoctrinal therapeutic philosopher like late-stage Ludwig Wittgenstein becomes the starting point for a doctrinal development, as if his *Philosophical Investigations* had laid the groundwork for a new state of research. But that is what actually happened when this book, above all on account of its so-called private-languages argument, was interpreted as the description first of a behaviorist and then of an inferentialist semantics.¹⁵ It may well be that traditions of doctrinal philosophy do exist (as “Platonism,” “Aristotelianism,” “Thomism,” “Spinozism,” “Kantianism,” “Hegelianism,” phenomenology, etc.) and also that the traditions of nondoctrinal philosophy can be traced from Socrates to the Cynics and Skeptics, from Montaigne through Schlegel to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Critical Theory, Foucault, and Cavell. But to turn an antidoctrinal philosophizing into the starting point of a doctrine in philosophical semantics, for instance, is an especially grave, but perhaps from the standpoint of doctrinal philosophy also an especially productive, misunderstanding. It demonstrates that it is impossible to pursue the history of philosophy as an amelioration of philosophical doctrines (the way one may with a somewhat old-fashioned mind-set write the history of physics as the improvement of the doctrines about space, time, and matter—as the history of progress).

No doubt Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo set the preliminary stages for Newton’s theory of motion leading him to say he is standing “on ye

sholders of Giants.”¹⁶ But Bach and Beethoven are not the preliminary stage of Wagner and Philip Glass because Wagner and Glass are not “representatives” of truth, relative to the old errors committed by Bach and Beethoven, and the works of past authors like Plato and Spinoza do not represent the preliminary stage of contemporary philosophical thought. The older thinkers retain their rightful place, and the philosophical present is never merely the ongoing development of or the “victory over” past errors but a *reaction*, quite specific in each case, to the past based on the experiences made in the present. Philosophical thinking of any past took place against the background of scientific, political, and religious *experiences* that are different than ours today, and for this reason, such thinking reacts differently to its own “prehistory” than later authors do. Hegel’s Aristotle is different than that of Saint Thomas. Due to the new experiences that responsible philosophers bear in mind—and not because of a supposed theoretical advance in problem solving—we must now philosophize differently than our ancestors did. It is true, to be sure, that one also has experiences with philosophical texts and concepts. But philosophy does not produce its philosophically relevant experiences by itself in the form of constructed *laboratory experiences*.

Experience that is not *produced* but *occurs* to people as a result of their situation in life has, beside the experience one has with concepts, is of great significance for philosophical thought so long as this thought wants to uphold a general (including extra-academic) relevance, which means, tries to react to life in its time. It is striving for this kind of relevance that manifests the responsibility a philosopher is willing to accept. Anyone who consciously says and writes things of which he assumes that they lack relevance for his own life and that of others, who speaks and writes only in order to draw attention to himself, uses the time of his life and of those listening and reading him irresponsibly. But once it has become obvious that it is impossible to use Platonic or Hegelian concepts for reacting to what one has experienced in the present time in any but an abstract or superficial way, then also the understanding of how past philosophical concepts succeed one another will change. As little as the past experiences to which earlier philosophizing reacted were wrong (if it can make any sense at all to speak of “right” or “wrong” experiences), so little are the philosophical reflections of these experiences outdated or irrelevant. Spinoza’s proof that devils and demons do not exist has, when seen against the background of the Inquisition’s activities at that time, a different relevance than nowadays. Likewise, the significance of Hobbes’s theory about the natural condition as a war of all against all can only be understood if one also looks at this theory as

a reaction to the life experiences that people had to endure during the English Civil War.¹⁷

Philosophical authors of the past, then, do not just simply refer to a different former “status of theory” but also to a horizon of experience that may appear alien to us in our time. The lab experiences of the empirical sciences, which do not relate to the human experience of life, would probably, if the appropriate experiments could have been made two hundred or three hundred years ago, have shown the same results. For the constants and laws of nature have not changed since. The circumstances of human life, however, have been altered fundamentally. This fact is what philosophy takes into consideration so long as it is interested in being relevant.

If we want to philosophize as seriously as our ancestors, then we can’t limit ourselves to studying only their texts. Rather, we must also have the courage and learn the ability of *responding* to the experiences of our own lives. These experiences are being transformed by the changes in science and technology, by the social and political upheavals, and also by the kind of art that makes new aesthetic experiences possible. A philosophy that in its own present time wants to encompass the world must be capable of reacting to every part of it. In order to accomplish this, however, one must first of all *have* such experiences. And that makes it necessary to leave the libraries and the departments of philosophy because studying the philosophical classics merely helps us to acquire conceptual knowledge. It does not give us the experience of life in our own present.

Worldviews and Life Lessons

Learning how to pursue an activity in a particular way, that is, with a *personal commitment*, is something that cannot be communicated through lectures and textbooks. On the contrary, it is the purpose of such texts to replace a nonexistent perception of the world’s relevant facts, or even the existence of a *wrong* image of them in the minds of listeners and readers, with the *correct* one so that ignorance and error give way to knowledge. And at this moment, I seem to be trying the very same thing: to replace the wrong view prevailing about philosophy with a correct understanding of it. Insofar as such a reflection is itself philosophical, it once more evinces the difference between the explanatory individual sciences and philosophy.

For one thing, there is in every university at least one colleague in philosophy who will vehemently contradict my conception of our discipline.

For another, it is far from the purpose of lectures in physics or biology and for their respective textbooks to replace erroneous notions of *physics and biology* with correct ones but instead to replace false ideas about motion, force, charge, respiration, reproduction, and so forth, with correct ones. These disciplines are not concerned with themselves but with the world. And the professors in the sciences have above all been authorized to acquaint their students with the correct representation of the world and not to impart a particular understanding of physics or biology (which does happen surreptitiously even so). But does philosophy produce representations of the world? I dispute that. Because philosophy has never been merely an assertive project, it has always found questionable what it may really mean to claim that one represents the world. Epistemology as the theory of knowledge was not simply the search for the methods and norms of correctly representing the world. It was also the discipline of investigating whether there really exists a representing relationship of human beings to the world or if knowledge (cognition) of the world is perhaps something altogether different from a representation of the world.¹⁸

The reservations that philosophy has about disseminating theories about the world (least of all so-called worldviews, *Weltanschauungen*) correspond to reservations concerning “how-to-live teachings” or “wisdom books,” which likewise have a doctrinal character. It is impossible to derive from the canon of philosophical texts what it means to lead a philosophical life. This fact defines the difference between the collection of texts from Anaximander to Wittgenstein and the Buddhist pali canon or the Christian Gospels. The latter describe rather precisely how to lead one’s life as a Buddhist or a Christian.¹⁹ To be sure, it may be possible to lead something like a philosophical life in the Socratic sense, and one can also intend to lead such a life. But it is a serious mistake to believe that this can be accomplished by adhering to certain doctrinal prescriptions for how to conduct one’s life, such as not to kill, not to lie, not to eat meat, and so forth. The need for a philosophy that gives orientation to one’s life, a *Lebenslehre*, that one does not produce individually from the reflection of the experience encountered in one’s own life, arises on the *flight* from the Socratic impulse of destructively examining the doctrines. Whoever wants to be *led*, whoever needs a bellwether does not want to lead a philosophical life in the sense of Socrates’s complete independence from all doctrines. That is why Western philosophy that has retained the Socratic impulse is not only no doctrinal science but also no religious dogma for life. It is no doctrine of any kind. There can be no philosophical gurus for enlightened Europeans, however loud the public calls for them may be. Socratic philosophers do not simply assert

either: “The world is this or that way,” or “One must live this or that way.” Philosophy that has preserved a Socratic impulse is not doctrinal either about the facts or the norms.

Experiments with Concepts

The question of whether instructional programs should inculcate the minds of those to be taught with images of the world that in certain (authorized) circles are considered the right ones or, if something altogether different should be done, is not a trifling issue in preparatory reflections about pedagogy. Rather, it aims at the heart not only of European philosophy but also of Western culture. Heidegger has claimed that we are living in an “Age of the World Picture.”²⁰ In response, Deleuze has denied that it is the task of philosophy to produce world pictures, stating even that this is far beyond its capability. I take up this idea in an attempt to develop a conception of philosophy according to which the philosophical activity of reflection is an *experimenting with concepts* for the purpose of acquiring the aptitude to react to one’s own experiences *with reflections* and, when the occasion arises, of *changing* human life in the culture in which one has grown up. This is the claim—the ability of reacting to one’s personal experience and of changing life in one’s culture—that sets nondoctrinal philosophy apart from science, which can bring about changes in the lives of ordinary people through technology.²¹ If, in following Max Horkheimer,²² one differentiates between *traditional* and *critical* theory and states that traditional theory asserts something about the world, then one can show that philosophy, whenever it found itself propelled by the Socratic impulse, had always been critical theory.

At this point, the objection suggests itself that trying to change the world and the options for doing so largely depend on the correct sets of information that have been collected about the world. That is true, but it is only half the truth because it is equally true that one’s preferences for life and the world influence how the world is represented. This applies above all to the *social* but also to the *natural* world. The statement that the Earth is located at the center of the universe at one time was a statement of fact but at the same time expressed an *evaluation* of humankind. According to this assessment, humans are those beings that the world is all about, around whom, literally, everything revolves. Even assertions concerning the supposed superiority of men over women, of one human race over another, or of humans over the animals refer to alleged facts but at the same time are the expression of an interest in domination.

Representations of facts in the form of general assertions are first of all hypotheses that perhaps prove successful for a time, and then—who can say exactly when?—are found to be failures. This is, at any rate, what happened to the majority of general assertions that people have until now come up with. At one time, these statements had to be curtailed; at one time, contradictory experiences emerged. Here, the same thing takes place that happened with the natural species of living beings: the majority of them died out. This allows the conclusion that the currently living species will at some time in the future get into circumstances to which they can no longer adapt. General hypotheses and natural species have only a limited life span. Which hypotheses one comes up with *at first*, which relationships *between* the facts one considers *probable* before any examination for this reason also depends on how one would prefer the world to be.

What people assert is determined also by how they speak. And their way of speaking is determined not only by how the world is but also by what kind of life they *de facto* have together and as individuals and what they would at heart prefer: that is, by their wishes and projections. The facts do not fully determine either how people speak or how they live. When one observes the historical variety and the concurrent multiplicity of the ways human beings live on this Earth, then it becomes obvious that wide *latitudes* exist for speaking and living that are being utilized in different ways. All human beings are born and die, need food and seek to reproduce. But already, *the way* they are being born, die, provide for themselves, and reproduce varies enormously. Being familiar with such latitudes is also knowledge about facts of human life. It can lead directly to desires for change: if one must not *by necessity* live on Earth the way people do in fact live, and if one must not *by necessity* speak the way people do speak, why then do “we” have to live and speak as we do and not quite differently?

Philosophical experimenting with concepts results from the conviction that our speaking and our life are so intimately connected that jointly changing our way of speaking also represents a change in our life, if indeed the change is “meant seriously.” As is generally known, it was primarily Ludwig Wittgenstein who in more recent philosophy gave this notion prominence, but it can also be found in many other philosophers before him, among them Herder, Humboldt, and Nietzsche. When seen against this background in the philosophy of language, the love of wisdom has to do with the *hope* that our life can be *improved* if we change our language. In this sense, the love of wisdom is the inclination to change life conceptually into a better life through reflection.

Such an inclination presupposes that in facing life, one does not give in to resignation, does not refute it in the Gnostic manner as beyond improvement in the first place, and does not even, like those who follow a redemptive religion or believe in technological scientism, put one's hope in an external agency, be it a savior, God, or a technology that does away with life's problems. Philosophical enlightenment as the conceptual working-out of the issues of human life is confident that humans are themselves capable of changing their circumstances. Hence, those who love wisdom, who are impelled by the Socratic impulse, not only consider life to be improvable, but they also see themselves (as a speaking and thinking community) *capable* of acting accordingly.

A transformation of language like this may consist in dropping certain concepts, in no longer using them—as, for instance, the term *private property* (which Marx and Engels wanted to discard)²³—or in introducing and using a different concept, such as “human rights.” One would then examine the consequent reorientation at other places of our language and in our life. The example of private ownership and human rights are especially instructive here because to all appearance, there is at first nothing whatsoever about an object or a person that changes whether I relate to the thing or the individual using or discarding these concepts. A meadow (or pasture) that I call private property looks no different than a meadow that I identify as “common or community property” (*Allmende*). And a human who I believe has no other rights than those that his or her state grants also looks no different than someone who I believe has, aside from civil rights, additional rights regardless of his or her nationality. But the things one can *do* with the meadow or the person differs depending on whether I do or don't apply the concepts of “private ownership” and “human rights.” I can't say, “I fenced the meadow and watered the trees; ergo, every piece of fruit growing on it belongs to me,” if I do not know or no longer use the concept of “private property” and everything connected with it.²⁴ And I can no longer torture a human being in the course of legal proceedings as soon as I have accepted the concept of human rights and everything connected with it, even if the state or the institution (such as the Inquisition) prosecuting that person has made torture a legal part of the court's procedure. Furthermore, I will *perceive* the meadow and the person *differently* depending on what I believe I can do with them or what else may happen to them—the way a hungry person sees a slice of bread differently than someone who has eaten enough, though *prima facie* the sensory impression does not appear to change because of differences in the conceptual language.

Ludwig Wittgenstein who has emphasized these connections between living and speaking with special intensity in his late-stage philosophy does not himself propose how we can change our speaking and living. He was a very conservative philosopher who in his later years seemed to believe that ordinary language really is “just fine.” (I am inclined to ask what language used by which people at what time isn’t in need of change.) For Wittgenstein, the problems of human life resulted above all from the fact that one does not recognize the perfectness of a given language and, for that reason, seeks to change it, thereby ending up with “misimproving” (*verschlimmbessern*) life.²⁵ But he did show how the way we live determines our speaking.

Conversely, are we to believe that changes in our way of speaking also change our life? Unfortunately, this reverse conclusion would be invalid. As a matter of fact, it is even very difficult to say how one could *intentionally* change the way a large group of people speaks. Philosophers seem to proceed at times from the assumption that a suggestion for regulating language use that they may make in a lecture or a book should actually have to produce pragmatic consequences. Most of the time, though, this is not the case. Here again the examples of private property and human rights used above are instructive.

It was not the texts of Marx, Locke, or Kant alone that brought about these changes. Instead, political, industrial, and religious processes that went beyond mere proposals for regulating language played an important role in both cases.²⁶ Often, it is the poets who begin to speak differently about the world, without making conceptual suggestions in what they write. Most of the time, they reach a much broader public than philosophical authors. Books like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo have changed the perception of unjust circumstances in property ownership and of human dignity more widely than philosophical arguments. And they have played a more decisive role in those processes that led to the abolition of slavery and to the condemnation of racism than theories of justice and of human nature.²⁷ But often, there exists a cascade in the reception process: poets read philosophers, and people read poets, and a linguistic change that was suggested in philosophy is realized virtually by poets in a world of the imagination. This imagined world is then perceived by many readers of a poetic work as a real possibility for life. This summary does not want to be taken for the “standard process” that the “introduction” or “rejection” of concepts undergoes. I’d merely like to note that philosophers often speak differently so that they, impelled by a critical purpose, can imagine a different kind of human life. Poets, on whom these options

for thinking leave an impression, will then proceed from these new expressive possibilities in their concrete stories. Some philosophers (Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella, Francis Bacon) have themselves taken up this business of poetry when they wrote concrete utopias.

Beside this particular possibility of changing the way people speak and live through the introduction of new concepts, the rejection of old ones, and through the poetic elaboration of virtual worlds in which modes of speaking and of living are different, a second, more radical transformation of language and life can be imagined. This change would consist in the practice of no longer using language primarily in the form of *assertions* and for the production of worldviews, but in another way: perhaps *to tell stories*, in *quarrels and conflicts* or *for praise or lament*.

The question, what a life might look like if it is not predominantly lived in the language of assertions but as stories told or in praise of persons and things—this query is sometimes combined with speculations about *earlier* ways of human life when one believes, as Heidegger does, for example, that Plato represents a fundamental turning point in the history of humankind. This Platonic rupture, he writes, consisted in the fact that *representational* (*vorstellend*) cognition and the production of explanatory assertions resulting from it began to play a central role in culture.²⁸ A historical supposition like that can easily provoke speculations about what human life looked like *before* this critical juncture and if a similar life might not be possible again in the future, after a comparable disruption. Richard Rorty seems to have thought that such a turn toward a *narrative* (and away from the assertively theorizing) culture can come about.²⁹ Heidegger establishes a connection between representing (*Vorstellen*) and explaining (about what he calls the *Stellen der Natur*—the arranging of nature—and the *Gestell*, construct)³⁰ with technology (*Technik*). Technology, then, is not simply a result of the development of some people's cognitive and artisanal capabilities. It is, rather, something much more specific. It appears only in those life forms that are defined above all by a representational, assertive, and explanatory relation to the world. Human beings who primarily tell stories and profess religious praises must not necessarily be “dumber” or “less skillful” than those who primarily make assertions and give explanations, although it is improbable that they'll develop a technology of complex machines (*Gestelle*). That does not preclude their devising differentiated techniques of remembering, narrating, of meditation and trance of the kind we know from non-European cultures.

That such transformations of the human way of living are possible becomes apparent when we recognize that philosophy, science, religion,

narrative, and pictorial art exist side by side in our culture but are of different relevance for distinct groups of people. The experience that contemporary human life is essentially determined by the assertive sciences and by trade in commodities—that we live in “knowledge and consumer societies”—is a relatively new phenomenon. When we go back roughly three hundred years, we would surely notice that the religions played a much more central role. In European antiquity, it is again art and religion, existing in a kind of symbiosis or in a state before their differentiation, that seem to have had a more vital importance for life than commerce and assertions. Making scientific assertions, engaging in philosophical contemplation, the telling of stories, the praising of the gods or of the community—all these activities take place side by side. They are not reducible one to the other even as the elites engaged in these competencies are at different times held in widely fluctuating degrees of esteem in their respective societies. In our society, the most important elites come from the circles of natural scientists, software engineers, and business managers. Priests and poets do still exist, but they serve the purposes of edification and entertainment and not those of fundamental orientation. Software engineers did not exist three hundred years ago, and the great tradesmen and natural scientists played a marginal role in comparison to the clergy.

Philosophy as an “institution” for distancing reflection on human life can hardly play a determinative role in the history of how people live (as Plato’s fiction of the philosopher-kings imagined). If philosophy did this, it would have to suffocate its Socratic impulse and turn into a theocracy in which wise priests give orientation to those who don’t reflect. But philosophy can develop catalytic effects by pointing out with how little justification, how incoherently or aimlessly some conceptual language is being used, and by raising the question of what this indicates about the lives of people who speak that way. The art of poetry, which remembers human ways of living in its stories, can keep forms of existing alive that are different than those that at present seem to us self-evident and without an alternative. The ability to imagine “our” human life without a car, telephone, and supermarket does not require an ethnological report from the rainforest. It suffices to read a tale by Eichendorff or a novel by Peter Kurzeck.³¹

Philosophy then is not *eo ipso* an asserting science. Rather, it may just as well be understood as the *activity of reflecting* that as nondoctrinal, but also nonnarrative reflection represents an intellectual project sui generis. The language of philosophy is a means of making us see our own experiences at some distance. This language is trying to find the right

concepts for these experiences and asks how these experiences should be evaluated. Philosophy as critical theory arises from a Socratic impulse and seeks to exert an influence on the lives of human beings as individuals and as members of a community by changing how we speak—that is, through conceptual “work.”

It is only through precise conceptual awareness that human beings can gain insight at some distance into the kind of experiences they do in fact have. Conceptual work makes apparent what we understand about our experiences and how well we do that. Why do some people speak of time, for example, as a “resource” and about circles of friends as a “network”? Do people who use this kind of language consider time a raw material they can consume? Do they have real-time experiences like that? Do they consider friends to be means by which to foster a career? Do they have real-life experiences like that with other persons? Does thinking and speaking that way cause any loss of meaning? Not everyone will find such questions and deliberations philosophically relevant. It is impossible to transfer the Socratic impulse to every person, and the need to distance oneself reflectively from one’s own experience does not arise in everyone. *Who* is it that pursues philosophy in this sense, and with what intention is it done?

Progress

An answer to this question requires an examination of the concept of “progress.” For a description of fundamental transformations in the way people live—for example, of the change from a life dominated by religion to one ruled by science—the categories of pro- or regress are unsuitable. That is true because pro- or regressive strides in the sciences or in religious adherence are processes that are identifiable only within the evaluative horizon of a certain culture, the assertive or the religious culture. A basic cultural transformation, by contrast, would also be a change of the criteria defining its *standards of evaluation*. When the culturally dominant relationship of humans to their world changes—as for example from one of religiously beseeching and praising to one of scientifically explaining and asserting and from there perhaps to one of describing in narratives—then life developments *can be evaluated* only within these overall circumstances. Whoever is not exclusively committed to doctrinal philosophy cannot be interested solely in advancing one particular form of thinking. Rather, there will also be such questions as these: *Which overall circumstances can human beings really attain?* And which

overall situation is more supportive of asserting and theorizing, and which favors narration? And what is it that triggers and propels the transitions from one to another relationship to the world? For this reason, advances in science and in one's individual life are something that has little to do with critical philosophy.

Progress in the sciences comes about from a very rough methodical constancy of the empirical sciences. All of their disciplines construct reproducible experiences in the laboratory and, so far as is possible, use the languages of mathematics in order to represent and explain these experiences. A not inconsiderable part of the natural sciences is transferred into technological applications or creates technological innovations to satisfy the need for updating the experimental systems themselves. The results of this modernization will then, as marketable products, change people's lives. These two aspects, the accumulation both of reproducible experiences and explanations and of technological innovations, are described as "progress" and are unavailable to philosophy. For there exists neither a uniform method of philosophizing (even the Socratic impulse does not lead to a universal method of philosophy) that would make it possible to speak of an accumulation of philosophical experiences and explanations. Nor do technological applications of philosophy or practical uses of it exist. For this reason, philosophy, no less than art, is in no way active in the "progress-business," as Ian Hacking has so aptly put it.³² Consequently, processes of philosophical education cannot be analyzed as part of a progressive program.

Even at this point, the figure of Socrates is exemplary again because, if we trust our sources, he obviously did not build a career in Athens. He also did not appear to be interested in fostering the careers of those with whom he engaged in conversations. His way of educating young men was concerned with what I will call an individual's *ability to react* in the face of the world in which he grows up.³³ Using classical terminology, we can say that Socrates was committed to the *freedom* of his conversational partners and that he was not concerned with their being forced into a successful vocabulary that would help them start a career. It is more likely, on the contrary, that the growing feeling of insecurity that Socrates aroused in the up-and-coming ambitious nobility of Athens— young people with what they believed were clear ideas of the nature of virtue and the good—had a somewhat detrimental effect on their respective political careers. In some of them, we may assume, this loss of self-assurance stimulated a sense of semiotic autonomy and set free in them a Socratic impulse. There is no denying the fact, however, that then as now, a contemplative, skeptical attitude and an autonomous conceptual lan-

guage are hardly suitable for politically leading others. This is important to remember when we are trying to gain a clear understanding of what *educational processes* basically are, and what an education in philosophy means for the one to be educated: Do they have to do with the care of one's own soul or with care for one's advancement?

Life, Oeuvres, and Socrates Again

Suppose the reflecting philosophical activity—contemplation—is a way of talking with others and of having written exchanges that are pursued with the aim of *living* differently at some future time. Furthermore, suppose that this contemplation takes place against the background of a loving activity we still have to specify and which has something to do with the hope that life beyond the notions of progress symptomatic of a particular cultural phase is *improvable* and must not simply be *ended* through a revolution or a religious withdrawal from the world. If this is true, then a treatise that lines up a series of assertions is unsuitable for philosophizing in the sense suggested above. For, in such a text, I cannot by necessity do more than merely *simulate* a conversation, or pretend that I am contemplating in the company of others, or fake the existence of a different life. (When philosophical hermeneutics refers to the act of writing or reading texts as a form of engaging in a conversation, it is merely using a metaphor that veils this deficiency.)

Numerous philosophical texts—for example, Plato's dialogues, Hegelian dialectics, or Wittgenstein's aphorisms—simulate conversations. That is why Plato has his Socrates, the original lover of nondoctrinal wisdom, give no lectures but be engaged in dialogues that often follow the same pattern: Socrates asks and his conversational partners respond by producing an assertion. Socrates next questions this assertion, often without replacing it with his presumably better assertions. And when he himself does assert something, these Socratic assertions are in turn frequently questioned as *provisional* during the course of the colloquy. There is no *report* about meanings in a verbal exchange of this kind. They are not *laid down*. Instead, a group of people *argues* about them, bringing them out into the open where a lack of clarity exists.

This dispute about meanings and assertions does not remain without consequences for what Socrates calls "soul" (*psyche*) and "state" (*polis*). The purpose of the discussion is "to strengthen" and to "liberate" the soul and to make the state a better community. Its aim is *not* to safeguard a theoretical result, perhaps as a system of assertions and in a *philosophical*

opus. The Platonic dialogues do amount to philosophical works (even if not in the form of explanatory theories). But Socrates himself is not the author of works. His conversations are not works—or they have only become such because Plato wrote them down. Socrates *lives* in a particular way, he is philosophically *active*, leads a *philosophical life* by constantly speaking with others and by dying in a particular way. It is about this life and its circumstances when we speak of “soul” and “state.” Socrates as an educator is not concerned with enabling his discussion partners to make intellectual progress and to be socially successful. Rather, one could formulate the Socratic project in modern terms like this: what kind of culture, what form of interchange among human beings, and what consequent connection to the world are best for the human soul and the human community—briefly, for human life?

Critique of the Opus

Following Goethe and Nietzsche, life as a distinct person has itself been called a work of art. In analogy, one may characterize Socrates’s life as the work of his philosophy. But such an understanding of what work (as *Werk* or *oeuvre*, *opus*) means is at best metaphorical. It is not a deficiency that Socrates did not leave even one written work, as little as Jesus or Gautama Buddha did. One may say with Paul Valéry that these human beings resisted *the temptation of the oeuvre*.³⁴ Nowadays we take it for granted that life basically has to be spent in the creative pursuit of accomplishments consisting in objects and works. We find a life that does not zero in on this kind of result hard to imagine. Life is “right” or “meaningful” if it is calibrated to produce results, if it realizes works. This is as true of the baker as of the car mechanic, the engineer, the stockbroker, the author, and the physicist. They seek to produce bread and cakes, smoothly running cars, new machines, financial products and profits, books and theories as visible evidence of their activities. Even the truth can in this sense be considered as evidence of this kind: that is, as a product of work.³⁵ Stanley Cavell has emphasized, however, that it is no contradiction to say of someone that she is a philosopher, without a doctrine and without an oeuvre. That everyone working in philosophy probably knows such persons, as Cavell notes,³⁶ indicates that philosophizing can be considered and pursued not exclusively as a result-producing endeavor but also as a self-sufficient activity.

A life that obtains its meaning not from results may at first appear *impoverished*, limited to nothing more than self-preservation and thus leav-

ing no room for the great work. Hence, to some observers the Australian aborigines on their migrations appear to be the authors of an *imaginative work* because they have no houses, write no books, and plant no gardens.³⁷ The reason that we must see them in our mind's eye as the originators of an imaginative work, of a cosmology, is that we do not directly perceive their migratory movements as a self-sufficient activity reflecting a way of life that is different than ours and that does *not* obtain its meaning from results or aims at a result, or from works that accomplish a particular development. People whose lives are oriented toward results can comprehend forms of life that do not manifest themselves in practical results, only with very great difficulty. They can't suspend asking "what all this amounts to," "what the benefit of it may be." Even the life of animals is comprehensible to them only to the extent that it presumably is "all about" self-preservation or the perpetuation of the species. Most students of Aristotle's teleology and of the biological analysis of functions can look at life only in terms of results.

A life that consists in the conduct of self-sufficient activities with no discernible goals, a life in which those who live it care about being in the world in a particular way and being able to continue these activities means "too little" to "us" under the circumstances prevailing in our current way of life. That's why education should presumably provide *resources* that facilitate a type of effort that results in appropriate products. Education, then, is not *shaping the mind* of human beings so that they are capable of directing their lives toward an engagement with self-sufficient activities. Instead, education is preparation for a workaday life that is defined by competition, is training for a situation of rivalry. In this perspective, even philosophy has to be aimed at some specific purpose, be it a theory or a work of a different kind (or perhaps the educational preparation for "key qualifications"). Life in this sense is *life for work*.

A society that aspires above all to the production and acquisition of commodities will surely find such a *result-driven understanding of life* and also of philosophy especially congenial. But one may assume that capitalism as an economic and existential system is the historical outcome of a result-driven conception of life and not the other way around. German and English phrases like "*having a point of view*" or a question such as "Are you buying that claim?" do not by coincidence refer to *relations of ownership*, and expressions like "to construct a theory" or "Can you produce an argument for that?" suggest a *process of production*. Having and collecting assertions and efficient arguments, producing and owning things and theories no doubt are possibilities of human life. But they

are not the only ones for a philosophy that develops conceptual alternatives for a specific way of life.

As a rule, assertions inherent in a theory as possible results of philosophizing or of scientific activities coincide with *laying down* and *pronouncing* sentences that mostly aim at determining precise meanings in support of explanations. In contrast to this purpose, Socratic conversations and experimental cogitations test and weigh *possible* significations. These latter activities are an exercise in and manifestation of the freedom a community of sign users enjoys vis-à-vis the signs. By engaging in exchanges about their potential significations, they come to realize that these signs are not tied to any fixed signification, that there is no divine or secular authority regulating speech, and hence life. Insofar as a change of significations represents a change of communal speaking, and insofar as this may lead to a transformation of communal life, Socratic philosophizing is characterized by the idea of freely and in common shaping life in conversations: that is, by thinking about significations and their relevance. The same way that walking across a meadow can manifest the self-sufficient actualization of one's ability to walk and need not be a running to reach a specific place, just so the questioning of established signs and the varying of newly considered uses of signs can be the self-sufficient actualization of the ability to shape one's relationship to the world freely. This varying of signs does not envision doctrines that one can safely take away as incontestable results.

The Socratic activity also turns against experts and gurus who administer doctrines, or who try hard to propagate their own work because they believe that they are sure how one must speak and live without the need to keep thinking about significations in common with others. As in a religion, the dissemination of doctrines can, even in philosophy, go on for generations in, as it were, charismatic factions. This process is subject less to critical thinking about the relevance of a certain message than to establishing if the master's words have been transmitted with absolute faithfulness, without even slight additions or omissions. And finally, philosophical activity of Socratic origin is also directed against how those live who want to be guided—meaning those who would like to be told how to speak and live and who are in search of definitive truth and would like to own the appropriate work that will free them from the continued necessity of reacting to the world. Following Dewey, I intend to show that this way of living can be characterized as “undemocratic.”³⁸ Where there is a need for this kind of life, the educational impulse of nondoctrinal philosophy aims to disturb it. Philosophy emanating from the Socratic impulse, then, has to do with striving for *semiotic autonomy*

and with the desire for *independence* in shaping one's life.³⁹ This conception of freedom or autonomy is the standard to be applied in any critique of a different way of life.⁴⁰

As a philosopher in this sense committed to autonomy, Socrates can neither give a lecture nor write a textbook because they are representations of a doctrine. That would turn him into an expert, a scientific theoretician, or even a leader who is after a work and its mediation. His activity does not consist in *passing on* true assertions as the results of thinking but in protecting others from their fixation on particular results of thought. This he does by posing *questions* and *questioning* assertions. His goal is the *cleansing* and *strengthening* of what may be referred to as the *soul*, or in modern terms, the *subjectivity* of persons. Purification or invigoration of this kind is what those need who think of themselves most of all as asserters of whatever it may be and who believe that it is essential for them as persons to have a particular conviction. That someone wants to use an assertion in order to hold his ground in a conversation, that he wants to *assert* himself, can also be seen as an affirmation of the person who in a confrontation, or in going beyond it, identifies with an assertion, stands up for it, and thereby tries to prevail in a *competition* with others.

Of course, assertions do not only have to do with self-asserting. Their immediate purpose is to provide basic information about circumstances in the world. If a person knows where a danger is lurking or where support can be found, using truthful assertions in order to pass this information on to others who happen to be *without* access to this situation, then we have a helpful arrangement that makes life easier for groups of people. But this manner of asserting is very elementary and far removed from the scientific practice of asserting that depends on theories. Assertions about the nature of matter per se or about organisms in general, about how we have to define "meaning," "happiness," and "truth" and what follows from this, are not concerned with the immediate survival of thirsty migrants who gratefully accept an informational assertion about a source of water. Perhaps every communication with a warning about dangers and the knowledge of something helpful brings people together and makes them form a group. For whoever helps me with an assertion about a source of water to quench my thirst and protects me by warning me about falling rocks participates in my life by way of our mutual language and supports me in achieving my fundamental interests.

It is true, however, that people whose self-preservation is assured and who have acquired their abstract knowledge from sources of information other than their own researches form groups around certain assertions,

around which they gather as “adherents” of a theory as if around a campfire. These campfires, then, are called “superstring theory” and “panselectionism,” “Keynesianism” or “Spinozism.” Adherents of this type consider certain systems of assertions to be true and are criticized by others who disagree. It is irrelevant for our survival if superstrings do in fact exist and that every allele is subject to selection pressure. In this case, assertive interconnections function as means of separating doctrinal “friends” and “foes.” Even if the assertive style of expression plays an informational role in all forms of human life, it is nevertheless a peculiarity of our present way of living that social solidarities are being shaped proceeding from and around doctrinally communicated scientific theories. Every child needs to be told which kind of food is edible and which isn’t, which way to walk to school, and things like that. But the acquisition of these true convictions should not be confused with the acceptance of theories.

The problem resulting from the doctrinal use of assertions has to do with education. Educational processes create communal agreements by way of shared systems of convictions. In cultures in which scientific theories and not religious rites or stories predominate, children are not only being familiarized with the procedures of asserting and explaining as important strategies. But as soon as they are taught certain universal concepts, they also learn how *specific* convictions are interconnected because the meaning of these universal concepts is determined by the theories that predominantly use them.

This establishes long-term evaluating and epistemic shared agreements such as “Science is important” and “Einstein’s gravitation theory is true,” “organisms are products of their genes,” and so on. These doctrinal commonalities connect people for generations in a shared use of language and protect them from what is alien and new. By contrast, independently inquisitive people who transform meanings in the sciences, in art, and nondoctrinal philosophy are in search of what is alien and new. Whoever does not pursue these activities and notices after the exchange of a few persuasions that the other speaks not different from oneself and holds similar assertions to be true as does oneself, such a person no longer finds the other one strange: “You agree that we are a product of evolution and not created by God!” “Do you also agree that the state has to take up an anticyclical investment posture?” Shared assertions create social cohesion.

Statements and questions like these hardly ever originate from active processes of cognition in the course of which one’s own thinking had to be radically changed due to an experience. They mostly represent more or less well-grounded opinions about which the people involved have been informed that they are valid. They are passed on, that is to say,

through so-called hearsay and socially function like myths. In everyday life, uttering a “valid” assertion serves less the purpose of informing another person than ascertaining that through its use, one participates in the community of people who speak and opine this or that way. The sentences themselves do not of course reveal their purpose straightaway. In that, for example, they resemble the rain dance: The performers of the dance may say it is their communal way of conjuring up rain. The ethnologist, who maintains that they are gathering for the rain dance in order to strengthen their community, may be right just the same.

The practice of using assertions as described above does not serve only to promote social cohesion within a group but also to establish a boundary against the outside. “What, you are one of the creationists?” “You don’t really support the privatization of all public services, do you?” But motions—those of inclusion and those of exclusion—show that people educated in certain systems of assertions have the tendency to adhere to these systems in order to feel safe, to regulate their fear of things alien, and not to risk their membership in a group.

In order to confront one’s fear of things alien preventively, the attempt is made on occasion to homogenize the practice of asserting—in plain English, to see to it that the others copy one’s own assertions. History, and not only that of philosophy, shows that consequences can arise from the refusal to join a community of those who make identical assertions: isolation, hatred, and even death, as the example of Socrates illustrates. The Socratic philosophical activity aims at learning the ability to conduct one’s life without having to cling to assertions rigidly. In this, Socrates also shows himself to be fearless. Realizing the possibility of reacting freely to the experiences of one’s life obviously was more important to him than belonging to a specific community with shared assertions, despite the danger of becoming isolated and hated.

Looking at it from “our” life situation, we mostly interpret the Socratic activity as one of enlightenment that, above all, opposes certain religious prejudices in order to replace them with well-founded judgments. This would then be the beginning of a doctrine. I consider this a misinterpretation, however, or at least not the only possible analysis of Socratic questioning. Socratic philosophizing is not concerned with the right as opposed to the wrong judgment. Rather, it is a liberating of the soul from a straightjacket of judgments so as to reactivate the ability to react to the world. Its aim, then, is the autonomy of individuals and not the truth of generalities.

If this is correct, then Socrates’s activity can hardly be interpreted as the construction of a doctrine in our contemporary sense, inasmuch as a

well-founded doctrine is not only an assertion with which only one *single* person identifies. Rather, it represents a *connection of many significations, assertions, and justifications that is accepted by many or generally*. Consequently, one may feel entitled to dictate to others that they should, before anything else, listen to these assertions and reasons without dissent, without having to and being permitted to enter into a conversation. There is a group standing behind an established theory—this, after all, is the precise meaning of “established”—and it is the power of this group that the “representative” of a theory represents when he teaches the doctrine in front of silent listeners.

Situations of representation of this type exist in the lecture halls of universities, in political meetings, and in church. In a lecture, in a political speech, and in a sermon, an individual tries to teach many people, seeks to convince them of a voting position, or announces and interprets the word of God to them—and in this way, to give them a normative orientation. The political leader wants to represent his followers; the preacher and prophet assume the place of God. Divine power legitimates the prophet to announce the divine will to the others who have not yet experienced the revelation. The purported political future of the community legitimates the political leader who sees himself as the shaper and decider of this future and who tells the many how he will get them there. In this respect, the academic lecture is related to the political speech and the sermon—the German word for lectern, *Lehrkanzel* (teaching pulpit), is no coincidence. It is as little as these an experimental discourse, even though it is not authorized by the power of God and the promise of the future. The speaker who gives a lecture and the textbook writer are legitimated, if ever so vaguely, by the scholarly scientific community to announce a consensus of speaking and asserting to which those who are not yet members of this community first of all have to expose themselves and in the end express their assent. Later, these new members may themselves become scholarly scientific experts who have obtained the power to make assertions of their own.

The political speaker must believe he or she knows what the community needs to do in the future. The preacher must know what God expects of us and how to make others understand this. Otherwise, the political speech and the sermon would be without a purpose. Academic teachers should know what literature, anatomy, mathematics, or living beings are really all about, depending on whether they are literary scholars, anatomists, mathematicians, or biologists. The political speaker, the preacher, and the academic teacher must be *convinced* of something of which the members of their audience are *as yet unconvinced*. Those who

speak to many and demand that the others will for the time being have to keep quiet must know something that the others are still ignorant about but that “in principle” is considered relevant for everyone. Outside of such a constellation, there would be no sense in agreeing to the asymmetrical situation in which one person speaks or writes and the others listen or read. Philosophers driven by the Socratic impulse do *not* possess such a doctrine. They are persons with doubts, who know nothing better than the others—for whom, moreover, the supposed knowledge of the others and the assurance with which they represent it signals a danger to the freedom of these others and to the freedom of the community.

The Figure of Socrates

I have presumed that it is known what Socrates did and what he supposedly didn't. But I am not concerned here with a historical investigation of the real person of Socrates, a futile enterprise at any rate, given the state of the sources.⁴¹ When I am speaking about “Socratic philosophizing,” I mean before anything else exactly what I have said here, nothing more. This perception of Socratic philosophizing relates to the real Socrates somewhat like the way the metaphysics of singular things in Peter Strawson's book *Individuals* relates to Leibniz's monadology, the paradigm of which Strawson follows in his book.⁴² Strawson's position would have developed even without the Kant of *Critique of Pure Reason*, but it is not simply a commentary on or a continuation of Kant.

In spite of these provisos about the meaning of “Socratic” in our context, it is useful to take a brief look at the image of Socrates in the history of philosophical literature about him. He is portrayed, to be sure, like the Sophists, as a mind that no longer felt obligated to adhere to the old religious norms but was not himself a Sophist. Perspectives and evaluations handed down by conventions were not binding in his thinking and acting. They were to be submitted to an examination and to be connected with what he called *logos* and what we nowadays see as the examination of reasons through the exchange of arguments in conversations. Because in these investigations Socrates refers all convictions to reasons and arguments and not to handed-down conventions, he has also been called a *Rationalist*; because his investigations as a rule end in an aporia, he has been categorized as a *Skeptic*. When they are seen against the background of the Platonic dialogues, both characterizations are justified. After all, Socrates frequently uses comparisons taken from the

activities of craftsmen and insists that philosophical inquiries like craft-produced objects must be relevant and have consequences for practical life, that they need to serve the improvement of life or of the soul. This shows the *existential-pragmatic aspect* (though not necessarily the “utilitarian” side) of his philosophizing.

Relinquishing tradition and convention as foundations to legitimate convictions that presumably are relevant for the conduct of life turned Socrates the outsider into a curious oddity in the still tradition-conscious Athens of his time and lends a negativistic or fundamentally *critical* trait to his philosophizing. Socrates is aware of this negativistic character of his activity by comparing the effect he provokes to that of a spur, a gadfly, or an electric ray.⁴³ He *jolts* his conversational partners the way spurs or a gadfly jolt a horse. At the same time, he *restrains* them in their conventionally motivated activity the way the electric shocks of the stingray impede its prey. The ones jolted are being made to move; those following convention are being reined in. Motion, for Plato, has to do with the soul, as is apparent also in his portrayal of Socrates, who makes something happen with people that does not relate to their striving for power, pleasure, or riches. What he does changes the motion of their lives and, hence, of their souls.

Even though Socrates makes himself unpopular with what he does because it paralyzes others in the habitual motion of their lives and stirs them out of their immaturity,⁴⁴ he seeks the companionship of a community. This communal character of Socratic philosophizing turns it into a *model for life* that lasted for a long time. The Socratic philosophizing community is different than that defined by the family or the state because its purpose is neither the procreation nor the protection of individuals through establishing a monopoly on power. Both of these communal institutions have nothing to do with *logos* but with pleasure and fear: that is, they deal with the elementary affective patterns. By contrast, the Socratic community is given orientation neither by biology nor by power. There is, to be sure, good reason to characterize it as oriented toward truth and the quest for the good life. But this says nothing about *what concrete form* the life of people in such a community actually assumes. Helmut Kuhn says that to this day, we have no clear understanding of what Socrates has in mind about the community of those philosophizing with him, such as the group who, in *Phaedo*, gathers at the time of his death. “During the millennia that have passed since, no one has accomplished the task that lay deep within him [= Socrates]—to gain, when the primal unity of life in the community disintegrated, the ‘life worth living’ through the *logos*.”⁴⁵ In order to understand what the

issue here is, one has to pay close attention to a specific concept that Socrates employs in this context and which nowadays, because of its long Christian history, is difficult to access: the term *soul*.

In his apology, Socrates calls it the aim of his life to direct questions like, for example, the following to his fellow citizens: "Best of men, I ask you this: when you're an Athenian, and so belong to the greatest city, the one with the highest reputation for wisdom and strength, aren't you ashamed of caring about acquiring the greatest possible amount of money, together with reputation and honors, while not caring about, even sparing a thought for, wisdom and truth, and making your soul as good as possible?"⁴⁶ A life that does not examine the soul is without value for him. But concern for the soul takes place in the community of those who speak with one another. It is only in this specific kind of conversation that human beings get to know their soul as the principle behind designing one's life in freedom. For this reason, Socrates wanted to spend his life performing examinations of the soul on others and on himself. Asking oneself if one knew what virtue really is, or if death is an evil or the greatest among the goods lead into such an investigation of the soul.⁴⁷

Of course, the soul is not an object that one could examine the way one tests a knife for its sharpness or appraises a tree for its fruitfulness. In the *Laws (Nomoi)*, the soul is defined as the first principle (*arche*) of motion and change (*kinesis*).⁴⁸ Hence, scrutinizing the soul is a probing of what it is in their lives that incites human beings. *Kinesis* encompasses more than the modern term *motion* that solely refers to a change of place by bodies. To probe the souls of human beings means to find out what in their lives actually keeps them going, above all, if they themselves keep up their momentum, or if others do that for them. This examination is not an effort in natural philosophy or, as we would say nowadays, a neurological test. When Socrates asks himself in jail why he does not flee, he declares explicitly that the insights of Anaxagoras about the bones and sinews cannot be of help to him in this situation. He needs a reason to stay or to leave, and no inspection of the parts of his body will give him one.⁴⁹ What impels a person in life has to do with reason and irrationality, with good explanations and passions. An examination of the soul is not about an immaterial causative principle that is spooking about somewhere in the brain or the heart but about rationality or irrationality in a human life.

As he reports at the beginning of his defense, Socrates himself was set in motion, was startled by the judgment of the Delphic Oracle that he is the wisest of all people. He didn't understand these words and began

to investigate what he did know—in contrast to the others who believed that they knew something. He found nothing. Because he himself wasn't sure about the things he asked others and because it turned out in their conversations that the others don't know the things they claim to know either, Socrates thought that his wisdom consisted in no longer having any illusions about the notion that a certain *knowledge* keeps his life going. In regard to this lack of knowing, Socrates resembles the others. Obviously, the Oracle was in an ironic mood when it gave him its information. It merely used him as an example to demonstrate how meaningless assertive knowledge is for the conduct of human life.⁵⁰ But by setting him in motion, by making him take up his activity of examining, the Oracle freed him of the belief that knowledge determines the way he is conducting his life. He did in fact become wise in the sense of *free of illusions*. And this knowledge about how meaningless assertive knowing is for the conduct of human life changed him radically: his knowledge of not knowing became the motor of Socrates's life. From that time on, he sought to make it clear to others as well that they are not in possession of a general doctrine that will give them guidance. That took away their illusions also and made it possible for them to become people who freely determine their own lives.

This knowing about not knowing quite clearly cannot be passed on as a doctrine. To announce, I know that I don't know anything truly relevant for our life and that this not knowing does not set me apart from all of you others—this, by itself, leads nowhere because as nothing but an assertion it remains altogether implausible. One would have to take issue with the putative knowledge of those who believe that they possess a doctrinal orientation to guide their life and examine it in a conversation before one can determine that it is no such thing. Such an elenctic examination is something completely different than giving a lecture about a doctrine. Socrates does not have a doctrine at the ready. This is exactly what he would need to have if he were to believe like the Sophists that with a correct assertion he could give others an orientation for their lives.⁵¹ Socrates does that for his partners in conversation by disabusing them of their certitudes. He takes the wrong compass away from them.

Of course, even Socrates does not want to deny that people know a lot of facts. They know what a knife is and what a horse is. They can give examples of good knives and good horses. Above all, he holds craftsmen (of whom Socrates most likely was one) in high esteem, in contrast to his opinion of politicians and poets.⁵² Socrates knows the habits of his wife, Xanthippe, knows his way around Athens, and knows how the city has developed politically. And of course all this knowledge provides a *rel-*

ative orientation in his personal daily life. But such knowledge is conventional and unsystematic. It does not amount to a theory with a consistent structure of reasons but remains rhapsodic. The one piece of knowledge was gained in this, the other kind in that way. It does not shape itself into something whole, and has relevance only in the life story of Socrates. This kind of knowledge is of no value for giving reasons what sort of life would in principle be good for human beings. It is particular and not paradigmatic and therefore inappropriate as orientation in the lives of other people. The knowledge of not knowing is the knowledge that no general theory of the good individual and of the good communal life exists in the form of a theory.

His distance from convention and his insight that having systematic expertise is existentially irrelevant for life give the Platonic Socrates an enormous independence and a strong sense of self-assurance. Kuhn writes, "Ancient literature knows of no more powerful evidence of self-assurance than the *apologia* of Socrates, however rich Presocratic history was in demonstrations of robust individuality that prevails against the power of tradition and the opposition of contemporaries. . . . Perhaps no human being has ever appeared greater in a secular setting than Socrates before his judges."⁵³ The negativistic trait of Socratic philosophizing in no way diminishes the individuality of the figure of Socrates because the strength that keeps him from making the wrong choice, and that he calls *daimonion*, works like one's own *inner voice*, like a precursor of individual conscience.⁵⁴ Socrates has, to quote Stanley Cavell, a voice of his own that, to be sure, does not tell him in the form of a theory how he has to live but does guide his life *ex negativo* because it shows him how *not* to act and live. And because he has overcome the illusion that there exists a general knowledge that could be relevant for his life but might not be available to him yet, he has been liberated from all sorts of expert claims about the particular way lives have been lived. Only one person can say something truly relevant about an individual's life: the one who is living it. Of course, others can help me to be honest to myself, to remember truthfully what I have done, and to admit to myself what I really desire. Partners in a Socratic conversation and psychoanalysts are helpful experts. But they are not experts who substitute general insights into life *per se* for my insights about *my* life.

Because he does not claim to know what death is—an evil, or perhaps the best that can happen to a person—he does not escape the verdict of death. For that would be not right. But because he knows immediately that it is worse to do what is not right than to suffer evil (his *daimonion* keeps him from doing what is wrong), his not knowing about death, his

freedom from illusion, determines Socrates's actions until the end. The amazing thing is that this not knowing is stronger than the animal fear of death. This goes to show that being oriented by the *logos* even in not knowing presents a protection from irrationality. Even though Socrates does not know what death is, he does not believe that the affect of fearing death, in contrast to thinking about it, would disclose death's nature to him. Even a positive affect, a desire that draws me toward something, does not necessarily reveal the meaning that something attractive will have for me in the end. A drug attracts an addict, but this attraction does not disclose the drug's destructive character. The fear of death does not give us any explanation about the meaning of death.

The existential consistency with which Socrates follows the *logos* even in the hour of his death and does not fall prey to whatever assertions are made or listen to emotions defines the exemplary character of his philosophical life: Socrates has no knowledge of a relevant fact that could guide him in his conduct toward death, and he does not rely on emotion. He prefers to think about this question together with his friends. If we call it "truthfulness" to have the ability to liberate oneself from one's own illusions and to live thoughtfully without them, then the wisdom of Socrates and his exemplary life consists in his truthfulness and not in having discovered or made public whatever theoretical or existential verities.

For the sake of descriptive orderliness and, of course, without thereby postulating natural types, we can differentiate three human ways of life: one that is guided by conventions, drives, and affects without in this process having recourse to knowledge and reasons; a second one that is guided by conventions and drives but conceals from himself the relevance these conventions and drives have for him by living with illusions about a presumptive knowledge and about reasons for acting to be derived from such knowledge; and finally a third one that is dedicated to unveiling these popular illusions. Socrates chose the way of life of the third species. Because the conventions, affects, and drives, but mostly the sham knowledge that conceals them, are something universally human, the Socratic way of life is despite its "oddity" of general human relevance. All human beings are potentially free individuals, and no one is entitled to give them orders about how to live their lives. But only a very few can also turn this potential for a free life into reality. Socrates did not live a reclusive existence like the Cynics, openly submitting themselves to the instincts. Nor does he try to replace conventional illusions about the good life with a doctrine of certain knowledge like the Sophists. In-

stead, Socrates turns the mental motions of truthfulness, the efforts of dispelling illusions in the company of people talking to one another, into a way of life of its own.

It is possible that Plato's ontology of the forms and, connected with it, his intuitionism in the perception of the good emerged from the Socratic way of life, from its *constant practicing of truthfulness* and its listening to the intimations of the *daimonion*. Following Helmut Kuhn, however, this Platonic teaching (*Lehre*) can be interpreted also as an *evading* into a system of transcendent essentialities in the face of the Socratic skepticism toward the relevance of assertive knowledge.⁵⁵ There is no question that what Socrates stood for gave rise to the ideal of a rational life in which *reasons* are demanded for all actions and only that life can be called free in which human beings do indeed act in accordance with those reasons that, after thoughtful consideration, they deem to be the right ones. The Socrates of the *Theaetetus* or of the *Meno*, however, can be seen neither as an ontologist nor as a rational agent but must be considered a veritable ironist who did not make his life dependent on a theoretical system, and who recognized the danger of self-deception inherent in "attaching" oneself to a theoretical system.⁵⁶ That he was searching for reasons for the right way of acting and for the life worth living but always found no other reasons than those that convinced him that he may *not* do something specific (for example, escaping from jail) and that he must *not* lead a particular life—for instance, that of a compulsive criminal—turns him into an ironist who exists almost entirely in negativity.⁵⁷

Outlook

We leave Socrates now. He served as a first orientation toward a better understanding of the forms and intentions of nondoctrinal philosophizing. At the end (of this book), we'll take a very different look at the individuality and mortality of people than Socrates did, who saw his free individuality realized only in a disembodied existence. The ability and tendency of people to talk to one another offers not only the opportunity to live a life committed to thinking. To learn how to react to the language from which a person emerges as a being that thinks, leads not only—as we shall see—to a clearer consciousness of *one's own* individuality. Rather, against the background of this consciousness also an insight into the particularity of *everything* that is real can establish itself. In the

final analysis, this will altogether challenge the habit of responding to reality with conceptual terms. The positive utopia arises that a silent existence may also be a philosophical life.

People, because they have language, can inform one another about what exists in the world, which makes it unnecessary that every individual must have personally gone through the respective perception. But this judgmental speaking about oneself and the world is inevitably always a generalization. Generalizing speech, so long as we recognize that all experience is that of individuals—meaning individuals both as subjects and objects of experience—always “trails behind experience.” When we want to focus on individual aspects, we never express through assertions what we really would like to say. There may well be situations when we no longer are aware of what we say. But in this case, our speaking is even further removed from the concrete experience than when we are still conscious of its inappropriateness. It is mere babble. It is only when they speak judgmentally that people produce those generalities that are helpful to them in dealing with a recalcitrant reality, both in their social problems and in the problems with nature that they try to manage technologically. The price to be paid for the increase of power within a community through assertions supported by repeatable, universally usable signs consists in the loss of attention paid to the uniquely specific character of everything we encounter. The increase in our ability to survive by our making general judgments is purchased at the cost of an ability to be happy that comes from the attention paid to one’s own singularity and that of others. This attentiveness can only materialize in an existence that, on the one hand, is not under a threat or, on the other, is no longer determined by assertive speaking. In order to be able to devote sufficient attention to the course of one’s own life, in order to create meaningful connections, in this life, which means happiness, and in order to turn one’s attention to the lives of other human beings, which means to understand what kind of a life is in the making there, it is necessary not to perceive one’s own lifetime in an attitude defined by a preoccupation with resources and to encounter the other individuals not only in a competitive situation. Accelerated relationships and those aimed exclusively at competitiveness are literally social pathologies: they cause suffering and prevent the happiness that life offers.

The project of a critique of assertive speech and of doctrinal philosophy is not new and has been problematic for as long as it has existed. At the latest “since the generation of Schopenhauer, Marx and Kierkegaard is the difficulty one has with philosophy part of the peculiarities, and indeed of the very self-perception of this discipline.”⁵⁸ A train of thought

that questions the reason of philosophical doctrines cannot be intent on originality in the sense of a new doctrine or on the discovery of new assertions. A critique of the relevance of doctrines must by its very purpose seek to remain “short on assertiveness” itself and instead must endeavor to resuscitate one activity: that of the precise description and distancing reaction to one’s own experience, in hopes that this will open up to individuals as well as to social life other possibilities than those of asserting, producing, and acquiring.

Life, Subjectivity, Assimilation

What is it that nondoctrinal philosophical reflection must react to? What is involved when we are advised to reflect on human life by experimenting with concepts in philosophical conversations? It is not about our physical health and, as we have seen, also not about progress. Socrates said that in such conversations, we pay attention to our “soul.” Because Christianity has given a special meaning to the concept of soul, we would nowadays say that it is all about our *subjectivity*. How are we to understand this?

Establishing Connections

There already exist many interpretations of subjectivity: as reflexivity, that is as the ability to refer to *oneself* (Kant); as intentionality, meaning the ability to focus one’s consciousness on *something* (Brentano, Husserl); subjectivity as perspectivity, which is the ability to assume a *standpoint* vis-à-vis the world (Russell); and so forth.¹ My proposal of an analysis follows Aristotle who has not yet spoken of subjectivity. Aristotle deals with the *soul* (psyche), defining it as the shape of a *living body* that in plants is responsible for their nutritional and procreative ability,² in animals for their ability to move and to perceive, and in more advanced sensory beings like humans makes thinking possible as a special form of perception. This connection of the psychical and the subjective with the organic has from that time on

survived in the line of tradition that goes through Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to this day—despite the Cartesian dualism that tried to separate what is subjective or of the soul from what lives.³ We can best approach this Aristotelian line of tradition by looking at the phenomenon of *assimilation*.

A stone assimilates to nothing; it simply is there. The ability to assimilate is specific to *living beings*. In what follows I will proceed from this ability of living beings to adapt and not from the etymologically oldest meaning of assimilation that entices the human to become like God. My reason for choosing this starting point will become apparent through the relevance that the concept of life has for my thoughts.

All living beings establish connections to other individual beings. The Aristotelian characteristics of aliveness—nutrition, reproduction, perception, and autonomous locomotion—are all based on the ability of a being for *creating connections to other beings*. When I speak of *establishing connections*, I imply an *activity*. And exactly that is perhaps the most obvious fact about living beings: they do not simply exist, like a stone, in causal relationships in which this or that *happens* to them. Rather, an organism *relates* actively to its parts and its environment. The most general characterization of this activity is to say that an organism is capable of establishing connections.⁴

A plant, which lives on water and minerals, uses its roots to establish connections to these nutrients. A sexually reproductive form of life must establish a connection to its sexual partner. An animal that perceives something establishes a connection to an object and its perceptible qualities. And a being that is capable of autonomous locomotion can connect itself to various loci as places of looked-for objects (which are the goals of its movements not as mere places but as associative symbols presumably bound up with the satisfaction of needs: the forest with a creek, the clearing with a group of deer, the mountain with a cave, etc.). *Adaptation* to food, a sexual partner, an object of perception, or an associatively charged landscape may be seen as the result of the *repeated* creation of connections. Also, this is an ability living beings possess: they are not only active but their activities follow *patterns* they are able to repeat. A plant opens its blossom in the morning and closes it at night, day after day. A migratory bird always follows the same route on its annual flight. A courting male stickleback again and again swims on the same course in front of the courted female, and so forth.

Assimilation in its most elementary form takes place through the formation of anatomical *structures* and *habits*. This means through the evolution of spatial and temporal patterns. For example, a birch tree on

a North Sea island adapts to the prevailing climatic conditions by means of a specific way of growing, even to the point of assimilating to that direction of the wind to which it is most strongly exposed. This is not simply a relationship of cause and effect, as it is with a piece of wood that is being split by an ax. Rather, the growth process in the course of which an anatomical anomaly evolves is itself a *reflexive* occurrence in which the metabolizing life-form, following a regular control system with changeable settings, refers back to its own life's history.

Establishing Connections through Signs

I had suggested that even in a critique of doctrinal philosophy, it is impossible to refrain altogether from making assertions. But the assertions made here were meant to be *unobtrusive*, to describe only what for the most part we are all familiar with anyway, produce no surprises emerging from unconventional theories that can explain what was inexplicable before. My assertions are primarily meant to discipline attention. They are to recall to memory and accentuate things we all know already without the help of whichever theories. In this inconspicuous sense, I'd like to assert that even subjectivity has to do with the ability of living beings to establish connections and, as they do, to create repeatable patterns. They are capable of actively responding to the world and in this process adapting to it by creating repeatable patterns. Life-forms generate subjectivity when this creating of patterns leads to socially shared *systems of signs* that a group of them can use in relating to the world. This suggestion combines what Aristotle teaches about the soul with what Wittgenstein imagines as a form of life: it is the vivacity of an individual and the semiotic life-form of many living individuals that constitutes subjectivity. Only living beings generate subjectivity, but they can do this only when they actualize their ability to create connections in a socially shared system of signs. Let us look at these assertions a little more closely.

Modern theories of subjectivity that perceive it as the capability of producing a perspective on the world or see it as reflexivity, which means seeing it as the being-for-itself (*Fürsichsein*) of a creature in its world, pay little attention to this connection between being alive vividly and subjectivity. There are many reasons for this, and they have to do with the history of physics and with Descartes's uncoupling of thinking about subjectivity from the observation of what is alive. I can't deal with this modern anti-Aristotelianism in any detail here, nor can I invalidate it here. Rather, I would like to use this reference to Aristotle simply in order

to place my understanding of subjectivity *beside* ideas that are currently still widespread. Attempts at continuing to think about subjectivity beyond Cartesianism and with an orientation toward the phenomena of the organic have in turn created their own ongoing tradition in the modern era. This tradition starts with Hume's theory of habit, continues through Goethe's notion of the mind (*Geist*) as a being in search of and creating connections, and lives on in Charles Sanders Peirce's synechism.⁵

In more advanced living beings, the ability to relate to other beings in repeatable patterns leads to a course of events that we call *learning processes*. A dog can learn to listen to his trainer's voice, for example. That is something other than the birch tree's process of adaptation, as near the North Sea, bent over, it grows leeward. It is obvious that the ability to perceive and produce patterns of gestures and sounds represents the elementary precondition for the use of signs that is so characteristic of our human subjectivity because the manner in which we relate to other beings, unite with them and adapt to them is mediated through signs. I relate to you at this moment not by beating you, caressing you, or eating you but by transmitting written signs to you. I'm able to produce these signs because as an infant, I adapted my own sound production to their patterns. And you can understand what I write because you adapt to the connections of meaning that I produce here. Actualizing the competence both of giving signs and of understanding them are examples of subjective processes of adaptation.

This process of assimilation begins with imitations, including (more or less conscious) judgmental interventions. Children spontaneously produce a large number of sounds, also imitating people they have noticed, and the adults in turn imitate those sounds of a child that they recognize as their own language. In this manner, they intensify the sound production that leads into the direction of their own language. Later, they will also correct sound sequences by accurately repeating what the child said wrongly.⁶

This use of signs is essential for human subjectivity. For, when we see some thing as something (for example, a drawn line as a rabbit or a duck), we can do this because in a human community, it is through signs that we guide our attention. When we use signs, we arrange particular things into classes. This allows us to state something about some thing to form sentences. The ability to see a thing as something requires at least two people who can direct their attention at something together and in a shared system of signs can make exchanges about this.⁷ The system of signs brings about both the shared world to which human beings refer and also our individual, specifically human subjectivity. Thinking in signs is always

thinking in a community, or it is an action that is generated through a community of sign users. Already the thought that a duck is sitting there is, in the final analysis, a communal act because without the community as a part of which we have learned to use the sign system in which we think we could not think about the individual being that it is a creature with a beak and therefore could also not see it as a duck. That's why adapting to systems of signs is decisive for the human form of life. Sign systems are tools that human beings use to establish connections with other individual beings; and the use of signs is a special way of using tools. Even the ability of establishing a connection with one's own life story is facilitated through tools of a sign-reflexive kind like "I," "ego," "me," and so forth.⁸

Cultivation and Education

So far, I've thematized assimilation/adaptation only in an active and reflexive sense: organisms and subjects have the ability to assimilate *themselves* to situations and other beings. But they are also *being* assimilated. They are not only subjects but also objects of assimilative processes: a grapevine is pruned, which means it is being adjusted to the vintner's growth expectations that envision a high yield; a dog is being trained to bite, that is, adapted to the notions of aggression that his handler in the army may have about the animal; a child is being made to conform to adult rules of quiet and cleanliness. These processes of assimilation are also referred to as "cultivation" and "education." When we cut a piece of wood so as to fit it into a tabletop, we use different terms, calling it, for example, "cutting a wedge." The concepts of cultivation and education apply only to those adaptive interferences that affect living beings. A piece of wood is nothing more than *material* that is either suited or not suited for a particular work process.

If something or somebody is to be cultivated or educated, however, the assumption is that this being is not merely material but that it possesses subjectivity, hence—in Aristotle's terminology—on its own *tends toward a form*. That means it follows an individual development into which the process of cultivation and education intervenes. These personal tendencies are either not desired among the cultivators and educators, or they are considered insufficient. Vines produce grapes on their own, canines bite without a command when they are hunting or involved in a ritualized fight, and youngsters explore their environment spontaneously. But vintners want to harvest more grapes than a vine would yield without pruning. Dog trainers in the marines want dogs to be more aggres-

sive and attack other beings than is the animal's normal habit. Teachers prefer that children learn more and different things than if they were left to their own devices in exploring their environment. In all these cases, the developmental processes of the living beings and subjects involved are being adjusted to the formative conceptions of the cultivators and educators. In these processes of adjustment, *power differences* play a significant role. For the vine can't protect itself from the pruning shears, the dog *underestimates* his own strength and *overestimates* the strength of the two-legged creature towering over him (when he stops doing this, he can no longer be trained), the child is *no equal* to an adult. Without these power differences, it would be impossible to adjust these beings to their cultivators' and educators' designs. In Aristotelian terms, this means that their innate form tendencies can be changed to agree with the designs of those cultivating and educating them.

These people do not at first have to justify their actions to their wards. There is no question here of exchanging arguments, at least not as long as small children are involved. That is why I emphasized the differences in power. But it is also not simply a matter of violence. We speak of violence when the *destruction* of a living form is carried out intentionally, either to eliminate it completely from the world—as in killing a fox that has rabies—or to replace it with a different one—as in the case of a horse that is being forced to jump over obstacles it would normally bypass. That is the obvious difference between processes of cultivation or education and acts of violence. Those who educate and cultivate do not as a rule destroy forms but *modify* them.

Despite the differences between violence on the one hand and cultivation and education on the other hand, power plays a thorny role on both sides of this distinction, at least for philosophers. If the processes of assimilation that are at work in learning how to use systems of signs are fundamentally directed by power differences so that less powerful beings are forced by more powerful ones to express themselves in a specific way and to behave in a specific way when others express themselves, then *insight* and *reason*, which we do after all associate with our use of signs, are in danger of being destroyed.

Plato, for example, who also gave considerable thought to education, asserted that when we connect insights to our utterances, we are not guided by other people but by *abstract objects*. The educator, in Plato's understanding of his role, does not use power in order to adjust the pupil to a conventional system of signs but guides him into remembrance where the original insights about the objects signifying sense become clear to him. These insights had already been in his soul before it entered his body

and was exposed to the power differences that regrettably characterize man's physical existence.⁹ Nowadays, we no longer lend credence to this myth. But as all Platonic myths, it has its function in his thinking. For what gives a teacher the right to demand of his student that he must speak or do calculations in a specific way? For Plato, it is the eternal order of forms that legitimates the educational process. These forms we are said to have known originally, before our birth into our present physical shape, without compulsion, in pure perception. The pupil is merely compelled to remember that of which once before he has had a clear understanding anyway. He is not forced to gain rational insight because that is altogether impossible. "Insight by force" is an oxymoron. An *argumentum ad baculum* simply isn't an argument leading to insight but basically a threat. The one threatened is to be forced to produce the symptoms of an insight or to simulate insight by saying, for example, "Yes, that's right, I agree," or some such thing. For Plato, the pupil's assimilation to the teacher's system of signs is a leading back to what he truly is: reasonable soul, capable of recognizing abstract connections. Education in this sense is not intended to force but to make reasonable. What appears to be compulsion is meant to be help in the self-actualization of the rational being that regrettably has fallen into bodily circumstances in which compulsion and violence exist. Education is meant to contribute, in the ideal case, to the pupil's regaining his intuitive capacity for insight. And this is how education does present itself to this day: not as a powerful form of training but as cultivation in the garden of the nonforcible force of reason. Plato was, not coincidentally, especially fond of demonstrating this theory using the example of mathematics, as when Socrates in the dialogue *Meno* gets a slave to work out mathematical proofs.

Mathematics as Exemplum of Rationality

Mathematics is the doctrine of abstract structural connections. It can be concerned with structures between abstract things that we can never visualize realistically, like n -dimensional spaces. Or it may deal with concrete objects such as countable bodies or patterns in circumstances of decision and action as in game theory. When it comes to education, mathematics is of central significance, especially in the form that we can visualize and that most of us learn during the first ten years of school.

Mathematics puts our subjectivity into practice as the ability of using signs in the creation of connections, and it does so as does no other intellectual project. Within the sign system of mathematics, in contrast

to the material world, everything truly appears to be connected with everything. We like to demarcate transformations of reality that are contingent and go back to power differences and the employment of violence from the kind of change that we designate as necessary and rule bound and the coercion of which has nothing to do with violence but with *regularity*. The principal examples of what is regular, rule bound, and nonviolently necessary are the natural laws of the mathematically quantifiable natural sciences, above all physics, as well as the inference principles that are incorporated in mathematical theories. I would even go so far as to assert that we learn to understand what reason is meant to be by adapting to the system of rules underlying mathematical sign connections. This means we do so by realizing our subjective tendency of creating connections within the framework of mathematical symbolisms. Adapting one's subjectivity to mathematics is for this reason not one kind of adaptation beside others. It is, rather, the *foundational* adaptation that one could also call the adaptation to rationality itself. It is through this adaptation that subjects no longer combine this with that associatively according to their particular inclinations when it comes to food or sexual partners. Instead, they learn how to understand the opportunities for making connections between real things and then to repeat them. In historical terms, court oratory, perhaps also philosophical argumentation as a paradigm of rationality, is older than the mathematical proof of the kind we encounter, for example, in Euclid. But today, mathematics is the first and fundamental instrument used in the training of a child's mind. Jurisprudence and philosophy to all practical purposes play no role, or at any rate no dominant role, in what schools teach.

Nelson Goodman was not the first to point out, but was the one who in my opinion has shown most convincingly, that natural laws can be understood as semantic inference rules that we learn by means of a specific paradigm.¹⁰ One can likewise consider logical inference rules and argumentative principles as something that one learns primarily with the help of mathematical paradigms. The first ones to have come about are the practical paradigms, like those of geometry. Then, in adaptation to them, a guideline of inference principles for future actions is set up, which Aristotle does with the description of these principles in his *Analytics*. According to this work, rationality, understood as a series of inference principles, is not present *before* all paradigms, but the paradigm of mathematical plausibility *constitutes* our conception of reason.¹¹ As Goodman has shown, we simply do not have a concept of natural law connections independent of the very different particular paradigms of natural scientific laws, even though philosophers have searched for them for decades.

Of course, this is not the Platonic model. The Platonic paradigm is not a practical one.¹² The difference I am after here is similar to the difference between Anglo-American case law and Roman law. In case law, I know what is murder and what is manslaughter by consulting the appropriate cases in which the two forms of killing are described and differentiated. It is only from a judge's practical dealing with these cases that my understanding of the difference in the meaning of murder and homicide is derived. What is irrelevant is an insight into an abstract difference of meaning that presumably (I dispute this) is the premise for a judge's ability to make this difference in the first place in any concrete case. In Roman law and its descendent jurisprudence, by contrast, I look for those paragraphs and codifications of principles that are dealing with premeditated killings out of base motives and with unpremeditated acts of killing committed in the heat of passion. In either case, it is not necessary to refer to concrete examples. In Platonic terms, the concepts in these legal texts obtain their meanings through insights into the relationships between abstract entities and not through a concrete practice of rendering verdicts. It is only the insight into the structures between these abstract entities that gives me—in Platonic thinking—the respective circumstances under which I can at all describe cases as those involving homicide or murder. As in Roman law I can, in physics, pick a mathematical law from a table of formulas, or—with reference to case law—I can calculate with *concrete expressions* and recognize in the process how, for example, a logarithm of a certain magnitude is to be formed.

When a pupil learns mathematics, he establishes mental connections between the signs he has been using that have to be not merely *associative* but also *inferential*. But in what does the difference between an inference and association consist? Superficially, one would like to say, in the fact that associations vary from person to person but inferences don't. That's why he/she can't give false associations but definitely can make wrong inferences. Inferential transitions—and this concept of transition will become important in what follows—are *standardized in general terms*; associative ones, however, are not. But aside from these very general observations, one can, in my opinion, explain the difference between inference and association only with attention paid to the paradigms corresponding to them: a transition is inferential when it can be subsumed under the pattern of a mathematical paradigm or one that is semantic by natural law or at least, like juridical deduction, can be set in analogy to these paradigms. By contrast, a transition is associative when for a particular subject it entails something inevitable—as I, when I hear the word *Excellency*, cannot help associating it with overweight cardinals in rooms with gilded stucco,

which is why words like *Exzellenzuniversität* and *Exzellenzinitiative* provoke again my antipathy against hypocritical clerics, who are in no way the issue here. In all this, however, I am not following along an inferential chain but am trailing merely a private association. The chain: all cardinals are hypocrites, Franz is a cardinal, ergo Franz is a hypocrite, does, however, represent a valid conclusion (after the pattern of modus Barbara) from the inferential practice of syllogistic reasoning, well known since Aristotle who distilled it from the practice of geometrical proof, among other procedures. This inferential conclusion does, to be sure, start with a false premise, but as everyone knows, this changes nothing about its validity.

Because inferences can be differentiated from associations on the basis of the practical paradigms of mathematics and logic, the philosophy of logic and mathematics is not an arbitrary topic of philosophy. It is not simply a partial area of the philosophy of science, as is the philosophy of physics and that of biology.¹³ Ever since Kant, following Plato and Descartes, made mathematics because of its ability to produce a priori synthetic judgments the standard of insight in theoretical philosophy as such, it is not any sort of metaconsideration but is central to what defines philosophy in principle—so long as we see philosophy as the argumentative encounter with the foundational issues in our understanding of the world. The question to what subjects adapt when they learn inferences is, for this reason, not an arbitrary question but concerns the nature of that adaptive process that putatively constitutes our rationality. I can assume, in the name of Plato or Frege, that the structures of mathematics are erecting themselves between abstract entities, or I consider them as something given to me through sensory sign paradigms that receive their meaning, in Wittgenstein's sense, through their embodiment in our life. My conception of rationality and the relevance that coercion and power have for it will be different depending on whether I follow Plato and Frege or Wittgenstein in this question. In order to make this more clearly understandable, I will now turn to two philosophers who had completely different views about the relationship of subjectivity and rationality and about the role that mathematics play in this connection.

Spinoza and Wittgenstein

Spinoza was very highly impressed, as were his contemporaries Descartes and Hobbes, by the argumentative style of Euclid's *Elements*. But unlike these two philosophers, Spinoza attempted in *Ethics*, his most

important philosophical text, to proceed as closely as possible in the manner of Euclid's *Elements*—*more geometrico*, as he called it. He did not, however, simply adopt for his own writing the ideal of the mathematical form of argumentation in that he was also convinced that with his *Ethica* he would be able to *make* other people rational and that this would benefit their lives. He believed that his book has the power to exert an educative or therapeutic effect by making its readers become reasonable. Today, we no longer perhaps expect that much from a book. No doubt, the reason for this is that we no longer attribute the same ontological dignity to mathematical structures as Plato or Spinoza did. To be sure, Spinoza did not believe in the doctrine of recollection (*anamnesis*) and in transcendent ideas, but he was convinced that there exists an immanent structure of reality that he encoded as *deus sive natura*, “God or Nature” and which is *mathematical*. When in our thoughts we realize mathematical structures, then, according to Spinoza, we adapt to this foundational structure of reality. In God's infinite reason, reality is an inferential structure, and it is our task that we assimilate our mind (*Geist*) to this inferential structure of reality. This is exactly what is meant to take place as we read the *Ethica*: because it uses only universal concepts, so-called *notions communes*, such as “cause,” “effect,” “body,” and “motion,” that presumably are not culturally relative and determined by historical factors, and because it precisely defines all other concepts, the reader's mind is being induced while he is reading to realize only inferential structures. Adaptation to the way meanings are connected in the *Ethica* is consequently, according to Spinoza's intent, an *education for rationality*: as the process of adapting to the most fundamental structure of reality which cannot be changed by any historical or cultural process.

Because he represents reality as in essence rational, adapting to a mathematical structuring of thought is not only an adaptation to rationality, but in Spinoza's thinking, it is an adaptation to reality's genuine nature. Culture, by contrast, again and again produces deviations from this natural or divine or inferential order. That is why it is the task of philosophy to prevent mankind from going astray or at least to provide a cure for the consequences of irrationality. Whoever does *not* comply with the natural rational order, will—to Spinoza's mind—get into difficulties that in the end cause suffering. This is the case because all differences in and fights for power come about and take place within this inferential order. To be sure, it is always possible that a more powerful being forces a less powerful one to do something, but that something should happen—again, according to Spinoza—that is *not* subject to this inferential order is impossible. Whoever may believe that he is capable of leading a life outside the

foundational inferential order has succumbed to very dangerous illusions, however much power he may already have acquired within this order. Those who seek to avoid suffering, will—for Spinoza—try instead to think mathematically, to assimilate to the inferential order, and to conceive of all power struggles as occurring within the rules of this order. When we describe transformations of our subjectivity that cause suffering as *violent* and make a categorical distinction between them and those changes that alleviate suffering, then an education toward mathematical reasoning cannot—in Spinoza’s conception—mean violence because it will in any case lessen the sufferings of the person so educated. Violent, on the contrary, is the cultural influence that prevents subjects from organizing their minds rationally.

Spinoza’s Stoa-inspired identification of the real with the natural and divine as much as his identification of this with the mathematical-inferential that represented the rational for him was highly momentous. Hegel’s paradigm of rationality was a different one, to be sure. It was no longer mathematical. But the idea that the particular subjects have to adapt to universal world reason (*Weltvernunft*) is true for him as well. And Robert Brandom is perfectly right in considering both of them his predecessors.¹⁴ In my opinion, he provides nothing more than a large-scale variation of Spinozist and Hegelian ideas in replacing God or Nature, respectively, the World-Spirit (*Weltgeist*) with a universal language game—an abstraction as implausible to me as the grand structures of his predecessors. I believe, *pace* Brandom, that this tradition should no longer be continued. This has to do primarily with insights in the late writings of Wittgenstein concerning the philosophy of mathematics. Before I turn to these insights, a polemical confession may be helpful to clarify my ultimate purpose.

It seems decidedly implausible to me that there exists a nature or a God or a world spirit; and I don’t understand what it means to say that there exists a language understood as a system of rules that all of us have to follow if we want to be rational either. I find it highly suspect when philosophers set themselves up as advocates of natural, divine, world spiritual, or discursive reason and as high priests of rationality believe they can prescribe for others to what they as particular subjects have to adapt if they want to be rational. In the final analysis, this amounts to turning philosophy into a language police that kills creativity by trying to prevent wider innovations of speaking as irrational. This manner of philosophizing—Whitehead called it obscurantism—is an approach that the guardians of reason have already applied against Georg Cantor’s *General Theory of Aggregates*, then against Einstein’s theory of relativity,

and finally against quantum mechanics. But science, wherever it is creative, is always a dissident, divergent form of speaking. Even though some elements of mathematics—what we learn during the first years in school—have become an integral part of the way we live, advanced mathematics is a highly speculative and divergent sort of work with signs. The introduction of advanced mathematical calculations, which are beyond visualization, has turned modern physics into a highly abstract enterprise that is as far removed from our daily lives as is the physics to which this form of mathematics is applied in the practical situations of our existence. Does quantum mechanics still correspond to our “ordinary understanding” of rationality? Hardly. We will see in the discussion of Arne Naess that a dogmatic administration of arbitrary semantic rules (though presumably derived from “ordinary language”) needs to be replaced with empirical scholarship in the linguistics of meaning. This research reveals surprising differences between male and female speakers of the same language.¹⁵ In Gaston Bachelard’s observations on the various forms of resistance that innovative research has to overcome not only when it confronts “ordinary thinking” but also the guardians of reason, counterintuitive dissident terminologies are a criterion of progressive thought. Even if the self-appointed dogmatic priesthood defending the philosophy of a universal discourse still plays an important role within academic philosophy, it is culturally meaningless outside the institutions of higher education. Neither science nor art nor politics seem any longer to expect any intellectual impulses from the philosophical administration of semantic rules. That is hard to swallow for academic philosophy.

But what does the situation look like if we do *not* accept Spinoza’s premise (which Kepler and Newton shared, by the way) that reality itself possesses a mathematical structure? Even for that, as suggested above, there is a prominent example: Wittgenstein’s philosophy of mathematics in which the concept of “training” (*Abrichtung*) to identify the way we learn mathematical paradigms plays a significant role. An example of this can be found at the very beginning of his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, where he speaks, among other issues, about *making transitions* in proofs:

If . . . we determine these transitions in a quite different sense, namely, by subjecting our pupil to such a training as e.g. children get in the multiplication tables and in multiplying, so that all who are so trained do random multiplications (not previously done in the course of being taught) in the way and with results that agree—if, that is, the

transitions . . . are so determined by training that we can predict with certainty how he will go, even when he has never up to now taken *this* step—then it may be natural to us to use this as a picture of the situation: the steps are all already taken and he is just writing them down.¹⁶

Wittgenstein here asserts that the image of the necessary transition in mathematics, the notion that one's orientation here is guided by eternal abstract structures about which there is merely one thing left to do, that is, read them, that this picture can be attributed to an *original coercion*, to "*training*." If this training is carried on persistently enough, it will inevitably bring about a behavior that follows a certain paradigm. If we accept the premise that the inferential motions of mathematics provide the paradigm for the rational use of signs in our training, and if Wittgenstein is correct to assert that the paradigms of the mathematical use of signs are not obtained through insight into relationships between abstract entities but through coercion or forced training, then the rational use of signs is to be attributed to the fact that subjects are being coerced to adapt to a certain way of acting in response to signs.

Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics cannot be classified according to familiar isms like formalism, intuitionism, or logicism. These isms are as a rule applied whenever the attempt is made to quickly label a position in the philosophy of mathematics. Even though Wittgenstein's use of the language-game concept has again and again entailed his being categorized as one of the formalists, this designation is wrong, as Felix Mühlhölzer has shown. His understanding of mathematical language as a game in which the signs refer to *each other* and *not* to abstract entities does indeed show a certain similarity with formalistic positions. But his idea that mathematics is *woven into the practice of life* and that mathematical proofs as the *most important* mathematical practice in life play the role of constituting meaning for the terms defined by them can hardly be called formalistic. Instead, this idea manifests, as Mühlhölzer convincingly demonstrated, the autonomous character of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics.¹⁷

Wittgenstein considered the isms in the philosophy of mathematics to be inappropriate in view of the "everyday practices" of speaking and counting.¹⁸ In this regard, Mühlhölzer sees a parallel between Wittgenstein's position and that of Albert Einstein who wrote:

I don't feel quite comfortable and at home with any of the "-isms." It always seems to me that such an ism is strong only as long as it can draw nourishment from the

weakness of its counter-ism, but once this ism has been beaten to death and my ism is alone and far afield, then it proves to be shaky-legged. . . . I'd like to propose the following theorem: If one cleans two arbitrary isms of all their filth, they will become identical.¹⁹

This is not a finicky remark. Both for Wittgenstein and for Einstein, what mathematicians or physicists *actually do* was more important than all epistemological metaconsiderations. For, it is only these lucubrations that produce the philosophical art products called "realism," "idealism," "formalism," or "constructivism." To the extent that these epistemological theories of mathematics or physics perceive themselves to be the foundations of the respective sciences, they believe that these characterizations express something essential about these practices. It is to this estimation, however, that the respective individual scientists frequently object. As did Einstein, who did not want to be pinned down to Positivism or Neo-Kantianism as the theory of cognition that he presumably had adhered to in his physics. In Wittgenstein's case, this objection of science to the philosophical characterizations is easy to understand because in his view, the practices of mathematics and physics take care of themselves, require no philosophical idealism or realism, no constructivisms or intuitionisms in order to come to a clear understanding of what part of reasoning is certain or dubious, exact or imprecise, reasonable or untenable. It is, after all, these practices themselves that provide the paradigms of certainty, precision, and reasonableness and not the subsequent philosophical reflections about them. Which practices people follow is not, however, subject to their arbitrary reaction. Rather, they are being formed in the *natural history of mankind*, as Wittgenstein sometimes calls this.²⁰

This is not Wittgenstein's way of advocating an evolutionary theory of cognition. "Natural history" for him is not Darwin's theory about the origin of man. Wittgenstein uses this peculiar and hard-to-interpret notion in our present context to characterize the fact that the mathematical processes of arriving at proofs are interwoven with life practices such as counting and measuring. Whoever learns mathematics does not simply learn how to deal with numbers and geometrical figures. He is also in a specific way introduced to the practical experience of how we live, and supervising that these mathematical rules are kept—the training—is the attempt to guarantee that this life practice will also be *continued*. Training, then, is not the exercise of arbitrary violence but is an *assimilating to an established form of life* that does not, however, represent anything abstract such as the Platonic forms or the structure of God's infinite reason. It is something very concrete and historically grown, as one can see

in examples like the act of adding in a supermarket or a surveyor taking the measurements of a plot of land. The demeanor of people is being brought into agreement; they are being adapted to each other when they, among other activities, actualize mathematical practices in a certain way in their lives. They can also *not* do this or do it differently, but their lives would not be the same. Again, Wittgenstein's observation:

Imagine people who used money in transactions; that is to say coins, looking like our coins; and are also handed over for goods—but each person gives just what he pleases for the goods, and the merchant does not give the customer more or less according to what he pays. In short this money, or what looks like money, has among them a quite different role from among us. We should feel much less akin to these people than to people who are not yet acquainted with money at all and practice a primitive kind of barter.²¹

Because transacting exchanges and adding go together for us, the rules of addition are a strong presence in our life. Whoever doesn't do addition in a specific way also can't use money any longer as a medium of exchange the same way as the others. He would fall out of our life-form. Training and educating has to do with the desire of the educators that our way of life may continue in the next generation. One does like to see creativity among adolescents, but this preference is limited. Most educational processes are characterized by the fear that either the way of life could be damaged or the pupil might not find a place (nowadays, workplace) in it because he does not make an elementary practice his own. Educational processes are by definition conservative.

Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics no doubt bears the mark of a clearly noticeable antipathy toward abstract entities as the authentic meanings of mathematical symbols. The notion that one can explain how mathematics may be applied to reality only if one, like Frege, establishes one class for all concepts to which these objects belong and to which the numerals presumably refer, is—if one follows Wittgenstein—as implausible as to assume that one could understand how a translation from one language into another is possible only if one postulates an abstract entity called "proposition" to which equivalent truthful expressions of different languages would refer. But there isn't a merchant in the world who uses classes of concepts when he applies mathematical principles as he balances his books, and no translator refers to propositions or truth values when he translates. In either case, according to late-stage Wittgenstein, those who postulate abstract entities simply fail to engage in a precise analysis of the respective practices, most of all in the analysis of the *multiplicity* of the practices possible in applied mathematics

and—one would like to add—in the craft of translation. Instead of observing the concrete life and actions of people, the position questioned by Wittgenstein constructs an abstract problem: How is it at all possible that mathematics refers to reality? (Hasn't it done so from the very beginning?) How is it at all possible to translate from one language into another? (Haven't humans done this forever?) And then abstract entities such as classes and propositions are postulated to which mathematics or the languages presumably refer because the reference of the mathematical and other languages to the way people live has remained hidden or has been ignored. This neglect has then produced a distinct professional culture concerned with the philosophy of language whose members meditate and publish about propositional standpoints, propositions, truth values, opaque and transparent contexts, substitutions, dependence and independence of mind, and so forth. The "functioning" of this professional philosophical culture in which one can develop an expertise in these abstract entities quite independent of analyzing the real speaking practices strengthens the conviction that presuming the existence of abstract entities does in fact make sense. And inquisitors from the Middle Ages and early modern era like Johannes Gremper must also have been convinced that black magic, witches, and demons existed in reality because otherwise their theory and juridical practice concerning these beings would have become invalid. The repeated execution of this juridical practice confirmed them in this belief.

Wittgenstein himself did not work out a complete—whatever that may mean—description of the mathematical practices and their grounding in human life. In his opinion, already the practices of demonstrating proof cannot be subsumed under one single concept or be organized in the rigid system of a proof theory: "mathematics," he writes, "is a MOTLEY of techniques of proof.—And upon this is based its manifold applicability and its importance."²² But he did examine one foundational and initial practice in great detail, the practice of *teaching* and *learning* mathematical skills. In this context he frequently speaks of "training" (*Abrichtung*). A few examples are:

Now, what do I want him to do? The best answer that I can give myself to this is to carry these orders on a bit further. . . .

And now I train him to follow the rule

— . . . etc.

And again I don't myself know any more about what I want from him, than what the example itself shews. . . .

This, then, is how I have taught someone to count and to multiply in the decimal system, for example.

365×428 is an order and he complies with it by carrying out the multiplication.

The justification of the proposition $25 \times 25 = 625$ is, naturally, that if someone has been trained in such-and-such a way, then under normal circumstances he gets 625 as the result of multiplying 25 by 25.²³

For Wittgenstein, what is at first compelling about a mathematical rule is the compelling force of the directive in the training process and not the noncoercive pressure of a rational insight. A person giving a compelling directive has, for Wittgenstein, nothing more at his disposal than the example he uses in his act of training. He is not in control of a special access to cognition of an abstract mathematical entity. At most, he is aware of the fact that the respective mathematical practice is interwoven in our life (knows about exchanging and measuring).

Wittgenstein finds himself confronting here the enigma of wherefrom the example derives its paradigmatic force. *Paradeigmata*, we remember, is what Plato sometimes calls the forms. Wittgenstein's examples are the *sensory successors of Plato's nonsensory forms*. But their sensuality does not explain the power they hold over our life and thinking. For Wittgenstein, the most important example in mathematics is the proof. That's why very many of his remarks on the foundations of mathematics deal with proofs. They are creative for him:

The proof creates a new concept by creating or being a new sign. Or—by giving the proposition which is its result a new place. (For the proof is not a movement but a route.)²⁴

A cryptic remark, giving clear evidence, however, that Wittgenstein's notion about our learning mathematics through training and not through insight is not some sort of conservative obscurantism. Whoever finds a proof, he says, is creating a new mathematical concept or a new meaning for an established concept. The proof, then, is an image—another Platonic concept!—for this new sense-creating configuration. A famous quote that introduces part III of the *Remarks* illustrates this, too:

"A mathematical proof must be perspicuous." Only a structure whose reproduction is an easy task is called a "proof." . . . The proof must be a configuration whose exact reproduction can be certain.²⁵

As Plato, so also Wittgenstein confronts us with the problem of partaking (*methexis*). How do we know that a calculation we make can also be proved, that it participates in the picture of the *paradeigma*? Not through a sudden intuition but through the evidence that the proof is a picture that does, to be sure, endow the concepts of its individual sentences with new meanings, but thereby simultaneously radiates across the whole field of significations of the mathematical concepts. We must then be able to understand our calculation as something that corresponds with the picture of the proof or at least establish connections between its premises and the proof-producing picture. We must arrange our calculation to be part of the system that the proof puts up between the concepts. Or, to state this the other way around, the proof persuades us that our calculation is correct by giving it a place in the landscape of its concepts. Again Wittgenstein:

What *proves* is not that this correlation leads to this result—but that we are persuaded to take these appearances (pictures) as models for what it is like if . . .²⁶

A proof of the proposition locates it in the whole system of calculations.²⁷

Proofs give propositions an order. They organize them.²⁸

The proof, then, is not an *arbitrarily* produced picture but one that shows us the landscape of mathematical concepts from a new perspective. Only when this perspective is one in which we can continue our life will we accept the proof. This is something that whoever has found a new proof will have to demonstrate before anything else: he must educate the others who are knowledgeable in mathematics to see its significations. Descartes first had to make others understand that one can represent a dot through double or triple numbers or that one can interpret numbers as dots. Before the Cartesian system of coordinates this value did not exist. Thus, proofs can have a pedagogical function in this case by educating others to see new values (*Bedeutungen*).

This is also something William Thurston demonstrates. He describes that he carried out his proofs (that arose from a problem of hyperbolic geometry) in order to create a “semantic infrastructure” without which his ideas would not be understood. He reports that his ideas at first encountered a solid environment where his conceptualizations met with complete disbelief and that, as a first step, this environment had to be changed. His arguing, therefore, did not focus simply on the presentation of an argument but on a semantic “reeducation” as the precondition for

his reflections being perceived as an argument in the first place. Before anything else, he had to create an understanding about the connections within which his thinking moves. He had to lay down the “infrastructure” or the semantic landscape through which his reflections were guiding his audience. His listeners were lost before he did this: they literally were unable to grasp what his proof was all about. Thorsten writes:

It became dramatically clear how much proofs depend on the audience. We prove things in a social context and address them to a certain audience. . . . At that time there was practically no infrastructure and practically no context for this theorem [about the geometrization of Haken 3-manifolds, M.H.], so the expansion from how an idea was keyed in my head to what I had to say to get it across, not to mention how much energy the audience had to devote to understand it, was very dramatic. . . . I concentrated most of my attention on developing and presenting the infrastructure in what I wrote and in what I talked to people about. I explained the details to the few people who were “up” for it. I wrote some papers giving the substantive parts of the proof of the geometrization theorem for Haken manifolds. . . . The result has been that now quite a number of mathematicians have what was dramatically lacking in the beginning: a working understanding of the concepts and the infrastructure that are natural for this subject.²⁹

It is not always easy to find one’s way back from a new semantic landscape in mathematics to ordinary life, to mathematics “in civvies,” as Wittgenstein called it. Most mathematical reflections that take place in universities these days, and of which for example physics makes use in its researches about string theory, deal only very distantly, if at all, with taking measurements of plots of land and making payments in a store. Long distances have to be covered in order to get back from the geometry of n -dimensional spaces to the Euclid a carpenter would apply. But for Wittgenstein the paths through these distances must exist. For example, the new understanding of how to measure time that relativistic physics requires and in response to which the way timepieces move is to be taken into consideration if one wants to synchronize them, finds an application in the identification of a sender’s location through satellites in the global positioning system (GPS). Ever since the introduction of navigational instruments in cars and cell phones, the relativistic measurement of time and the mathematics applied by it are connected with everyday practice.

Proofs, in Mühlhölzer’s analysis of Wittgenstein, are based “as ‘formal examinations’ on techniques of sign transformation and are nothing more than pictures (appearances, *Bilder*) of these transformations. This

pictorial character lends to them both the lack of timeliness that is particular to mathematics and at the same time, in that the pictures function as paradigms (*Vorbilder*), its particular normative quality."³⁰ This normative quality does not originate from the power of a transcendent entity or from the strength of reason. We are trained to arrive at conclusions the same way we are made to learn how to ride a bicycle. But mathematical practices have consequences at many more situations in our life than does riding a bike. People who lack this skill don't necessarily have problems with participating in our way of life; but people who can't add, certainly do. That's why mathematical problems seem *more necessary* to us; that's why, in contrast to riding a bike which, if one doesn't want to take a spill, also has its requirements, we award mathematics the title of "rational" and name the descriptions of some foundational mathematical procedures *the logic* or the *rules of reason*.

Intuition and the Power of Judgment

The diagnosis that at the basis of human rationality there lies a training process that is premised on power differences stands in sharp contrast to a humanism that is being guided by concepts such as "reason," "culture" (*Bildung*), "taste," and "judgment."³¹

If, following Hegel, *Bildung* is defined as "promotion to the universal" of an individual and it is said of this "promotion" (*Erhebung*) that it "covers the essential determination of human rationality as a whole,"³² then this establishes implicit value hierarchies: "the universal" is "of the mind" and "rationality" which in turn is "higher" than the particular or the concrete that are defined merely as the earthy immediacy of "desire" from which one must distance oneself through work.³³ Man as a rational being must be "raised" via education (*Bildung*) to attain this universal, which means that education is no longer a process of training but entails an elevation of particular beings through their integration into the universal:

It is the universal nature of human *Bildung* to constitute itself as a universal intellectual being. Whoever abandons himself to his particularity is *ungebildet* [unformed], e.g. if someone gives way to blind anger without reason or sense of proportion. . . . Hence *Bildung*, as being raised to the universal, is a task for man. It requires the sacrifice of particularity for the sake of the universal.³⁴

Individuality is characterized solely by fervent anger and avid desire, both of them affects hostile to community; it has to be sacrificed, accord-

ing to this definition, because it represents no self-sufficient perspective on the world; no singular empirical process has a value on its own but only when it embodies also something universal.

The universal, in contrast, by being attached to Hegelian mind (hence, indirectly also the divine *nous* that Anaxagoras considered the world's essence),³⁵ is presumed as given. It is not affective and contingent but rational and necessary. In humanistic tradition no consideration is given to the notion that the universality of, for example, language could also be contingent on natural, cultural, and social history and has to be changed whenever this is required: "we cannot arbitrarily change the meanings of words if there is to be language."³⁶ A change is arbitrary when it ignores the traditional meaning of the words that has always directed experience.³⁷ But how does one recognize this traditional meaning of words? Well, presumably through historical education. This *Bildung*, it is said, brings about a kind of memory that is not merely an ability to have recollections, but is the actualized "essential element of the finite-historical being of man,"³⁸ that relates to the infinity of tradition's connections and integrates itself into this continuity.

Of course, there can be no doubt whatsoever that a historical knowledge of how meanings developed is helpful, that it leads to a more conscious manner of speaking, and can teach us a great deal about earlier debates and power struggles to determine meanings. But a historical awareness of how the meaning of such foundational concepts as "man" (*Mensch*), "spirit" (*Geist*), or "law" changed—does it lead to insights into *necessary* meanings? Hardly. Because debates do not always lead to insights into what is necessary, but if they are conducted as power struggles, one semantic meaning contingently becomes dominant over another, historical consciousness also always stores coincidental semantic constellations.

By contrast, in the humanistic tradition that proceeds from the Kantian doctrine of aesthetic judgment to Gadamer, anyone with the power of historical judgment must also know how by force of necessity one has to speak. History is a rational process of semantic purification. A person equipped through historical *Bildung* with the power of judgment senses, due to his education, what is the *right manner of speaking*. This feeling for what is right, made possible by the power of discernment, cannot be passed on from the educated to the noneducated in an abbreviated form by way of a process of information. Only someone who has raised himself by his own ingenuity in the protracted process of education to universality knows why to speak and to think in this manner. But are insights into a word's history not always connected with the knowledge that this word could in times past have meant something altogether

different from what it means today? Is the history of the mind really a semantic Last Judgment (as Peirce in following Hegel may have believed)? And when does one know that history has arrived at a verdict about a word's meaning that will also be valid in the future?

A look into the times of totalitarianism and its language regulations suffices to question the notion of history as a process of thoroughgoing purification of a rational community. Did a person who was pressured to appropriate the conceptual vocabulary of racists and their belief that philosophizing people can be classified as either "Near Eastern [*vorderasiatische*] desert thinkers" or "Aryan deep thinkers [*Tiefdenker*]"³⁹ feel liberated from his particularity and brought closer to universal reason? Victor Klemperer has very closely analyzed the peculiarities of the German language during the Third Reich. It is still easy to recognize them immediately, as if intuitively, in passages like the following:

Erst das achtzehnte Jahrhundert hat den erworbenen Seelen- und Sinnesreichtum in die organische Einheit und Ganzheit neuen arteigenen Lebens übergeleitet: in die volkhafte Wiedergeburt der Deutschen Bewegung seit 1750.

It was only the eighteenth century that was finally able to transform the acquired wealth of spiritual and sensory resources into an organic unity and totality of life characteristic of the race: into the national rebirth of the German Movement since 1750.⁴⁰

The specific meaning that words like *Seele* (soul), *Ganzheit* (wholeness/totality), *Art* (species/nature), *Leben* (life/vitality), *Volk*, and many others assumed when they were added to Nazi usage was putatively not generally rational. We would probably say instead that learning this language amounted to an exercise in adapting to a very particular affective household, to a specific dangerously aggressive emotionality. This observation should not be restricted to Nazi Germany. Did not the distinction between Greeks and barbarians at one time direct the way human beings were perceived? Did not this differentiation also aim at a specific affective exclusion? In which language and at what time can one find the universally rational meanings to which the intuitions of cultured people refer? All we have are the languages of particular nations at specific times or of theories in certain phases of their development. Where is the universal language that should be visible at all as the result of historical evolution in the first place?

Humanism's concept of cultural education that fully puts its trust in the reason of history corresponds to the Platonic conception that the soul of the educated is transformed through perceiving the idea of the good.

For Plato, those who attain cognition behold the universal. For Kant and Hegel, an ability of the mind (*geistiges Vermögen*), reason, which potentially every human being can actualize, *creates* the universals. For Kant it is rationality (*Verstand*) or the reflecting power of judgment (*Urteilkraft*) that give rise to concepts.⁴¹ For example, we compare different plants and thereby form the concept “tree.”⁴² But already, this act of comparing, in that it is given its directive by the question if all observed plants have a trunk and which do not, if their limbs branch out and where this is not the case, presupposes a language competency in which already universal concepts are being applied. “A certain conceptual set of instruments is needed, after all . . . before *further* concepts can be formed.” Concepts are not created *ex nihilo*.⁴³

In the hermeneutics of humanists, the educated person of culture possesses a talent for differentiating and reflecting. Whoever does not have this talent also cannot become educated. The educated person is unable, however, to justify himself in his judgments or prove himself through his methods. For the uneducated fail to understand the differentiations made by those who are educated, and educated people do not require justifications because, after all, they share the knowledge of the other educated people. The judgments of the educated for this reason are immune. Whoever can mentally re-create them is likewise educated and has the power of judgment. Those who fail to agree with these verdicts are dumb: “The difference between a fool and a sensible man is that the former lacks judgment. That means he is incapable of subsuming correctly, hence is unable to apply correctly what he has learned and knows.”⁴⁴ In other words, whoever does not subsume something particular under a universal in the same way as educated persons is not to be mistaken for a rebel and someone who tries to express a different experience of the particular: he is simply uneducated. It is therefore also impossible to help him with education because the activity of the power of judgment cannot be instilled through the demonstration of rules. Revisions of language as well as divergent speaking are possible only to those who are familiar with the universalism of language because they have the historical sense for language. Those who are uneducated and want to change language, commit an offense, so to speak, against its function of directing experience.

To be sure, efforts are being made in the theory of judgment to differentiate between original and artificial concepts.⁴⁵ But these efforts are far from convincing. In this context, even the concepts of the empirical sciences are considered to be artificial, even though it cannot be denied that they are subject to a rapid semantic drift. But this drift is based

perhaps on very general concepts or on differentiations that are fundamental in the (phenomenological) lifeworld. But they must first of all be singled out through the painstaking analytical work performed by the philosophy of science. And second, it is questionable that a necessary conceptual frame is involved here. However, the friends of the power of judgment assert all the same that the educated person is in a position to act as a judge where conceptual revisions in the sciences have to be decided: "Furthermore, the systems [of the empirical sciences which advance conceptual innovations, M.H.], if only in the interest of their ability to function, require an authoritative agency that can decide what among the overabundance of all the things that are knowable and subject to research [and perhaps call for new conceptual terms, M.H.] is also *worth knowing*."⁴⁶ But of course it is "exclusively" the educated "individual persons" who are capable of rendering such a judgment and "can never delegate" it because taste and intuition will not be delegated.⁴⁷

This is how the fiction of a caste of cultured concept gourmets originates. These are people who tactfully determine which conceptual developments are appropriate and which are not. It seems impossible that there can be an experience that is not structured by the foundational preexisting universals. To have world means to have a rational linguistic, respectively judgmental ability.⁴⁸ This is Kant's basic premise also of humanistic hermeneutics. The particular cannot be experienced as something particular. That is why the individual person as a particular individual simply has no access to the world at all. He obtains this access only through the universality of language or of reason, which are administered by the educated.

Ability and Contingent Sign Connections

Neither Kant nor Hegel nor Gadamer proceed from the premise that human beings belong to a community of sign users within which they can act more or less freely and can make use of the respective signs with greater or less creativity and adaptation. The fact is being ignored that the sign system in which they communicate and reach mutual agreements has a contingent, historically evolved structure and is constantly being changed through struggles for power. That scientists should invent new calculi, new sign systems, new concepts, that like poets they strive for semiotic and semantic autonomy so as to be able to react to *new experiences of individuals*, simply cannot be possible because particular things, presumably, cannot be experienced without the universal structures that

have always existed. Empirical linguistics, which attributes the human capacity for using language to a coincidental mutation or a transformation of gestural competencies, sees this differently, of course.⁴⁹ The friends of the power of judgment do not think about the possibility that the universalities within which human users of signs move as perceiving, acting, and thinking beings could conceivably be of a completely heterogeneous nature, that perhaps there may not be such a thing as a grand structure by the name of *reason* or *mind* at all but that only a multiplicity of universals quite different in nature exists which one needs in order to accomplish such different aims as recognizing a plant again, remembering a face, repairing a car, executing a somersault, and so forth.

The old talk about reason and other mental abilities that are behind our use of general differentiations can be understood as the attempt to focus attention on two capabilities of differentiating that one would nowadays locate in the area of man's organic equipment and of his social integration into sign systems. Humans as a group are capable of differentiating between certain sensory qualities, and they develop signs that refer to these senses because they have the same equipment of sensory organs. Because we have human eyes and not a cat's eyes, human ears and not a bat's ears, human noses and not a dog's nose, human tongues and not a snake's tongue (and the corresponding brain equipment), we recognize certain sensory qualities in our environment. Because we are born into and educated as part of societies in which certain systems of signs have been established by conventional habits of differentiating, we enlist the help of language to make distinctions between certain groups of things. Individual people can respond both to these biologically determined abilities and to the socially acquired aptitudes to make distinctions by (within certain limits) sharpening their senses (as artists), by developing organs of perception like night-view instruments (as technicians), and by being linguistically innovative (as poets and philosophers). But nowadays, the universality of the concepts need no longer be "traced back" to hard-to-understand agents like a universal mind/spirit or a rationality. Rather, it can be attributed to a biological capacity that is common to all people and to habits of differentiation that are socially fixed in a system of signs. Both these aspects are to be investigated in biological, psychological, and social-scientific research.⁵⁰ How to react to predetermined forms of differentiation, and whether a person differentiates correctly or falsely, are normative and epistemological questions. They cannot be answered by pointing to biologically and sociologically ascertainable facts. But this does not mean that one absolutely must *not* consider the capabilities for differentiating as biologically and

sociologically determined. Whether I have a tumor treated or not is a normative question that cannot be decided by the medical description of cancer (carcinosis). But because I can respond normatively to a diagnosis of cancer, I need not see the tumor itself as something that cannot be characterized with the use of biological or organic concepts. This is the same with other habits of differentiation.⁵¹

People do in fact constantly react to the universals they confront and ask themselves if they should apply them to this or that one of their specific experiences. In such a situation it is true that “every such decision, every new use of a concept is, however, (in principle) at the same time the continuance of its [the concept’s, M.W.] original formation.”⁵² Every such decision is a step in the concrete history of sign conventions that takes place constantly in the social life of human beings. It is not only processes of human decision making that determine this history but also many other things that Wittgenstein summarizes under the vague concept of “natural history.” Among them are also natural givens that defy social influences such as differences between fixed and fluid bodies and the like that may have played an important role at the origin of the first very abstract terms (fire, water, earth, air).

The fact that human beings, who through a series of external accidents (coincidences) and decisions have gotten into a certain history, will then look at this history as something inevitable, is understandable. History does, after all, shape their experiencing and thinking in a very fundamental way. It is history that has made them the beings they are and for this reason is essential to them.⁵³ But important as history is from an insider’s perspective, it remains a contingent history. This is true also of the history pertaining to the origin of human language.

The Life of Assertive Beings, Linguistic Dissidence

The manner in which acting and speaking are coordinated in human life and are being conjoined ever so often in educational processes can be imagined in a *fictive genealogy* that traces how assertive beings live as the outcome of a developmental process. In such a genealogy that enhances Wittgenstein's concept of language games with a touch of (fictive) empiricism (as Wilfrid Sellars does in his myth about our "Rylean ancestors"),¹ assertive speaking represents a selection advantage for humans living socially, among whom it first appeared. In the present context, as it does for Nietzsche, the genealogical method has primarily a *critical* function. It is not meant to provide here truly convincing historical assertions or normative legitimations.

Not only humans but other animals also give each other signs. When a bird sees a predator, it is frightened perhaps and expresses its fear in a screech that habit (conditioning) will for the other animals in the forest *gradually* turn into the signal that a dangerous animal has entered their territory. It is not necessary, however, for the bird to make such sounds with the *intention* of informing the others about the presence of the predator. (This is indeed the case with marmots and voles whose so-called guardians are on the lookout for predatory birds and whistle when a shadow floats across their habitat.) But when someone utters declarative clauses with a subject-predicate structure containing indications of

place, something different is happening. In uttering a statement like, "There are deer in the clearing back there on the left," the speaker does not express an affect that can serve as a signal for others. Instead, he *intentionally* informs others about something absent and *brings it to their mind*. The bird's warning screech also rouses attention to something that at this very moment is already there but perhaps is not yet noticed by all. This screech, however, is not necessarily uttered with the intention of making others aware of something.²

The report about something absent in a declarative clause expands our access to the world in yet another way because it adds an important social dimension to the use of signs: whoever is in the position of providing reliable information about a source of food gives everyone in the group an advantage so long as this group shares its food resources.³ The possibility of sharing pieces of information or truths makes it possible to share resources. This makes information itself a valuable resource. If it turns out, however, that the claims made were false, the consequence is disappointment or perhaps even devastation. For this reason, the true assertion is socially rewarded, and the false one is sanctioned. A competition about the discovery of truths that are relevant for everybody could result from this because discovering and communicating truths can earn social privileges for those who find and communicate them.

Some linguists conjecture⁴ that gesticulating with the hands was the *original language behavior* of early people who went hunting together in the savanna, and in this way they kept their companions informed about their movements. Through gestures, they could have coordinated their actions and exchanged information about their prey. It is imaginable that in such a society, a carefully balanced system of nonlinguistic and language-based movements evolved that entailed high functionality. It gave human groups a high selection advantage over other primates who were not capable of such behavior. Statements about the behavior of pre-historic beings, however, always remain speculative to a certain degree because this behavior, regrettably, did not petrify.⁵

Problems with Holism

The genesis of complex functional systems is difficult to imagine. This is also true for the system of language. Romantic philosophy of nature, for example, taking its orientation from Kant and his theory of organism, thought that living beings are so delicately harmonized systems internally that no part may disappear or produce other effects without

endangering the existence of the whole system.⁶ But an evolution does after all presuppose a *constant transformation* of the system and is premised on the disappearance of some and the emergence of other system components. If the system can only exist, however, in the form in which we see it at the present time, then it simply cannot have *evolved*. The imagination finds it difficult to simultaneously vary the environment and the internal complexity of a functional system that has adapted to it. Yet both are constantly in flux. There is never a moment when functionality is perfect. That is why Kant's and his successors' view concerning the expedience of a living being is highly idealized. But it is this view that is sometimes also transferred to the system of concepts. Consequently, a philosopher like Wilfrid Sellars cannot imagine (on account of the delicate harmony among the conceptual norms), that this conceptual system might have originated other than "all of a sudden."⁷ This is the retrospective problem of how to imagine evolutionary processes of delicately coordinated functional connections that cannot be attributed to planning.

One may assume that a development such as we sketched in our fictive genealogy makes it inevitable that habits of differentiation are ever more precisely being coordinated with each other. For example, anyone who distinguishes between persons and objects and among the latter, grammatically, between masculine and feminine, cannot assert that men are objects. Yet with respect to neither living beings nor conceptual systems should one consider the *internal* coordination of the parts to be too *fine*, if the complexes in question are to remain capable of development. Vertebrates that are equipped with two kidneys will obviously survive even when one of the two organs fails. A damaged brain, as not only the famous case of Phineas Gage attests,⁸ need not mean the end of an organism. Just as little do incoherencies in a conceptual system entail that such a system is no longer useful for communication and as an aid in directing actions.

When two groups of people meet, and one of them believes tigers are gods and the other sees them as nothing but predatory beasts, they can agree all the same that they are facing a tiger, a dangerous predatory cat. They only will act differently toward the animal.⁹ A person who considers snakes the incarnation of evil will deal with them differently than someone who sees them as companions of Asclepius, the god of health. Even so, people with such different ideas about snakes can quite well alert one another whether a snake is present or not. The one will perhaps be glad about its presence; the other will more likely be horrified and may try to kill the snake. Even when both of them agree that a snake is

present, a dispute may arise between them about what this means and what is to be done because they have different concepts of a snake. The connections between the (different) concepts themselves and the relationships between concepts and actions are not of a kind that complete unanimity between them would have to exist before they can be communicative and, with respect to the collectively pursued aims motivating their actions, also “functionable.” The ways speaking beings live are not organized *inferentially*. They should not be reconstructed analogous to *theories*, as we shall see in greater detail later. Rather, they are more like *landscapes*. Certain conceptual conjunctures do exist within them the way landscapes with mountains and rivers contain passes and fords that lead from one region to another. There exist certain near and distant connections between actions and conceptual notions of the world. Some of them are easy to find, and others only with difficulty, the way one may in a landscape come upon an easily detectable path with the help of a broad road and, in case of a beaten track, encounter a hard-to-recognize link between two locales. And just as there is no direct transition between two areas in a landscape, making it necessary to travel from the one to the other region by way of very lengthy detours, so in the linguistic form of life there exist sections that are at best tangentially related, between which one sees no transitions. One will notice this in linguistic interactions when dissenting and disputatious attitudes arise. A good example of this is the vocabulary of the neurosciences and the actions of the physicians conjoined with it on the one side, and the language about freedom, right, and guilt and the legal actions linked with it on the other.

Dissent

In order to be able to understand how forms of dissent and dispute are possible and can plunge people into crevices, one has to grant individual persons the ability to *react* to the form of life and manners of speaking from which he or she has evolved. Such reactions can be accompanied by a painful transformation of one’s own identity. Someone who has grown up in a definitive religious, ideological, or sectarian environment, but then, on account of having lived through and overcome a particular experience, gets into a dispute with his or her social milieu, can under certain circumstances part with this sphere of influence. “Outsiders” may not understand why this person came to dissent with his or her spiritual/mental origin, how she could arrive at a new self-description and develop the strength to accomplish the separation, and why other persons with

similar experiences are incapable of behaving the same way.¹⁰ For some people, an experience in their lives will suddenly cause a reevaluation of their circumstances. Forms of behavior formerly described as “pious,” may then appear as “submissive”; processes characterized as “learning,” may now be evaluated as “brain washing.” If other persons concur with these new characterizations, a development within a small area of this linguistic form of life will be the result, clearly due to the spontaneity of persons reacting to this particular way of living.

Insights into biological and social determinations of human life often lead to the exaggerated opinion that human beings simply lack the ability to distance themselves from what determines them biologically, socially, or culturally *through their own initiative*. Such reactions, it is in fact assumed, are attributable instead to hidden biological or social parameters. Freedom is said to be an illusion.¹¹ But ever since science introduced the principle of action and reaction, even individuals in the inorganic world are thought to have an intrinsic ability to react to their environment. Human beings are frequently capable of reacting only when they can also *distance themselves* from these determinants in a process of cognition if they can somehow visualize what determines them, can imagine it so that the determinants no longer are at work clandestinely. (That is why freedom has something to do with insight and knowledge.) The question of what makes this possible is difficult to answer.¹² Language, at any rate, plays a *double part* in this: it determines speaking, thinking, and doing things, and it is, when appropriately mastered, a means of knowledge, distancing, and then also an instrument for the possible liberation from those determinants one has come to understand. Anyone who is capable of using language creatively and of relating it to one’s own life experience, also acquires the capability to relate creatively to the determinants of one’s own life situation and to deviate from the way his fellow beings speak and do things after they have been conditioned by similar circumstances. In principle, this is possible on three levels:

First, a human being can assert something that diverges from the others’ assertion that is formulated in the same conceptual terms. A asserts that the deer are on the left side of the clearing, and B says they are standing to the right. The second and much more important case, however, is that A wants to introduce a *new differentiation*, perhaps that between red deer and fallow deer that has not been mentioned before. He does so because he considers this distinction important for hunting. Perhaps what he means is that fallow deer are more nutritious and easier to hunt than red deer, and for this reason says: “Deer may be standing close by on the left, but farther in back to the right are *better* deer—let’s call them fallow

deer—that are much more nutritious and easier to hunt. We should concentrate on them.” Third, a member of the group might propose that one should not make assertions about where what game is to be found the center of one’s efforts and instead should offer greater sacrifices to one’s totem animals. The aim of this proposal is to change from *asserting* as the most important linguistic activity to *praising*.¹³ We shall see that this third form of dissident speaking is philosophically of very great relevance. Because some ways of speaking are central to a form of life, and others are peripheral, dissident philosophical speaking can aim at exchanging the relationships between periphery and center.

In the present context we are less interested in the origin of dissident speaking than in its future possibilities: How is future dissident speaking possible so that human life changes, given the existence of a functioning language game? Or, in other words: If the currently *real* way of speaking, because it is well adjusted, is part of a form of life *that can be continued* and is considered rational, how can new forms of speaking and living come about? How, to put it pointedly, are *innovations* possible so long as they must as a rule appear *irrational* when seen against the background of established forms of speaking and living?

New Concepts

If we step back from our genealogy and take a look at the actual linguistic situation in which people find themselves, we will encounter all three of the mentioned forms of linguistic dissent, respectively dissident speaking. Disputes constantly take place between persons who use the same conceptual terms as their foundation but assert different things about the facts. A style of dissident speaking that employs a different conceptual frame than the one used until now in the respective linguistic communities is less frequent, to be sure, but even that does exist, and it is of importance also. In contrast to the first form of dissent, which mostly occurs in everyday disputes or within an established science, this second one is relevant for philosophy. When philosophers propose, for example, that one should establish the concept of “human right” [*Menschenrecht*, one’s right as a human being, M.W.] in order to distinguish between the rights granted to persons by the legal system in which they are citizens and those they have regardless of their membership in such a legal system, then what is at stake is not simply differentiating between assertions in the sense that one person asserts A and the other one not-A. Rather, the issue is the differentiations that *are to be presupposed* in the first place.

In favor of these differentiations one can argue only *implicitly*. Concepts as habits of differentiating are, after all, the preconditions for creating premises that one can deploy in arguments. As a rule, in the analysis of arguments one tends toward underrating the relevance of differentiations. Very rarely is there a dispute about whether one has arrived at the conclusion correctly or what the case is. Often it is a conceptual difference that in reality is hiding behind the dispute about a correct or false conclusion: A *distinguishes differently* than B and for this reason has a different perception of a premise without the antagonists in the quarrel realizing this.¹⁴

A third possibility of dissent, finally, goes back to the proposition that humans should live *in a different culture* than the one that makes asserting its center. There is no quarreling here about meanings in assertions but about what relevance should be accorded to making assertions. This type of dissent is important for the philosophies of Heidegger and Rorty. The concept of thinking in Heidegger's way of using it points to a different manner for human beings to exist than the one that is being realized through representing and explaining as its central cultural activities.¹⁵ And Rorty pleads for developing a narrative culture in which the sciences no longer play the central role they currently occupy in the Western world.¹⁶

To propose new conceptualizations requires a considerably higher degree of creativity than divergent asserting within the same conceptual framework. In order to understand this, one would first of all have to become clear about what concepts are. For the context relevant here it suffices to imagine concepts as *habits of differentiation* about which one can reflect and which one can vary. Many living beings distinguish between bright and dark or sour and salty on the basis of their neuronal equipment. These abilities to differentiate are quasi "inbuilt" in living creatures. But one can also *acquire* capabilities of distinguishing something from something else during the history of one's life. Then it can become a habit to distinguish apples from pears and oranges from grapefruit. In this way one can tell the difference between elms and oak trees, dogs and cats, granite and basalt, aunts and uncles, and so forth. With human beings, this takes place most of all by way of language. But human beings can acquire not only habits of differentiation by means of language. They can also, as is the case with other habits, reflect on whether they should retain a habit or not. As one may at a certain stage of one's life consider the habit of smoking a mistake and that of jogging a benefit and for this reason quit smoking and instead take up jogging, so people can also give up *concepts* or introduce new ones. For example, people have for the most part given up the concept "witch" as one that

refers to a real difference among women. By contrast, they have introduced the concept of “human right,” as described above. Through both processes—and it is just that when concepts are being abandoned or introduced—not only language has undergone a development, but the human form of life has been changed as well. Less torture and torment is the result.¹⁷

But how is it possible for anyone to react creatively to established speech patterns during his or her lifetime? This question raises another question: What are “established speech patterns”? Linguistic usage establishes itself by forming a connection with other usages so that they become *systematically coordinated*, a process that is also “supervised” by institutions like *Duden*. At all times, only a part of the actually spoken language becomes “established” like that. In many regions of the linguistic landscape, a manner of speaking constantly arises that is not coordinated with other forms of language and against the background of the above-mentioned regulatory institutions must be considered divergent. Such a coordination of linguistic elements to make them conform to a “grand connection” does not always exist, for example, in philosophical language. (This is why philosophical language in general frequently defies easy understanding.) In this context, one can distinguish two types of philosophical attitudes about language: one type that tends toward *creating a terminology* with the help of neologisms and another one that derives its orientation from everyday speech which, as we shall see, does not exist as a system. Plato and Aristotle are in this case, as so often, good examples of fundamentally different philosophical mentalities. The Platonic dialogues are largely nonterminological. By contrast, Aristotle must have tended toward peculiar formulations, at least as his contemporaries saw it. If one translates his use of the Greek word *hyle* into everyday language, then his *Metaphysics* would contain clauses like the following: “By construction timber I mean, for example, the ore; and by shape the positioning of its idea, and by what both consist of, the statue as a together-whole.”¹⁸ This way of putting it must have sounded to Aristotle’s everyday contemporaries just as strange as a statement by Jacques Derrida does to ordinary French speakers. What characterizes the tendency to create a terminology is either an *expansion* of meaning—in our example Aristotle’s expanding the meaning of *hyle* beyond its everyday signification of “construction timber” to mean “material as such”—that can lead to a new concept. The alternative would be a *contraction* of meaning—as in Newton’s concept of force, where all semantic components suggesting “animal” and implying exertion and exhaustion are being “cut off.”

Such semantic interventions in the everyday meaning of concepts normally take place in the interest of system construction. For it is a characteristic of system creation in theoretical contexts that do not use everyday language to strive for inferential transparency and freedom from contradiction. Philosophical systems and scientific theories are comparable in the semantic and logical demands they make. Even though philosophical systems do not pursue explanatory purposes in the same way as scientific theories, their argumentative structures do frequently function deductively all the same. In this process, meanings are substituted for each other after, for example, definitions have established a semantic identity between two terminologically fixed expressions, and, accordingly, meanings of simpler concepts are combined to form more complex ones. Hence, deductions in philosophical systems are as a rule of a semantic and not syntactic or purely formal kind. A special case in this context is Hegel's system that in its conclusions (*Schlußverfahren*) requires a semantic transformation of its concepts so as to dissolve the aporetic semantic connections that were created earlier in the system itself.¹⁹ Hegel *makes systematic use* of contradiction. In his texts, contradiction is not something to be avoided (as little as in a Platonic dialogue) but is a consciously chosen means of advancing a line of thought. These semantic transformations of the concepts that play a role in his system, Hegel himself already related to changes of human forms of life, a salient example of which is the transition in the *Phenomenology of Mind* from enlightenment to absolute freedom and terror.²⁰ Nowadays, this procedure is hardly applied as a principle in system construction any longer, though it is used more likely as a means of historical *narration*. It has been a matter of controversy ever since the first appearance of Hegelian dialectics, whether the texts so produced have the character more of theoretical systems or of formalized historical narratives. In any case, both the Platonic dialogues and Hegelian dialectics create a *survey of the forms of dissent*. They present divergent habits of differentiating or represent the philosophically relevant semantic differences of concepts in natural languages as well as in scientific terminologies.²¹ This also reveals de facto or at least potential developments of language and of life.

Ideal types of theoretical system formations in which all concepts are neatly attuned to one another, all forms of dissent have vanished, and language seems to have come to a standstill can be found above all in the early modern era. The concept of system at this time is closely connected with *the concept of reason*. In this way, the Stoic conviction of the world's rationality is reflected in the methodological notion that the

representation or explanation of this rational world would, in turn, have to be “reasonable.” That meant the reasonable nature of the world putatively is revealed by the fact that in this world, everything is causally connected and that this causal connection, in turn, is to be represented through a system of inferential coherences, through a system of conclusions. Perhaps the clearest formulation of this is Spinoza’s parallelism of extension and thought, where a rational inferential order of ideas corresponds to the rational causal order of the bodies.²² In fact, the dilemma of human self-understanding reveals itself nowhere more clearly than in Spinoza’s claim that in his system he is representing both the world’s rational structure and promoting individual human freedom. It is important, however, for the question I have raised to recognize that Spinoza wanted to substitute his terminologically systematic semantics for the incoherent speaking and thinking that normally (i.e., outside his philosophy) takes place in everyday life. It was his intent to provide people with a therapy by liberating them from unreason and their subsequent suffering from their passions.²³ Both the disputes a person has to carry out inside himself and those into which he gets with other people were to be settled through an unambiguous and rational organization of the conceptual frame within which one thinks. (Spinoza would say, through the rational organization of the ideas that constitute one’s mind.) But this means if Spinoza’s critique of everyday speaking is right that *natural speech is not systematic* and therefore irrational, that the various semantics of everyday language are jagged and contradictory and for this reason causing dissent and suffering.

Spinoza was primarily looking at the *cultural* differences that are reflected in different languages. Of special importance (surely also for him personally) must have been the languages of religion. That one religion perceives God as vengeful and another sees him as loving can lead to dissent of various kinds. A pious attitude toward life can be realized through adherence to purity laws and meditation practices without accepting a personal god, as is the case in Buddhism, for example. Another form of piety may manifest itself in sacrificial rites in honor of a divine person. Such differences may contain many conflicts. As long as different manners of speaking and the forms of life in which they are “anchored” remain *separate* from each other, there will be no conflict. Problems arise only when the members of different cultures come together, when they try to live together, and try to speak to each other. One does not quite understand what the other one says when he speaks of “purity” or “devotion,” and how he lives when sacrificial rites or meditation exercises are part of one person’s daily rhythm but not of somebody else’s. To keep

forms of living separated and not to speak with one another may therefore be beneficial in the interest of preventing conflicts. But this also stifles all developmental opportunities. Trade relations may establish connections between many people, but that may not necessarily lead to peaceful coexistence. When both a Muslim and a Buddhist need a shirt and a loaf of bread and they sell shirts and bread to each other, this may be advantageous to both of them, but it does not mean that they actually have a mutual understanding and tolerance in religious terms. Just because they mean the same thing by “shirt” and “bread” does not imply that they share this unanimity about the meaning of “pious” or “holy.” There is also no need whatsoever that these religious concepts have the same meaning for them because there is no reason that the existence of one single way of speaking and living rather than a variety should be better for people in this world. One may even consider that the statement that it is better to have a variety of ways to live and to speak is little more than the expression of a particular preference. It may amount to nothing more than asserting that a variety of ways of living both in human and in nonhuman reality simply is “more beautiful” than so-called monocultures. Most of the time, however, the disappearance of variety is tied to painful processes of displacement and extermination, which means it entails processes that are morally relevant and do not merely concern the beauty or ugliness of our world. When systematizing human speech were to be accompanied by homogenizing human forms of life all over the globe, then one could perceive this tendency for good reasons as destruction of variety that potentially causes suffering.²⁴ Those who favor uniformity and universal reason will probably answer that one has to undergo this misery of homogenization in order to prevent the misery that various forms of dissent are likely to cause.

The philosophical friends of unified speaking and living often seem to think that differences in meaning have to do with forms of *imprecision*, if not of all things with *irrationalities* in the sense of *inconsistencies*. The meaning of a concept has to be firmly fixed so that *it is perfectly clear* what is meant. If a concept can mean different things, then its use can be interpreted inconsistently. And because an inherent contradiction allows, as is well known, any sort of conclusion, there is a danger lurking here. This may be correct if one proceeds from the rationality of definitive (rather than dialectically organized) theoretical systems in which there exist derivative relations between premises and conclusions. One cannot within one course of argumentation assert that God is a person and that he is not a person. But life and the language communities of human beings do not amount to sequences of argumentation. When people

understand different things by concepts, *their respective understanding* can be very precise. They may even understand to what degree the other person understands something different by a particular concept than they do themselves. Sometimes this kind of understanding leads to a quarrel among the people who make up a particular form of life. But even a quarrel is not something irrational. When a person is quarreling with herself, when she is not sure, if she thinks God is a person or not, then one can indeed plausibly assert that she is not in a reasonable state of mind, or one can say at least that she is not in a state of certainty. But when the semantic difference *extends to various people*, things have changed. It requires careful deliberation to decide when such a quarrel is to be settled through an agreement on a mutual signification and when by drawing a line. The world would become “more rational” only in a very theoretical sense if all its speakers were to follow the same semantic rules. But the question is if this would be “better” and in which sense. If the quarrel is the origin of a development in which neither standardization nor drawing a line takes place but a third alternative, that is, a new concept arises that both sides can accept, then one would not want to consider the “compromise” as something to be avoided. Rather, one would then, following Heraclitus and Hegel, so long as one accepts the new concept as the premise for a new insight, consider conflict to be the father of “progress.”

The metaphor of landscape I proposed for indicating human speech and the human forms of life suggests something altogether different here than that of system. Barriers that rivers, mountains, or oceans create in landscapes separate living beings from one another and bring about different forms of life. Because Australia has been separated from Asia for a long time, kangaroos exist there but not stags, and in Asia exist no kangaroos but stags. Both creatures are herbivore flight-not-fight animals and inhabit approximately the same type of ecological niche. Even so, due to the simple fact that marsupials reproduce and raise their offspring differently than deer, the whole life of kangaroos differs from that of stags. Would it be “more rational” if the border between Australia and the Asian continent were to be abolished and the stags would crowd out the kangaroos or vice versa? Borders protect life-forms from other life-forms and prevent conflict and competition. Philosophical reflections too often see differences against the background of a systemic taxonomy as something that has to be explicated in a dispute and suspended in standardization. It is questionable, however, if the jaggedness of a landscape must really be replaced with a consistent system, with a perfectly

functioning system of broad straight roads in order to reduce human suffering, as Spinoza believed.

Simply to let different ways of life exist side by side presupposes not only a degree of autonomy in facing the existence of differences (in Nietzschean terms one could call this noblesse, suggesting the distinction of not having to compare oneself) but also implies that reality does not dictate how one has to speak and to live. Only when reality does not force human beings into a single way of speaking and living is it possible for a variety of them to exist in the long run. For this, there is at least historical evidence. For a long time, a wide spectrum of human speaking and living was possible on our globe. Of course, all humans see a difference between water and pieces of fruit. This habit of making distinction seems to be demanded, so to speak, by "reality itself." But whether one has to differentiate between humans and animals, murder and homicide, marital and extramarital intercourse is not something the "nonhuman" world "regulates." Human beings create different social realities in different ways of living. If one does not differentiate between the distinctions that humans themselves have brought into this world such as the one between murder and homicide, and those that have existed all along like the one between water and pieces of fruit, then one can arrive at the erroneous conviction that humans would have to adjust their semantics to one another *in every respect* if they want to behave rationally. But things are exactly the other way around: insofar as they want to behave rationally toward their social world, they would in fact have to speak differently because these social worlds as given realities are as different from one another as the desert is from the ocean.²⁵ But it is humans themselves who have created the differences between the "social worlds," which has something to do with the *looping effects* of their self-categorizations. A healthy person who tells himself that he is a diabetic will not likely become one. Although effects of autosuggestion exist even in the medical-biological area, they are by far not as frequent as in the social area. When someone tells himself that he wants to be a sportsman, joins an athletic club, and practices, he can after a few months claim about himself, "Now I am an oarsman" or "I am a football player now," and "As a rower, I may eat only whole-meal bread, and should give up chocolates," or "As a football player I have to jog every morning," and so forth. Self-descriptions change us when we make them the occasion for changing our ways.

Certain metaphysicians and scientists may find it difficult to imagine a self-description as a causal factor, which has created a tendency among scientists to turn everything social into an aspect of biology. But it is

obvious that individuals as well as human groups behave in a certain way on account of certain self-descriptions, and for this reason, they take on certain characteristics. Buddhists are expected to meditate, rowers should lift weights, scholars must read books, and fathers need to take care of their children, and so forth, at least if they each take their respective classifications *seriously*. Only when they are serious about these self-descriptions and not merely engage in role-playing do they also turn into the type of persons who actually are more relaxed than others, have stronger muscles, know more, have certain worries, and so on. Hacking speaks of “human kinds” in this context: people describe themselves as this or that and thereby turn themselves into beings of this or that kind. Because these descriptions are subject to a historical drift, there is also a change in the different ways of being a human person. The most famous example in this context is perhaps that of the “kind” of homosexuals. Even though there have perhaps always been people who have engaged in same-sex contacts, it is obvious that the category of the perverse and sick homosexual is of more recent date. One can imagine a society in which same-sex love is considered a higher form of love because it lacks a biological function (was the Platonic Academy such a society?). We do know societies in which homosexuality is considered an illness or a crime, cursed with a moral taint. In Russian society, it is a sign of masculinity and gregariousness to belt down strong alcoholic drinks. In Islamic societies, it is deemed immoral to drink alcohol. One can imagine societies in which intensive athletic activities are frowned upon as a waste of time (perhaps those in which orthodox Judaism is influential) and others in which sports is an essential feature of everyday life (in California). When societies with such different characteristics come into contact with each other, it is quite possible that developmental processes set in and that in the course of time, the boundaries between the different “lifestyles” blur. This may initiate reevaluations of the attitude toward gay people, the consumption of alcohol, and sports. Such reorientations are both the cause and the expression of a changing life in which consciousness or the awareness of life are also undergoing a transformation. People who believe they are enslaved by a morally reprehensible vice will feel and behave differently than those who consider their behavior the expression of a special nobility and friendliness. The historical and—if we look at different societies—concurrently coexisting different forms of doing things and of speaking originate in who or what the respective persons *want to be*. One may want to put an end to this ability to reflect and to see things at a distance through defining human

nature entirely in biological terms. Then one would have to assert that human beings do not conform to “their kind,” that they fail “their nature” when they try to be alcohol-drinking denigrators of athleticism because these activities could harm their health and shorten their life. *Wanting-to-be*, the distancing and normative power of self-descriptions, that may even include whether one wants to be healthy in the first place and how long one wants to live, will then disappear. For, even though it can be proved that drinking alcohol and despising sports do shorten one’s life, people can *decide and desire*, individually or collectively, in favor of opting for the short life of an alcohol-consuming despiser of sports rather than an ascetic sporty type with a long life. With the help of one’s linguistic ability to reflect it is possible to distance oneself from the biological tendencies of life and to react to them.²⁶ By this I do not mean to say that human beings can change their arms into wings or their lungs into gills (even though their ability to reflect does after all enable them to construct airplanes and diving equipment). But within their culture, they can have thoughts about the intake of food, sexuality, and death, and they are able to reflect on the problem of how to live with these phenomena, depending on how they are described. Differing ways of living are manifestations of different ways of how one comes to terms with biological phenomena, among others. For this reason, it is impossible to abandon all forms of living and to level the differences in dealing with these phenomena by homogenizing the way people speak. A standardization of this kind would be possible only if one could prevent the community and its individual members from having their own thoughts about their experiences and from deciding what kind of human beings they want to be.

Experience of Life

Anyone who wants to react to a language and the form of life with which it is connected by systematizing it or by trying in a different way to intervene in it must first of all obtain a *survey* of its inevitably jagged landscape. He must ask himself why he wants to standardize this landscape, for example, by removing barriers between different realms of speaking and living in it, and why he prefers to introduce everywhere a religious, economic, or biological manner of speaking.

A not inconsiderable part of philosophical work is given to obtaining such surveys. The multivoiced texture of the Platonic dialogues, the pro

and con of a medieval *disputatio*, the figures of consciousness in Hegel's dialectics—all these forms of philosophical representation and reflection offer a survey of the possible trails through semantic landscapes. They show that human thinking, speaking, and living is not coherent on its own. Anyone who wants to create such a survey of the semantic differences and contradictions does not automatically say farewell to the ideal of freedom from contradictions. Perhaps he merely sees the ideal has not been realized as yet in every place and in each instance considers it enforceable. Perhaps after the survey, he will work toward achieving standardization (was it this way with Plato?). But there is an important argument to be made in favor of *maintaining* the contradictoriness of speaking in real language communities (as opposed to theories): the differing experiences of life made by actual people express themselves in different ways of using concepts. Only people who are capable of being linguistically serious about their own life's experiences and of conceptually making them public can be present with their "own voices," as Stanley Cavell has called this, in the community.²⁷ It is obvious that people with different experiences of life and a correspondingly different use of language will raise objections to what they say. As long as communities attach a higher value to the opportunity of individuals to reflect about their life's experiences and to discuss them than to preventing every kind of dissent, they will abhor a complete homogenization in the use of language. As long as there exist differing experiences of life, people must also contradict one another. In contrast to contradictions in a theory, this kind of contradiction does not reveal a flaw, for example, that the language in question is not yet "quite ready for it" or has not yet been "fully worked through." It does show, on the contrary, that people are still "working" with this language and that different subjects can accomplish something with it.

The clearly organized presentation that Wittgenstein strives for²⁸ is not a plea for relativism. Rather, it is semantic realism, as long as one is prepared to take note of the lack of uniformity in the existing semantic circumstances. Gaining a survey over semantic landscapes, for example, by using the word *nature*—a term that is associated with very different concepts or habits of differentiation depending on whether one speaks about natural things as a mathematician, physicist, biologist, or gardener—does not mean in any way that one approves of this pluralism or that one does not have a definite understanding of nature in one's own life. And if one supports a multivoiced texture, espouses the semantic autonomy of individuals, their right to a voice of their own, and stands up for a *semantic pluralism* within communities instead of advocating a strict systematiza-

tion (or scientification) in the everyday use of concepts, then this does not imply advocating a *relativism* that leaves it up to every single person how to use a word and what meaning to give it. For, based on a person's experience of life, there may *by necessity* exist for any human individual a definite meaning for a definite concept. But this does not make it more desirable, in my opinion, to homogenize what people have experienced in their lives because these experiences are what constitute the stories of their lives and define their individualities. Whoever wants to grant people and groups of people their individuality should flinch from exerting too severe a pressure in favor of semantic standardization. That a physicist who participated in a war has, on the basis of his laboratory and war experiences, a different concept of war than the biologist who was not in the war is no problem. Why should one reduce these different ways of understanding nature and war to one and only one awareness? Why should it be unreasonable that two conceptual modes are colliding here? Why should the disappearance of individual experiences of life in one standardized conceptual terminology lead to more rationality? So long as the experiences of life and the conceptual intuitions that connect with them can be articulated, everything can in fact be relived. It is a philosophical illusion that human communication, so long as it is rational, is "oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus."²⁹ A group of scientists may in its communication about an experiment have to establish a consensus about how an experiment is to be interpreted. In this situation, they proceed from the same (experimental) experience and the same structures of reasoning and signification (the theories they share). In political committees whose rules require unanimity before a decision can become legally valid, consensus may likewise be a communicative good. But every parliamentary debate and vote in which a simple majority leads to a decision does not aim for consensus but for making dissent visible. Consensus is the premise for getting done what the majority votes for. But the fact that different speakers proceed from different premises when they argue for or against a bill, that they attribute different weight to commonly shared premises, is a consequence of the different experiences that determine their speeches. In democratic procedures one arrives at a decision by way of the consensually accepted majority rule as its procedural principle. That is to say, that decisions do not of all things need a consensus but the articulation of the various dissenting voices. By contrast, philosophers sometimes act as though expressions of dissent are attributable primarily to differently solid reasons for them.³⁰ The truly interesting voices of dissent, however, originate from different premises of the argumentation while the strategies of reasoning are

equally solid. When these differences in the premises are the result of differences of experiences, but when the latter have to do with differences in the histories of the individuals and collectives, then the fixation on consensus and reasoning in some theories of communication reveals a blindness of philosophical theory formation for the actual historical processes and the experiences of life behind them. These experiences result in differences that no theory of rationality can discuss away.

Ordinary Language, Theories, and Explanations

It is ironic that of all philosophies the late thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the greatest “surveyors” of our linguistic landscapes, has become the starting point for a type of thinking that seeks to comprehend natural language as an *inferential system*. This approach proceeds analogous to theories that are terminologically organized to the last detail. For, Robert Brandom’s inferential semantics picks up a metaphor that was used both by Wittgenstein and David Lewis. Wittgenstein has made the conceptual term *language game* prominent. David Lewis, adopting it, has said that in languages we *count points*, which means that there is a kind of scorekeeping (just as in a ball game, the points that a person or team has made in the form of baskets, runs, or goals are recorded).¹

Brandom appropriates this metaphor and starts with the premise that the meaning of a concept, for example, is fixed by the quantity of previously accepted propositions in which the concept has appeared before. In his opinion, the question whether an utterance is accepted in an actual linguistic exchange or not depends on what the proposition that manifests itself in the utterance presupposes at a given point in time and whether these presumptions have been accepted or not.² Speakers make *commitments* and claim *entitlements* when they carry out speech acts in a language game. At any stage of a conversation, what one can say and do depends on what one has said before: “what one is permitted or obliged to do depends on the score, as do the consequences that doing

so has for the score. Being rational—understanding, knowing how in the sense of being able to play the game of giving and asking for reasons—is mastering in practice the evolution of the score. Talking and thinking is keeping score in this sort of game.”³ Rational speaking and thinking here means that, in accordance with the semantic rules, there is an exchange of justifications and that premises are being explicated so that what can be said and done has been laid down. Human beings speak with one another—that is the impression Brandom’s theory leaves with the reader—by attending to whether the other one is careful enough to keep his semantic commitments, whether he will be sure to say B after he said A. The meanings of the concepts are fixed by the established propositions in which they occur and can be combined accordingly. In this manner, the semantic rules are posited according to which concepts should be handled in the future. Of course, speakers do actually deviate from these rules. But Brandom is not concerned with how the score is being kept in reality. Instead, he is interested in how it *should* be kept according to the implicitly normative scorekeeping practices and “how scorekeepers are *obliged* or *committed*.”⁴ An obligation to divergent speaking does not appear in this picture. The de facto “wildly proliferating” development of the meaning of concepts and the consequent opportunities for innovative speaking are beyond the interests of this normatively rationalistic picture of language.⁵ It also leaves no room for the creativity of misunderstandings and deviations from rules. Even such a rather simple problem as how a concept is being used in a new sentence that one has never heard before presupposes more than being subsumed under a rule, requiring as it does the imaginative analogizing of previously heard uses of the concept with the one directly present.⁶

In baseball as in other ball games in which one scores points, there are also *umpires* or *referees* who apply the rules of the game to the quickly changing situations according to their “power of judgment” and when necessary, punish transgressions. The rules are fixed. No referee may change them during the game. The players have to abide by the rules and accept the referees’ decisions. Is that the situation in which we find ourselves during a language game? Who are the referees? Is asserting and justifying all we do? What about asking questions and giving orders? And most of all, what about suggestions for using a word in a new way? How do we deal with different ways of understanding terms if de facto, as I believe, there is no one to make the decisions?

Brandom asserts that the different perspectives on the world, due to different perceptions, and the different semantic commitments that different interlocutors have entered into through their existing utterances

“can be aggregated into one grand score for each stage of the conversation of a linguistic community.”⁷ But this notion is as implausible as the utilitarian aggregation of the happiness of a group of people. The illusion of such a “collective happiness” may arise in politicians who in an election result see the votes cast by voters for their party aggregate in a graphic representation. When politicians bear the responsibility for governing, they may frequently also have to ask themselves which decision would benefit most people, or they ask themselves which action would gain them the most votes. But as long as the benefit that individual persons experience and the feeling of happiness of individual people do not combine into a mutual awareness of benefit or happiness, these aggregations amount to fictions in which the mathematical representations of majorities and minorities are considered as concrete beings. The same is true of Brandom’s “consciousness of meaning,” or his semantic scores. The reason for Brandom’s fiction, however, can also be found in the fact that he has adopted not only Wittgenstein’s language-game metaphor but also an understanding of language that analogizes it with *theories*.

Languages as Theory-Like Totalities

In order to realize what this inheritance involves, it is sensible to recall a meaningful passage in *Word and Object* in which Quine discusses how language can come to refer not only to so-called sense stimuli and how it can describe them:

Someone mixes the contents of two test tubes, observes a green tint, and says “There was copper in it.” Here the sentence is elicited by a non-verbal stimulus but the stimulus depends for its efficacy upon an earlier network of associations of words with words; viz., one’s learning of *chemical theory*. Here we have a good glimpse of our *workaday conceptual scheme* . . . in contrast to that crude stage [of merely phenomenological reporting about sense stimuli, M.H.], the verbal *network of an articulate theory* has intervened to link the stimulus with the response. [This] intervening theory is composed of sentences associated with one another in multifarious ways not easily reconstructed even in conjecture.⁸

Quine interprets the everyday conceptual frame within which we move by the paradigm of a theory. Also, scientifically examined theories and everyday languages cannot clearly be separated from each other. They are interwoven. Everyday perceptions are influenced by theories, for example, by those of chemistry. And just as in a theory the meanings of the terms

are coordinated with each other, just as assertions refer to each other in consequential relationships and just as from this a web of concepts and propositions results, so also our “workaday conceptual scheme,” our ordinary language is said to be structured holistically. In conjunction with the established theories, it forms the famous “web of belief.”⁹ Also, in this case, we may ask where the collective subject is in which all the convictions come together that human beings have created in science and in everyday life.

Theoretical languages in contrast to natural languages are largely artifacts that were produced for a particular purpose. They exist to *explain* astounding events and connections. Even though scientists have no absolute power over theoretical languages and always remain influenced by the history of their discipline when they devise its terminology, they do, when they create neologisms and make postulates have a disproportionately greater power over the development of “their” technical terminologies than any speaker of a natural language. Natural languages are, after all, no artifacts. They were not created to provide a collectively applicable instrument that gives explanations. It is an important observation of Wittgenstein’s late philosophy that language acts fulfill a good number of functions, not only those of designating and explaining. Observing natural languages from the standpoint of theoretical languages is like trying to tell the growth of trees from looking at planed and polished tabletops. For, the production of theoretical languages goes hand in hand with, among other things, *making meanings unambiguous* and with an *explication and fixing of inferential relations*. Studying the lemmas of dictionaries and a glance at the way people actually speak, however, shows that *linguistic* expressions are in no way unambiguous (as when Latin *altus* has to be translated as “high” or “deep,” depending on the context), and people can often live quite well with the contradictions that arise between their professional and ordinary “social roles.” Neither as individuals nor as groups or linguistic communities are people rational mind-substances in the Cartesian sense.¹⁰ Sometimes they may agonize over contradictions, sometimes not. That varies from person to person and from one contradiction to the next. It is also far from certain that the life of individuals and of communities would always be a better life if it were to take place “on the basis” of a system of convictions without inconsistencies.¹¹ But it seems obvious to me that the actual natural language (not its normative dream), if we could ever obtain a “complete” survey of it, would represent a contradictory connectedness.

Theories, on the contrary, can always be controlled to a certain degree by their producers in the way that they use them, for example, to cleanse

them of contradictions. To be sure, theories will always, unless purely formal theories are involved, contain fragments of everyday language that is beyond the control of individual persons. But a successful theory that accomplishes its explanatory aims can become the standard for the use of concepts in many fields of speaking. A salient example is Newton's definitions of force and work in the study of mechanics and the effects they have in everyday language. Imagining a natural language in analogy to a theory means that one also imagines an administration of the semantic norms of the natural language analogous to the administration of a theoretical language by explaining scientists. A quarrel about the meaning of a concept would then no longer be a power struggle, as it is in fact likely to be in the case of a natural language. Instead, there would exist an objective standard (for instance, explanatory success) that would be administered by a referee. This person would then have to decide which use of the concept is the more successful one. In reality, however, terms that are of little explanatory relevance like "honor," "Vaterland" (fatherland, land of our fathers), "nature" (*die Natur*) play an important role in ordinary language, even in practical terms.¹²

When philosophers of ordinary language refer to what "we" mean by a word or how "the man on the street" speaks, they seem to claim that they have a survey of the various ways in which concepts of natural language are used. This appears possible in exactly the same way that one can obtain a survey of what concepts mean in a theory. But only in exceptionally few cases does such a survey originate in empirical research. After all, this type of research does not seem absolutely necessary whenever a reprimand of this kind is made with a normative claim. Whenever actual natural speakers speak differently than "we" speak, they are not in keeping with the norm. The only case that I am aware of, in which a philosopher conducted research about the different ways that locutions are used, and consequently in Wittgenstein's sense explored the meanings of words in different language communities, is that of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, to whom I will return later.¹³

Educational Experiences

The notion prevails that ordinary language is a system in which the meanings of words exist in neat harmony with one another, free of contradictions. Parallel to this notion runs the assumption that there is a concept of truth that always refers to the characterization of an attribute of statements. Accordingly, even in the natural languages only speaking

of *propositional* truth makes good sense. But both in sequences of utterances made in a natural language and in philosophical texts, the presentation of assertions that are simply set forth as true because they are connected with successful explanations are rather infrequent. Much more often the intent is to *publicize* new ways of using concepts and thus to *create* the *insight* into statements that are considered to be true. Hence, Gottfried Gabriel, in the context of his analysis of Bishop George Berkeley's dialogues, emphasized that their aim is not merely an argumentative explication of the assertion "*esse est percipi*," but that they also seek to create in the reader an *insight into this truth*. Yet this insight cannot be gained, he says, by the force of the argument but is an *attitude* toward the respective truth.¹⁴ The statement "*esse est percipi*" is plainly implausible. Many readers will reject it as absurd. For this reason, the meaning of "to be" (*esse*) and "to perceive" (*percipere*) are submitted to closer scrutiny so that the intuitive rejection of the statement "To be is to be perceived" is being jolted. In the end, the "propositional attitude" is to be created in the light of which one has *gained the insight* that the being of something consists of its being perceived. Consequently, "I have come to see that '*esse est percipi*' is true" is the actual goal of the dialogues, rather than proving that "*esse est percipi*." Such a propositional attitude creates something *personal*. One could also simply say, my intent is to create the insight into or a conviction about this truth in order to avoid the rather artificial relationship to the abstract object called "proposition." Here, the author turns directly toward the individual reader. He does not announce the universal validity of the truth of a theory.

A philosophical text is neither a report about the truths of facts nor a decree about normative decisions. Such a text is intended to communicate and create insights and evidences. Frequently, insights of this kind go along with accepting a semantic explication. For anyone who sees that Berkeley is right when he asserts that "Being means being perceived," the meaning both of "being" and of "perceiving" undergo a change. Adherents of different convictions, representatives of diverse truths frequently mean something different by the concepts that they use. This has to do, among other things, with their various experiences. Trying to understand Berkeley's dialogues closely can even lead to an experience or, as people used to say, to an "educational adventure" (*Bildungserlebnis*), which is more than understanding an argument. It may cause the person so affected to see concepts differently and to become aware that meanings in his or her language change. Because not everyone has the same experiences and the same "educational adventures," their concepts are different. But even so, they are capable of making themselves understood in a mutual lan-

guage. A change affecting a person's "household of convictions" and in the meanings that he or she uses is an introduction to a new view of the world. The educational experience thus makes new experiences of the world possible, which is exactly what also the author's text seeks to accomplish in the reader. Texts and extended committed utterances are attempts to bring about a change through the intimate relationships of a conversation and of reading. It is a change that would provide an opportunity for experiencing the world on terms that resemble those of the committed speaker or the author of a text.¹⁵

Multiplicity of Meanings

In order to understand the multiplicity of meanings that attach themselves to the words in an ordinary language, it is necessary to visualize the different activities that people pursue: eating oysters, having sex, feeding babies, making music, running in a race, torturing prisoners, bandaging wounds, assisting the dying, expressing condolences, and so on. During these activities, people have different experiences and talk more or less often. Only a very few of them will at times even conduct experiments, construct theories, and in the process have scientific experiences that they utilize in explanatory projects. In view of the fact that there exists a large number of ways that people behave and have experiences, it is surprising that scientific observations, explanations, and deductions play such an important role in contemporary philosophy, as if all human beings were explanatory scientists or as if the explaining scientist were the ideal human type. Some philosophers appear to look at *all* of human life under the heading of *folk psychology* as an *imperfect explanatory connection*.¹⁶ This fixation on finding explanatory conclusions can be called, at least as far as it relates to human circumstances, a variant of *scientism*.

Understanding everything humans do and say according to the two activities of reaching a theoretical conclusion and of giving a scientific explanation, means that certain scientific work turns into the standard of rational speaking and acting as such and that all other activities that in one way or the other deviate from the ideal of scientific proficiency or have not yet accomplished it are considered *imperfections*. But what does the feeding of babies or the stroking of cats have to do with an imperfect explanatory activity or with applying a theory?

When such a scientific perspective constricts the view of the *condition humaine*, the observers will easily misapprehend the relevance of

nonpurposive acts in ordinary or everyday life. They will also underestimate the transformations in a culture that arise because sciences and technology exert an influence on daily life. If everyday life were nothing more than a preliminary stage of science or an indication of its decay, one would find it difficult to understand the repercussions of science on things of everyday life. For, this impact would then be nothing else but a *self-actualization* of scientific rationality that is in any case present in everyday life. Differences between cultures that are characterized by science and technology and those that are defined primarily by religion, art, or warfare will then be difficult to understand, unless one takes recourse to a schema like modern and rational because scientific, *versus* premodern and unscientific, hence irrational. Suppose science has determined that jogging is good for one's circulation, and many people in one culture start running because this insight has been popularized there. In another culture, the priesthood adopts the notion that on Sundays, no one may walk more than one thousand paces but spend the day in contemplation and meditation and then publicizes this idea. This difference in the manner of exerting influence is not one of differing explanations but of differing cultural authorities: explanatory ones here, religious ones there.

What I have called scientism here misunderstands, briefly stated, the ordinary and everyday as a form of *theory*, as an imperfect connection of conclusion and explanation. The critique of it I do not wish to understand as a revival of the reactionary critique of so-called logocentrism in the early twentieth century. Taking their cues from Nietzsche and following the intuitionism of the "conservative revolutionaries" Lagarde, Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck,¹⁷ the most prominent representatives of this trend were Ludwig Klages and Viktor von Weizsäcker—both practitioners of a critique that still reverberates in the Heideggerean antimodernism of French postmodernists.¹⁸ For, unlike the opponents of so-called logocentrism, I do not want to understand explaining and deducing as the only forms of rationality. A person who does not explain or deduce can still realize structures of action and thought that in an ordinary sense may be considered *rational* because they *can be continued* and because they create agreements in the actions of individuals. This can be made comprehensible in a simple way by applying what is also a concept of Wittgenstein: follow the rules (*Regelfolgen*). Counting or grammatically correct writing and speaking are neither forms of explaining nor a kind of deducing, but that is no reason for banishing them to the realm of unreason. Stephen Toulmin has shown even for the sciences themselves that it would be fatal to understand them primarily as inferential

systems. I will include reminders of Toulmin's critique in the following comments in order to point out how far-reaching is the misunderstanding that our symbolic everyday actions could be reconstructed in inferential concepts.¹⁹

In Anglo-American philosophy, Donald Davidson and Robert Brandom are currently the most widely discussed representatives of what I call here the scientific-inferentialistic tendency. It is generally known that Davidson moves explaining and understanding into very close proximity to each other when he considers the process of understanding as one of constructing hypotheses and prognoses about the web of opinions and about the actions to be expected of the person to be understood and sees the rational explanation of action as a variant of causal explanation.²⁰ Davidson participates in this scientific trend in two ways: (a) in the orientation he takes from Alfred Tarski's convention, developed explicitly only for *formal* languages, of establishing truth value through the meaning of "true" in *natural* languages, which in contrast to formal languages have no fixed semantic structure at all, and (b) in his view that nonscientific languages have a semantically holistic structure. Sellars, Davidson, and Brandom are all representatives of this semantic holism that by now has become almost a dogma of contemporary philosophy of language. The *openness* of natural languages—I will discuss this in connection with Tarski in the final section of this chapter—makes this holism implausible, however. This holism has to be juxtaposed by *populationism*, an alternative that does not think the semantic units from which a sentence constructs itself as organized in a deductive system but sees them as what Toulmin, in the context of evolutionary biology, has called populations.²¹

The way of seeing things that concerns me here is very simple: observable facts and truths exist in *many* symbolic contexts, many of which in turn have *nothing* to do with explanations and theoretical deductive connections. In this I proceed from a *strong concept of theory*, according to which a theory exists only where also an inferential structure *that was created with the intention of explaining something* is explicit. Sciences are—this has been a truism²² since the pragmatic turn in the philosophy of science—not identical with the theories that people in these sciences advocate, and the multiplicity of theories that is important in a scientific discipline does not consist of a coherent deductive system.²³ But it is even more important to me in this context that natural languages cannot be theories in this sense. It is for this reason that theory-independent facts and truths exist. They need not, however, satisfy criteria of *immediacy* because of that. It is my aim not only to make this view of natural language plausible but also to show how the misleading notion has arisen

that *all* observations and truths are charged with theory or have been constructed theoretically. This is not to speak up in support of some kind of realism. Rather, I will argue against the distinction between realism and antirealism or idealism.

The Relevance of Distinguishing between Science and the Ordinary

Why is it important to point out the difference between explanatory sciences and ordinary life? The significance of distinguishing between the scientific and the ordinary consists primarily of the need to recognize that there exist observations and truths of the ordinary (for example, in criminal proceedings, in which fact finding is known to play an essential role and witnesses by swearing an oath are to be prevented from telling an untruth). Statements and conflicts about what is the case as well as the search for truth and the effort of evading deceptions are not only the privilege of sciences. The facts and truths that are the issue, for instance, in court proceedings, do not depend on theory. They are not part of explanatory strategies in a scientific sense even though scientific consultants may be called upon in order to prove someone's guilt through a DNA analysis and expert witnesses produce statements in this situation. Whether the neighbor takes his dog for a walk in his own yard and the dog has killed someone's cat there, whether the husband has gone to bed with the lady next door and impregnated her, whether she lies and her own jealousy is justified or not—all these are questions to establish facts and differences about what is true without there being a theory involved from the start. Suspicions of the lady next door or of the marital partner are not so much hypotheses about her opinions and behavior as most often manifestations of affective patterns that among other things are symptoms of the respective social circumstances (neighborhood and marriage) and can provide motives for actions that then will be central to attributions of guilt. Now the question is what about these affective patterns and their manifestations in everyday life should be of *philosophical* interest.

Again Stanley Cavell's work is helpful here. For, when Cavell places everyday things or what he himself calls "the ordinary" into the center of his philosophical thought and, for example, in his reading of *Othello*, establishes a connection between the phenomenon of jealousy and skepticism, he shows that the questions of philosophical skepticism are relevant not only for how we deal with scientific assertions and presumptive phil-

osophical certainties. They also pertain to human *life in general*. According to Cavell, the skeptic breaks a certain bond with the world the same way a jealous person falls out of a relationship. It is not as though the skeptic notices all of a sudden that until now no criteria whatever were available to him to support his putative knowledge about the existence of the outside world and that the jealous person has no criteria for the fidelity of his beloved. Rather, the sudden search for criteria shows that the connection with the world respectively the interpersonal relationship has changed. As Wittgenstein says about what he calls his "world picture" (*Weltbild*) that he is not attached to it because he has satisfied himself of its correctness, one can say analogously that one person does not love another because she has *satisfied* herself of his faithfulness.²⁴ At the very moment that I have doubts about the rightfulness of how I live or about the loyalty of my spouse, the form of life has already ended being *mine* in an emphatic sense, and my spouse only appears to be my unquestioning confidante.

A mathematician may be convinced that a particular theorem can be proved or refuted and may search for premises and forms of evidence that would justify his conviction. But the circumstances of everyday life are not like the unproven or as yet nonrefuted theorem of the mathematician. The question that interests Cavell and Wittgenstein is not whether there exist criteria for the correctness of my form of life or the fidelity of my spouse. In paralleling skepticism and jealousy, Cavell is concerned instead with the problem of how the strange expansion of the demand of reason comes about to search for criteria, proofs, and explanations even in places where everything was intuitively self-evident before, and where no one had questions about what was happening. What does this kind of behavior indicate? That there is an outside world or that someone sides with me is at first quite obvious. And yet, both certainties can cease being self-evident. But the discovery of criteria does not restore the previous self-evidence. Criteria do not lead back into a state of innocence before questions were raised. What skeptics and jealous persons search for, does not, if they find it, return them to the ordinary relationships out of which they have fallen.

That, by the way, is also true in reverse order of scientific theories. Successful theories have been established by criteria of mathematical provability and empirical demonstrability. But that does not make them self-evident in the ordinary sense. The assertions of Copernicus and Newton were as little self-evident in their time as were those of Einstein and Planck centuries later. If nowadays I ask people without expertise in the natural sciences and who are unfamiliar both with the specific problems to which these theories were a reaction and with the procedures of their

examination, it is to be expected that they consider the Earth's rotation around itself and around the sun, or the fact that in a vacuum a bird's feather falls at the same speed as a stone as little self-evident as the truth that the force of gravity is replaced by the curvature of space or that electrons, when they move to a higher or lower energy level, always do so in the form of quantum leaps. But for scientists calculating and experimenting with or in their theories, these are all, on the basis of their mathematical or experimental *procedures*, nothing but self-evident truths even if not self-evident truths *of the ordinary*. That means even the self-evident truths of scientific theory do not originate by virtue of criteria according to which the theory is accepted as certain. Rather, they come about through the repeated employment of a calculation or an experimental system, which is to say, through applying smoothly functioning habits of action.²⁵ Consequently, self-evidence and certainty are not identical, even in science. An education in mathematics and the natural sciences, while imparting the pieces of evidence needed to support these theories, is not capable either to turn scientific insights into pieces of *everyday* self-evidentialities. This can be accomplished at best through ordinary actions performed at technical *apparatuses* whose scientific conditions are known. Hence, what is ordinarily or scientifically self-evident and what has been proved by criteria and is certain are obviously two different things. But it is exactly this difference that is made invisible when one understands the ordinary from the viewpoint of scientific theory. By contrast, Cavell seeks to use the differentiation between the scientific and the ordinary in order to restore the universal relevance of philosophical investigations. This means reversing what he has called the debasement of philosophy through its fixation on the sciences and to sharpen again the sense for the complications of human existence, for the "human complexity," as he calls it, without referring to the *immediacies* of the ordinary.²⁶

The fact that I truly love Miriam or that the streetcar line number 9 in Zurich stops at the Rigiblick station does not mean that I am immediately aware of this. I have experienced that I love Miriam and that the number 9 stops at Rigiblick station, and these experiences are characterized by all kinds of concepts. But these concepts are not parts of theories. Even though in this case no ascertained theories exist in the background, these facts and truths are not trivial. If I am new to Zurich and want to be on time for a meeting at Hotel Rigiblick, it is *important* for me to know that the number 9 stops there. If I ask someone because I don't know how to get there and am told that I should take the number 5 at Kunsthau, I am being unpleasantly led astray. Questions about which street to take reveal the relevance of truths that require no theory with special urgency. And

when I tell myself that I really love Miriam, the consequence may be that I will marry Miriam. If I deceived myself in this through wishful thinking (what exactly that means will be a later topic),²⁷ then a very painful kind of insight may later be the result. The fact that I am mistaken about my love for a person because of wishful thinking does not mean, however, that I have not searched correctly for the criteria by which I may have been able to ascertain my love for this person. Wishful thinking and self-deception are not the same kind of error as the one that happens when I make (a mathematically) incorrect deduction or take an inaccurate measurement in an experiment. There exist theory-independent truths and facts as well as theory-independent errors. All of them, despite being independent of scientific theories, are highly relevant in our lives.

James, Tarski, and the Concept of Theory

Cavell did not invent the distinction between scientific and nonscientific truths. Already William James pointed to the difference between *common sense* and *science*. James was convinced like Tarski but unlike Davidson that there is no *uniform concept of truth* and that Truth as such ("*die Wahrheit*" *als solche*) cannot be the object of a philosophical theory.²⁸ He thought instead that truths have to be understood in the plural, but that they share the fact of *guiding* us from one experience to the next, from one clause to the next, one object to the next, or one action to the next. The way they do this is different each time, depending on whether a truth is involved that guides us in a laboratory, in a courtroom, or in our search for the right path. But according to James, this "being guided" *always* takes place. It only means something different in each case. Being guided by a logical theorem like the *modus ponens* from one line in a proof to the next line is only one possibility among many. This theorem cannot be transferred to the particular way that the right information about the correct direction takes us to our destination. The question of whether one should give priority to a correspondence-, coherence-, or consensus theory was *senseless* for James because he believed that there are *different* procedures for convincing oneself of the truth of something and that these procedures sometimes depend on correspondence, sometimes on coherence, and sometimes on consensus. In the strong sense of theory that I made the basis of my arguments above, James did not advocate a theory of truth that explains what truth in science or in common sense really is. It is exactly at this point that Russell's criticism, says James, misunderstood his intention.²⁹ James wanted *to show* what

people are after when they are searching for truths. In the process of this act of demonstrating, he also made assertions, and one can opt for basing something on a *weak* concept of theory, according to which *any* assertive connection that claims to consist of true sentences is a theory, regardless of what kind of a structure this assertive connection has and with which intention it has been produced. In this weak sense, even Plato in *Theaetetus* would have represented a theory of cognition, Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Mind* in the chapter “Lordship and Bondage” a theory of *Anerkennung* (recognition), and Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morals* a theory of bad conscience. And even my grandmother’s sequence of convictions, by which she can state in a recipe what goes into good Königsberg dumplings, would amount to a theory.

But I consider this weak concept of theory misleading not only for an understanding of the ordinary but also in the context of analyzing philosophical activities. I do not believe that Plato, Hegel, and Nietzsche advocated the theories indicated, indeed that they were at all interested primarily in *advocating* theories. They did something altogether different in their writings: they *showed* processes of thinking, *advanced* conceptual developments, and *unveiled* prejudices. Perhaps Plato was even leading a theoretical life in the sense of a contemplative existence. Who is to know? But, to put it polemically, he had not degenerated, as little as had William James, into the spokesman of a conviction cartel like those philosophers who offer a realism or constructivism the way other people are representatives for vacuum cleaners or electric irons.³⁰ James had no intention of representing an explanatory theory of truth; instead, he wanted to show descriptively what happens when people search for truths.

For this reason, it would also not be right to celebrate James as the inventor of a pluralistic theory of truth such as Crispin Wright, for example, later developed.³¹ Recognizing a multiplicity of forms of truths need not trigger the reflex action of labeling them with an -ism, and playing them up as an explanatory “theory.” The fact that there are many types of cars (*Lastwagen*, trucks; *Kinderwagen*, strollers; and *Einkaufswagen*, shopping carts) may be a temptation to propose that there exists a multiplicity of vehicles that can be rolled. In view of this fact, one need not, however, feel bound to formulate a unifying theory of the car or wagon. That human beings search for truth is certainly more central to their existence than the use of a plurality of rolling containers. Yet it does not advance our recognition of the human need for truth to declare that the descriptions of the correspondence-, coherence-, and the revelatory character of activities in which a search for truth takes place are to be theories of truth as such and line them up in opposing positions. In cases like these, most of the time

nothing but an abstraction is postulated: the essence of Truth as such. Just as little does the reference to rolling containers as such explain anything about the essence of the various cars or wagons by presupposing an abstraction. For, the category of “rolling containers as such” simply does not exist anywhere but in this pseudotheory. It likewise does not explain what truth really is when philosophers honor truth with the use of concepts of correspondence, then attempt to reconstruct other ways of understanding truth as variants of correspondence or as “less foundational,” and for this reason would prefer to “represent” a “realism.” This failure is due to the fact that this object in need of explanation is a fiction, or more precisely, what Whitehead called an inappropriate concretization of a postulated abstraction.³² What takes place is this: truth is first postulated as that to which all utterances with “true” presumably refer, the way one understands a proposition as that to which synonymous sentences, that is, the sentences from different languages, presumably refer. And then one asks oneself how in the world these abstract objects can be possible.

The concrete practices of translating and of searching for orientation are being excluded from these abstract deliberations. This is the very reason, however, that the need for an abstract object arises in the first place. If translators would say that in turning the Latin *philosophus dixit* into the English sentence “The philosopher said” they refer to a proposition, then this assumption would be justified. Equally justified would be the search for a theory of truth if people who require a true theory about gravitation or need a true friend for a mountain hike were to assert that in such situations they would always refer to truth per se. If one considers truth or proposition theories as explications of translation or orientation activities, then people themselves are not quite sure during these activities what they are doing when they are looking for a correct translation or an orientation. The theoretician, reconstructing these activities with the help of a propositional concept or a general conception of truth, moves into an observer’s position in which he presumes to have a better view of what really happens during the practice in question. He will not attempt to duplicate the practice in question by participating in it.³³

What in this connection may indeed require explanation is the fact that humans need orientation and that they search for something that gives an impetus to their lives. Perhaps they do in fact and in contrast to other beings need sentences, friends, pictures, remembrance markers, and the like so that they can decide what they should do next, where they should turn. Perhaps that is why they search for the true theory, the true religion, the true leader, the true friend, and so forth. An appreciation of this

constitutional absence of orientation in humans, however, will hardly emerge from a theory of truth.

That philosophizing might have nothing to do with representing an “ism” like “realism” or “consensualism,” has by now become difficult to understand due to the academic turn that philosophy has taken. Most academic philosophers understand themselves as representatives of “schools” and not as practitioners who pursue the art of serious thinking and help others to learn the practice. They are more closely akin to the representatives of ecclesiastical confessions than to the teachers at art academies or conservatories who impart certain proficiencies.

Even though James, then, was no *representative* of a textbook-like idealism or realism, was no representative of a philosophical confession, he asserts all the same that the universal characteristic of a truth—that it *moves us ahead* in a sequence of expressions, actions, or objects—can best be described by the concept of *agreement*. Strict agreement in the sense of *correspondence*, according to James, exists only in those truths that involve pictorial imagination or memories. For example, he mentions that it may very well be true or erroneous that the memory picture looks like a clock and that it makes good sense to speak here of correspondence—as when someone says, he thought the dial is blue, but now that he looks at the clock again, he realizes that it is gray.³⁴ For scientific theories, however, James seems to have considered this kind of agreement implausible as a variant of truth, while he seems to have found procedures that suggest consensual and coherentist conceptions of truth more convincing.

In his essay “Truth and Proof,” Alfred Tarski distinguished between, on the one hand, normal languages with “universal character” that constantly expand and that make *no* clear distinction between semantic expressions like “name,” “truth,” and “proof” and nonsemantic terms like “table,” “dog,” and “human being” and, on the other hand, scientific languages.³⁵ His truth convention, Tarski insists, should be applied only to *formalized* languages that satisfy certain conditions such as, for example, completeness of vocabulary, formality of syntactic rules, and clear-cut ability to distinguish between sentences and linguistic forms that are not clauses. For every formal language, a truth convention or definition can be formulated as the well-known Tarski biconditional. This is not possible for normal languages that are not subject to the stated conditions. This was not Tarski’s attempt to deny that truths exist in ordinary languages. In contrast to Davidson who makes use of these reflections,³⁶ Tarski merely wanted to say that his understanding of truths contained in formal languages cannot be transferred to natural languages because the

latter constantly change their vocabulary. In other words, they undergo semantic transformation. But exactly this historical flexibility is important for normal languages, which, as Tarski puts it, are meant to provide an adequate expressive potential “for everything.” The satisfaction of high expectations made of the formal *precision* of a language and the realization of the potential for a semantically adequation-theoretical interpretation of the truth concept is purchased in this case, as Tarski (no less than Whitehead) has seen, with the *loss of universality*. To put it pointedly, I cannot express my condolences at a funeral in the language of Newtonian physics. The diachronic and synchronic universality of a language, like it or not, is gained at the loss of its precision. There is no use in asking by how many percentage points my sadness at the loss of my aunt was more intense than at the death of my uncle and how that came across in my expressions of condolence.

If one takes the semantic openness and historicity of normal languages seriously, then a holistic analysis of their semantics becomes as implausible as the social holism of functionalistic social theories, considering what we know about the openness and historicity of social regulatory systems. For, anyone who perceives how normal languages are changing constantly, how they lose vocabulary and then gain new words (and—when one looks, for instance, at youth languages and their “normalization”—how even their syntactic rules “drift”), then that person will no longer accept the notion that meanings might be realized as a web of neatly coordinated concepts. Perhaps they are so realized partially in the area of professional and other special jargons that do not yet amount to theories but are no longer normal languages. In the culturally innovative areas where revisionary metaphysicians, poets, and juveniles speak, they definitely are not so realized.

It is known that holistic semantics in scientific theory quickly turns into something incommensurable. Newtonian physics, when speaking of space and time, is dealing with something quite different than Einstein’s theory of gravitation. Because this causes confusion about how, historically, to get from the one to the other, there exists the inclination to prematurely resort to the concept of “break” or “discontinuity.” But this is not a way of explaining historical development. If a biologist were to respond to the question of how one gets from fish to amphibians by saying that a break has taken place here in the course of natural history insofar as fish and amphibians each are such perfect organisms that the ones simply could not develop from the others, that they are incommensurable, one would accuse him of having abandoned evolutionary theory. A history of science that can be prevented by the dogma of

semantic holism from explaining how celestial mechanics evolved from casting horoscopes, an everyday practice at the European courts of the early modern era, or how chemistry evolved from alchemy, practiced as a mixture combining esoteric religion and magical material knowledge and instead simply declares astrology and astronomy, respectively, alchemy and chemistry to be different language games with self-sufficient semantics and idiosyncratic truths must either pretend to historical blindness or, with respect to historical norms, must behave conservatively, if not in a reactionary manner. In this respect, holistic semantics is similar to holistic organicism in the social area in that it considers functioning connections of order to be changeable only at the cost of becoming *dysfunctional*.

The Ordinary and Its Truth

Making the ordinary a thematic concern of philosophy involves an investigation neither of nature nor of culture. It also is not an exploration of the basis or origin of human knowledge and not the discovery of conditions for the theoretical or scientific. For “nature” and “culture” are already conceptual abstractions of connections that are not differentiated in everyday life. Philosophies of the ordinary, hinted at in the late philosophies of Wittgenstein, Husserl, and Heidegger and developed in an intensified way by Stanley Cavell, have their beginning in the effort to make something *concrete* the thematic concern of philosophy. Even Wittgenstein’s form of life and Husserl’s lifeworld intend to thematize something that precedes the full conceptual differentiation into culture and nature.¹ It is not a coincidence that the *concept of life* (*Lebensbegriff*) assumes prominence in this context. Life, which begins at birth and ends in death and is led in communities of individuals in which particular persons and groups develop and appraise patterns of behavior and speech, is neither a biological nor a social or cultural fact. Nor is it a synthesis of them. Instead, the facts analyzed in the biological, sociological, and culture-centered sciences are the results of *abstractions* that arise from certain explanatory interests and theoretical perspectives on life and that can lead to illusionary problems.

According to Whitehead, such phantom problems arise in philosophy when concrete facts of life are dissected into theoretically constructed component parts—*abstracta*—in order to explain them, and when the question arises afterward how these abstractions as putative aspects of something

particular are connected with each other in terms of the concrete facts. Whitehead calls this error an inappropriate concretization: *the fallacy of "misplaced concreteness."*² It might make sense to look for the elementary constituent parts of a matter within the frame of a chemical analysis. In physics also, there exist mereological explanations that deduce the reaction of an atom from the way its electrons interact with each other. But to inquire in an analogous manner in connection with death as a life phenomenon about its biological, psychological, social, and cultural aspects can easily be a deceptive practice because these aspects simply cannot be investigated in isolation, unlike hydrogen and oxygen as component parts of water or the electrons and protons as component parts of an atom. Hence, the apparent problem arises where certain abstractions, in light of a concrete fact, do not exist independent of cognitive efforts to find an explanation but are treated as though they could be combined like independent *concreta*. The center of mass, with the help of which one can explain the rotation of a triangle that is fixed at one of its corners, is not a further "part" of the triangle alongside its three corner points. In the same way, "the natural" is not an aspect of death or of sexuality. Death is not a "composite" of the biological cardiac arrest, the social phenomenon of mourning, and the hope of resurrection that can be described in the language of theology and the humanities. When the physician determines the fact of death, the relatives get together, maybe mourn, maybe quarrel (perhaps both), organize a funeral where the minister speaks of resurrection, and so forth, that's when an everyday event is taking place.

Anyone, who wants to understand this in its concreteness needs no mereological explanation that postulates abstract components. There is also no need for attributing death to natural or social laws, which means, to a nomological explanation. A *story* told in precise language showing what happens on such an occasion is much more helpful here.³ Narratives can make the concreteness of events in life their thematic focus without using the term *biological, social, or cultural*. The poetic evocation of the everyday makes it evident that there exist facts and truths of life that are given and can be understood irrespective of theories. It is even possible to ask oneself if the relevant poetry can disclose truths about these facts or not. Aside from scientific ideologies, there is no reason to copyright the concept of truth and to reserve it exclusively for characterizing propositions that form part of scientific theories.

But this reference to poetry reveals a *fundamental problem* of any philosophy of the ordinary or everyday. What is the difference between a philosophy that does not *explain* but primarily *reflects* about conceptual

landscapes, *describes* them, and *experiments* with new conceptual constellations and poetry? What follows after the pathos of description, for instance, in phenomenology, if not a novel? How necessary it becomes that philosophy and literature or thinking and imaginative writing approach one another, when it is a question of how to take hold of life's concrete details in language, becomes apparent, for example, in how extensively Stanley Cavell includes literature, opera, and film in his discussion of these issues. But a philosophy that approaches the ordinary with the help of poetry does not itself turn into poetry because its narration is not autonomous. Rather, it acts like documentary proof for ideas that do not refer to real or fictive concrete persons and events. Even a philosophy of the ordinary seeks to find knowledge of and insight into general concepts. But both the story and the philosophical description of semantic landscapes produce insights. They do so in different ways, however: the story by way of exemplary concretion, the philosophical description by way of explicating conceptual relationships.

What is the theme of these philosophical descriptions? Simply put and following Cassirer: the conceptual *forms* of the facts of the everyday provided they are relevant for many people. In mathematics as well as in physics or biology, deductions are made, but even so, no explanations are given. There are deductions with or without explanations, and likewise there is a describing with and without telling a story. Physics and literary narration refer to *given* events in nature or in the lives of human beings. By contrast, mathematics can be understood as an activity that refers to arbitrary possible analyzable forms of deduction. The philosophy of the ordinary, analogous to mathematics, turns its attention to the possible conceptual forms of everyday experience, and can then illustrate these forms through narratives. In order to see that such forms do exist in the first place and that they exist quite independent of scientific formulations of concepts, one has to realize that due to the development defining the philosophy of science, forms of facts are now understood almost only as *constructs of theories*. This has recently been the topic of an impressive critique in Dale Jacquette's article "Theory and Observation in the Philosophy of Science."⁴

Forms of Life and the Freight of Theories in Observations

Together with Thomas Kuhn's and Wilfrid Sellars's revitalization of Ludwik Fleck as well as W. V. O. Quine's critique of empiricism, a whole phalanx of persuasive rebuttals of immediacy has come forward in the twentieth

century. This has brought about a re-Kantianizing and by now—via Brandom—a re-Hegelianizing of Anglo-American philosophy.⁵ After Putnam's Kantianizing internal realism and McDowell's antinaturalism, this philosophical tradition has meanwhile—in the works of Robert Brandom—returned to the conviction that even the “causal order consisting of particulars is . . . itself . . . thoroughly conceptual.”⁶ One problem inherent in this development and especially pronounced in Hilary Putnam⁷ is the fact that a distinction is hardly ever made between those processes of mediation that occur in *scientific* investigations between theory and observation and those that take place *outside of science*.

The fact that experience is always *formed experience*, that something is never just given to human beings, does not mean that experience is always formed by *scientific concepts*. Kant and Hegel are not Fleck's, Kuhn's, and Putnam's predecessors. That all experience must submit to being formed by subjectivity did not mean to these earlier thinkers that all observation is *theory laden*. It is a mistake to lump these two assertions together because

the challenge is to make sense of the fact that proto-scientific reflection seems to involve observations for which there are no obvious-candidate scientific theories in terms of which observation language can be semantically contexted. . . . We go back in that case to the problem examples of the child and pre-scientific and extra-scientific observers. What are we to say about the putative observations of children and savages, who, as we are otherwise inclined to suppose, are altogether innocent of scientific theory? If Feyerabend's argument (against the distinction of theory and observation) is correct and there is no sharp distinction between theory and observation because *all* observation is theory-laden, then we must conclude that children and savages either do not engage in observation, which sounds extreme, or unbeknownst to them, they have at least implicit scientific theories, in terms of which their observations are meaningful.⁸

Jacquette does not mean to assert that observation *cannot* be theory laden. Sometimes, when it concerns a *scientific* experience in a laboratory, observation is freighted with theory; sometimes, when children are looking at toy building blocks, it is not.⁹ Only on condition of an enormous softening of the concept of theory may the assertion be made that *all* experience is *always* theory laden. In that case, the distinction would be blurred, however, between the cultural conceptual forming of perception by nonscientific symbolical entities on the one hand and of experience shaped by scientific theories on the other.

A person with a Christian education looks at a cross differently than someone who knows nothing about Christianity. Perceiving the image

of a scarab is different for someone who can read hieroglyphs than for a person who cannot read this form of writing. When you are hungry, you look at bread differently than when you are sated and so forth. But neither Christianity nor hieroglyphs, not to speak of hunger, are theories. Without the assumption of a nontheoretical subjective-individual and subjective-collective formation of observation we cannot begin to understand how the enterprise of scientific theory-formation could possibly have started and how it reverberates on the everyday.¹⁰ For this reason the dogma of the universal theory-laden-ness of observation as well as the theory-relativity of truth amounts to an obstacle that keeps the history of science from producing an appropriate investigation of the *beginnings* of scientific projects in the ordinary. Such histories of early stages must observe the truths and forms of facts in ordinary life because humans acquire habits of differentiating—which is to say, concepts¹¹ that form their perceptions—*before* any kind of scientific theory-formation. The scientific formulation of concepts is a continuation of this prescientific acquisition of habits of differentiation that on the level of individual development is a process of training, as we have seen above.¹² By contrast, scientists do not train one another when new concept formations arise in connection with the development of theories. Instead, they have debates about the most appropriate differentiations against the background of the experiences they themselves have systematically created. Sometimes this takes place in long processes of negotiations.¹³ Despite the distinction between forms of perception that are being passed on by training and those that come out of processes of negotiation, it is also legitimate to think of the childlike distinction between dog and cat, grandma and grandpa, table and chair as a conceptual pattern that shapes perception. Yet the concepts of “dog,” “cat,” “grandma,” “grandpa,” “table,” and “chair” are not components of theories as are such concepts as “hydrogen,” “electron,” and “angular momentum.” There is no debating about them; rather, one simply has to accept them if one grows up in a certain culture.

Intervention through Sign Acting and World Concepts

In order not to misunderstand natural language as a theory and natural speakers as naïve scientists, one should not interpret subjects primarily as *explainers* who *confront* the world. The world is not a laboratory that humans enter from the outside intending to explain what is going on there. Rather, humans arise from worlds that existed before them and

will exist after them. These two things they know as soon as they have lived in the world for a while. (There are other ways of using “world,” above all in epistemology, according to which such statements are senseless. “World” is a concept, however, for which there is no copyright, not any more than there is for other philosophical terms, and which cannot be controlled by any experience.)

That humans originate in a world and are always already in a world has been ascertained in philosophy in different connections: by Whitehead, Dewey, and Heidegger.¹⁴ Following Whitehead, one can interpret the development of subjectivity as the integration or growing together and evaluating of a tremendous quantity of determinants, some of which are actively being phased out. From the time of birth, humans are exposed to mother and father, lamps and pillows, sounds and colors, and numberless other things and events. To this they react from the beginning and learn to see a difference in all this and get used to it. Subjectivity originates in the *history of these reactions*. It is present as an organic germ in the capabilities for imitation, for developing habits of motion and thereby for creating connections. It matures, in the competencies of understanding and giving signs, to grow into what we call human subjectivity. Subjectivity can in this context be calibrated: a being may be called *all the more subjective*, the more it is capable of responding to the world from which it emerges with the action of signs. This being is “even more subjective” if it succeeds in changing the course of this world significantly on the basis of these sign actions. Subjects, understood in this sense, are elements in the process of the world that intrude into this process directly with sign actions and are able, in changing it, to continue it.

Obviously, here the world is not understood as “all that is the case.”¹⁵ It is not an accumulation and not a system of facts but a process in which something real constantly comes into existence and vanishes. “We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures.”¹⁶ This is a *social* perception of the world; it is being understood as a *history of societies* in which again and again individuals arise, in turn exerting an influence on the societies from which they originated.¹⁷ Society may refer here to all kinds of complexities, not only human connections. The world is a process because the individuals who enter life in it have the more or less far-reaching ability to react. If this ability to react did not exist, the world could be an unchangeable substance. But because both the ability to react and subjectivity exist in it, because a good number of individuals can combine one thing with another and react to this and that, nothing stays the way it was in the past. Conflicts result

from this because individuals react to the world not only by intervening in it but also by adapting to it. This they do while they are trying to sustain that from which they have originated. Attempts to bring about changes in connections to which individuals have adapted lead to more or less determined reactions of resistance on the part of those who have adjusted to the way things are. In these very elementary controversies in the world, truths can play an important role. For, the interventions of the subjects sometimes are based on convictions that they acquired about themselves and the world from which they have emerged, that is, strictly speaking, about a world of the past. Anyone who thinks that a thing can be seen this way or also some other way but believes that it is immaterial how it is seen, that is, has not formed any convictions about something, will, as a rule, not react to this factor with notions of change. Someone, however, who is convinced of certain truths, will tend to act in accordance with these convictions, sometimes in the interest of stabilizing the situations that form the foundation of his convictions, sometimes favoring changes.

These truths need not be scientifically authenticated. When a young man is convinced that he does not want to live like his parents because he has the suspicion, or conjectures, or even knows that the way his parents lived has not made them happy or has subjected them to unfair treatment, then he considers it true that his parents' way of life was *false* because it brought them neither justice nor happiness. In order to reach this conclusion, the young man does not need to engage in psychological or juridical research. Truth will be one of his family's life experiences. "My parents were unhappy because they were sent into a camp. They were treated unjustly." Anyone responding to a statement of this kind with questions like "How do you know that your parents were unhappy? Did they take a psychological test? How do you know it was unjust to put them into a camp? Was there an expert's legal opinion?" has no idea of the varieties of evidence provided by life's experiences, which can stand up quite well against scientific forms of evidence. Thoughtful persons can consider their experiencing the daily life of their parents to be more accurate than the results of a questionnaire that the parents may even have filled out. Accordingly, questions like these as a rule are asked only by someone who in his or her pursuit of a psychological or social scientism does not acknowledge that people can arrive at assured convictions about their own life and that of their fellowmen without engaging in scientific investigations. If someone is of the opinion that the world from which she emerged is a bad one because it exposes her to nothing but the pressure of competition and war and because this has produced

fear and despondency, then she needs no empirical social research in order to consider these assertions to be true. Such extreme life experiences quite easily provide pieces of evidence for convictions and evaluations that can be shaken only with great difficulty. Less clear-cut experiences of life may lead to proportionately less unambiguous convictions and evaluations. In this case, an empirical investigation may conceivably bring about an “artificial clarity” that only appears to be more evident than the result of nonscientific thought processes.

Also, the desire to fathom unclear circumstances with scientific precision can be triggered by an actual experience such as the one that most assertions that one encounters will on closer inspection turn out to be false. This is not to claim that practices of scientific research and connections of assertions are grounded in the certainties of a lifeworld. The point is not to discover a *mutual* more original world in which the mathematical, physical, chemical, biological, and other systems of persuasion are “rooted.” At issue are the *subjective* worlds that arise when a subject reacts to the world. Meanings usually are established either in *conventional* terms when there is no exchange of arguments, or *consensually* after debates in the theoretical contexts of science, or *in a traditionalistic way* according to a description of the generally prevailing manner of using language. The issue in all cases is how to constitute collective meanings. But the genesis of meanings has in fact always to do with the reaction of *individuals* to other *individuals*. To be sure, there does exist an accustomed way of using language, and within its parameters, as in all scientific theories, there exist more or less stable definitions of meanings. The scientific meaning of “*Kraft*” (force, strength, energy, etc.), however, is a reaction to the word’s meaning in common language that predominates at a particular time. This meaning has been preceded by certain experimental experiences that in turn represent generalized life experiences of laboratory scientists. A person who is devoted to the sport of hammer throwing and has certain experiences with his equipment may also, in addition to being familiar with the common meaning of “*Kraft*” and perhaps with its meaning in physics, know yet another meaning of “*Kraft*.”

Empirical Semantics

It has probably been customary in linguistic theory even before Charles W. Morris to distinguish between syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of language.¹⁸ Philosophers speaking about normal language have largely relied, however, on their so-called intuitions and, with few exceptions,

have hardly engaged in a truly empirical study of its pragmatics, that is, the actual use of an expression in ordinary language and hence its everyday meaning in Wittgenstein's sense. It is a tacit assumption that one's *own* use of a term is *representative* of its use in the common language as such. When philosophers say "we," what they often mean is a generalized "I."¹⁹

As the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess has emphasized, such "intuitions" are not problematical as long as there is unanimity in a debate about the use of a term. They do become problematical, however, whenever two parties assert something different about the customary use of a word.²⁰ On the other hand, most of the time it is tacitly assumed in the *application* of *formal* systems for the purpose of explicating *nonformal* linguistic usages that semantic terms such as *true* and *false* or logical operations like "and," "or," and "not" are used in the nonformal contexts in the same way that in the formal context the signs "(t)" and "(f)," respectively " \wedge ," " \vee ," and " \neg " are used. Divergent usages are then easily interpreted as a false application. For, often (above all by "hermeneutic beginners") the clearer formal usage is considered not merely as a possibility for explicating the nonformal usages but frequently is seen as the *norm* by which the nonformal usage is to be judged. Yet whether a formal usage of a semantic and logical expression is *appropriate* for a nonformal one is an *empirical* question, the answer to which first and foremost requires an investigation into the actual nonformal usage.²¹

Instead of pursuing such an investigation, most of the time, however, the assertion is made that the "opinion of the man in the street on the truth-notion is . . ." or "the usual criterion of error is . . ."²² In contrast, Arne Naess shows that a whole *spectrum of different usages* emerges not only with expressions that stand for something that can be experienced but also with logical operators like "and," "or," and "not" and with meta-linguistic concepts like "true" and "false," when one investigates their usage empirically by using questionnaires.²³

In the philosophical investigations the assertion is made that as a rule people mean by "truth" the agreement of a sign or idea with reality, that their understanding of truth is determined, implicitly or explicitly, by a *conception of correspondence*. What the empirical investigation of the understanding of "truth" shows in actual fact is that "agreement with reality" ranks only as "the fifth most frequent way of answering the question."²⁴

As early as in the 1940s, Empirical Semantics was understood as a research program that represents a "strong reaction against uncritical applications of the conception of a language as a [normative, M.H.] system of rules."²⁵ This program was able to show that differences in the history

of different linguistic communities also lead to specific nuances of meaning that are relevant *for translations*. Translations from Norwegian in which the word *demokrati* is to be rendered in German are characteristically different from those that shift from Norwegian into Russian:

The uses of the Russian term . . . are obviously influenced by events in Soviet Russia since 1917. The history of Norway has been quite different. Occurrence analysis today would reveal complicated differences. . . . They may *in part* be roughly indicated by saying that economic relations between the citizens are highly relevant in the Russian terminology in estimating the degree to which a regime is democratic, whereas in Norway . . . references are mostly to elections and the structure of government in general.²⁶

How to react philosophically to such a difference? It is not possible to set ordinary Russian apart from Norwegian or, in the reverse case, everyday Norwegian from Russian as “the correct language.” Is the philosophical reaction to this difference supposed to try leveling the different experiences that people have had in their countries and that are reflected in divergent usages of their words (or perhaps are in part also a consequence of different ways of using words) through an abstract theory of democracy? It is, of course, legitimate to say that in my theory T the concept of democracy does not refer to the economically determined opportunities of exerting an influence on the country’s development but refers to the manner of forming a government. Equally legitimate, however, would be the counter-reaction, for example, of Russian speakers to this kind of information that theory T simply proceeds from a concept of democracy that is *irrelevant* for Russian speakers and their perception of the political circumstances; which is to say, theory T is not applicable here. The definitional attempts of such concepts inherent in philosophical theories which thereupon seek to rise to the level of norms vis-à-vis normal speaking, have, as a rule, precisely this purpose: to efface the history behind a concept and behind a habit of differentiating and to fix the meaning of a concept “once and for all.”

Florian Coulmas has shown that the concept of mother tongue (and in view of our present context one would like to add that of *ordinary language*) is sociologically only of relative usefulness to an understanding of how a speaker speaks because every speaker, male and female, *reacts* to the language in which he or she is growing up. Anyone who speaks always faces opportunities to choose *what* he or she wants to say *how*. If one pursues these choices in detail, one will have to say in extremis that each individual speaks a little bit differently.²⁷ Coulmas extends an idea

that Walter Benjamin had developed as early as 1916. Benjamin criticized it as a “temptation” of linguistic theory to assume that language as such defines mental essence. He insisted on distinguishing between the mental entity that *communicates* itself in a language and language itself.²⁸ Both aspects—what is communicated in language and the person, who communicates linguistically—express themselves in an utterance. Consequently, language is being changed in every utterance, which, among other things, constitutes the cognitive character of poetic writing. It gives linguistic expression to things, events, and experiences in a way that before had not yet been possible. Peter’s linguistic expression of his experience with a dog is different from Susanne’s linguistic expression of her experience with a dog because Peter and Susanne are different people and because they may have experienced different dogs. The perception of the differentiated linguistic registering of an experience also directs the attention of readers toward the memory of their own experiences in similar situations. This can bring about a specific “participation” or “identification” in the naïve reader with the fictive characters (which contributes to the entertainment value of much prose writing). Of course, there exist syntactic and semantic rules that require classifying a statement like “prime numbers dreams blue behind grandma,” for example, as not correct, and there are authorities like Duden (for the German language), where these rules are codified, and teachers of German who keep watch over adherence to the rules and who, if necessary, sanction transgressions. But that pretty well exhausts the explicitness of norms and the possibilities for sanctions. A philosophical sanctioning power, as far as the regular, respectively irregular usage of ordinary language is concerned, does not exist. And it would be a disaster if such an authority did exist, as we shall see below.

Every so often, philosophy tends to generalize speaking and thinking in concrete terms into something intelligible to stylize it into the manifestation of a general human reason (Kant), the house of Being (Heidegger and Gadamer), a universal discourse (Habermas), or a grand semantic game with intelligible referees in which humanity as such participates. But there always exists (as can be learned from the empirical research of linguists like Naess) only the speaking of concrete language communities and concrete speakers who react to the language communities from which they originate. Even the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss criticized the idea of a reason shared by mankind, and of an intelligibility of the history of the species in his critique of Sartre’s anthropological efforts as remnants of a colonialist anthropology that ignores the very particular living circumstances and histories of individual human groups.

For the perspective of philosophical anthropologies and theories of reason very easily make all those structures, within which different groups of people exist, vanish, allowing the “prodigious wealth and diversity of habits, beliefs and customs” to escape that perhaps nowhere but in a particular place and at a particular time in this world have determined the life of humans.²⁹ The way general notions of what is human and rational relate to respecting the multifariousness of forms of life is a thorny issue. When do the normative implications of talking about “the essence of being human” or “reason as such” lead to establishing solidarity among people living in different circumstances, and when do they turn into an instrument of suppression?

Lévi-Strauss does not maintain, unless I misunderstand him, that European colonialism *invented* anthropology and universal human reason, inasmuch as this relationship can also be defined the other way around: the ideas of a universal human nature and reason which always is associated with normative claims could be the reason behind the impulse of *subjugating* and even eradicating those who putatively do not live up to these generalities although even they “somehow” appear to be humans. Already, Aristotle’s anthropological conviction that there exists a *natural difference* between those who acknowledge the presumably universal difference between the principle of governing and of the female, and those who do not, can be read as legitimating the Greek wars of conquest against people they referred to as barbarians.³⁰ The popular notion that the idea of a universal humanity provides the foundation for a peaceable cosmopolitanism has to be considered cautiously whenever thinking about the normative implications of abstractions like “reason” and “humanity” does not take their pragmatic potential into account.

Norms and Empiricism

A strict separation of empirical semantics and the philosophical investigation of language seems plausible where philosophy alone is given the task of getting involved with language as a system of norms. This way of looking at the issues, however, is too simple. When one wants to know if it is legal to drive on a Swiss autobahn at 120 km/h or 130 km/h maximum speed, one does not investigate statistically the maximum speeds of actual drivers. Rather, one looks up the information in the Swiss Road Traffic Regulations. Even should a majority of people driving a car in Switzerland be on the road at a speed higher than 120 km/h, the law that forbids driving faster than 120 km/h is still valid. Road traffic in contrast

to language does not organize itself (or does so only to a very limited degree). It is organized by the Department of Motor Vehicles and by the traffic police. When it comes to language things are more complicated. There are institutions like the Académie Française in Paris, the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung in Darmstadt, or the Duden Institut in Mannheim. But they do not police language (even though some of its members at times think they should).

Let us instead take a look at another analogy, one that Richard Hare introduced—the difference between the rules of a dance, that is, the way “it should go” and what actually happens during the dancing.³¹ Suppose a group of people is not sure how a particular Scottish dance (say, the eightsome reel) goes. They try it and either bump into and trip over one another and all of it ends in chaos, or they succeed in doing a dance, but it “is not the dance which they were trying to dance,” or “the dance proceeds correctly,” meaning, it is the dance they actually had in mind. It may be thought that the difference [between these three possibilities, M.W.] is obvious. But in fact it is very difficult to discern.

In this situation, Hare distinguishes between the perspective of an anthropologist who tries to identify the dance of certain natives and that of people who, being or having been dancers of a dance themselves, want to perform it again as a group.³² The anthropologists know “their” dance only from the outside, whereas the dancers know what they mean by their dance because they have danced it before and, in their attempt to dance it again, can relate to this practical knowledge that, in contrast to that of the anthropologists, is not merely a knowledge based on observation. The dancers—unlike the anthropologists—need not be able to give a description of the dance. In this context, Hare refers to Ryle’s distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that: whoever controls his attempts at dancing through rules need not for this purpose have recourse to factual knowledge that can be communicated in sentences. He even can give merely an exemplary demonstration of a movement in order to get the rule across: “Look, that is how the step is done!” Only the dancers—and it is here that the analogy to language reveals itself to be appropriate—and the speakers with know-how are capable, while they are dancing their dance and speaking in their language, of introducing innovations in dancing or in speech that do not appear to them as mistakes or collapse into chaos.³³ (Ironically, Hare calls it the “Platonic” view “that innovations always lead to chaos.”)³⁴ When there is dancing as a group and talking with one another, the participants in the dance and in the conversation can react to such an innovation with a remark like, “We don’t know what to make of this.”³⁵ According to Hare, such

a reaction is to be avoided during dancing and speaking in a group because it means that one does not keep to the implicit rules of the dance or speech. But whenever such a reaction occurs, a clear signal of the implicit rule is given. Only someone who has know-how of the dance or of speaking, however, can in this way also become aware of the implicit rules of the dance and of speaking. The anthropologist of the dance or of a language who does not dance or speak a language himself cannot possess such an insight. He cannot distinguish between a *variation* of the rule and an *infraction* of the rule.

The possibility of a dispute between the dancers or speakers about the question of whether this kind of dancing or speaking is a variant or an error is not mentioned in Hare's account. Yet it is exactly in the observation of disputes that the empirical outsider's perspective could be helpful. Suppose there were people who originally come from the same region but then decide to go their separate ways and immigrate to valleys that are largely isolated from each other. At first, they dance the same dances and speak the same language in both valleys. But then their dancing and speaking grow apart. When the people in valley A hear about a dance and speech deviation in valley B, a quarrel starts about whether this is an error or a variant. A visiting anthropologist, reporting that people in valley B have been dancing or speaking in this deviating manner for years, will, in my opinion, certainly reinforce those who see here a variant of the original and not a lapse. When someone says that democracy is at work where a fair distribution of wealth prevails and this person then is criticized because she allegedly has neither the right understanding of wealth nor the right concept of democracy, then it can be helpful to listen to the comment of an empirical semanticist that the person expressing her opinion about "wealth" and "democracy" uses these terms precisely as the people in Russia do.

The objection may be raised here that being allowed to drive 130 km/h on a German autobahn does not make it legal for me to drive on Swiss freeways at this speed. That is correct. But of course mentioning the German autobahn weakens, even invalidates, the argument that chaos or exposure to horrible danger from traffic might be impending when people are allowed to drive 130 km/h on any autobahn. Pointing, from an outsider's perspective, to a different regulatory reality makes the conviction relative that an infraction of the rule is completely unacceptable. This is why Hare's derogation of the anthropological outside perspective vis-à-vis the firsthand knowledge of the inside perspective is only half the truth. There may exist processes of rule recognition that can only be carried out by persons with the requisite know-how for acting. By contrast, they fre-

quently lack the distance necessary to accept an infraction of the rule as a potential variant of it. "Outsiders," who do not feel the pain of active participants at a rule infraction, will find it easy to state, "It'll work that way, too! The people in the next valley are showing us."

Stanley Cavell even denies that it is at all possible to take up such an outside perspective toward ordinary language, which is also natural language.³⁶ Humans can no more look upon nature from the outside than they can linguistically position themselves outside natural language. What nature was for the Stoics (an immovable normative framework) is natural language for the *ordinary-language philosopher*: the coherence of our thinking and living from which we cannot escape. Yet this is true neither for nature nor for ordinary language. Humans react to that which nature has given them. They have their noses fixed and exercise their weak muscles. Young people and poets find the established ordinary language boring, imprecise, and hypocritical, which is why they react to this fact appropriately: by speaking differently. Ryle says that we must speak, if we want to be understood, as the language that we learn from our ancestors prescribes. This does not, however, describe the reality of ordinary language but represents a semantic conservatism that is far removed from reality.³⁷ Our actions and our speaking do receive certain guidelines from our natural and cultural circumstances. But to the extent that our personal courage and self-awareness enable us to do so, we can step back from our natural and cultural endowment and react to these directives.

Another symptom of this conservatism is Peter Hacker's campaign against the dissident speaking of some neuroscientists who speak about the brain or its parts the way we usually talk about persons.³⁸ It is true that to this day we say that it is you, I, or we who perceive, think, wish, want, or sense something and not our brain or an area inside it. It is easy to imagine, however, that the neuroscientific way of speaking will prevail and members of future generations will speak about the brain the way we today speak about persons. Most dissident neuroscientific speakers probably do not realize what consequences such a change in speaking might have in our moral and legal system. For, thinking and wishing, wanting and sensing does indeed play a role in how we attribute responsibility and guilt to people. We ask, for example, what motive a certain person could have had for a certain act. True, one cannot hold a brain responsible for an act and give it a verdict of guilty. It would surely have to be a person. For this reason, neurologizing human self-descriptions would lead to pathologizing the respective moral and juridical norms. Instead of saying that someone has committed a moral error or an actionable offense, one would have to speak about his brain having a certain defect that needs to

be cured. A part of Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* describes a world in which such a drift has already taken place. Alex, the novel's protagonist, is a murderer and rapist. He is being reconditioned by the physician Dr. Brodsky who has him take a nauseating medication and simultaneously watch films with scenes of violence: Alex's *body* learns that violence is a horrible thing.³⁹ The educational process has turned into a physical affair. Learning to obey norms, in Dr. Brodsky's world, means becoming healthy in mind and body.⁴⁰ Instead of sending free persons to prison and imposing a form of punishment that does not change them when they do not change themselves, they have to submit to behavioral therapy and are treated physiologically, which really changes them physically.⁴¹

It may sound like a contradiction that, based on insights into human nature (the mechanisms of learning), in scientific institutions someone may be at liberty to change persons through conditioning processes without, however, treating them in these transformational procedures as free reflexive subjects. But the fact that research, while denying human freedom, understands itself as the activity of persons freely searching for truth, does not contradict the actuality that a neurological self-description of people is spreading which applies a personalistic vocabulary to the brain and its parts. Freedom from contradiction is a standard that one may demand of theories. Yet ordinary language is not a theory. People have no problem living with contradictions so long as they do not construct theories.⁴² They live, for example, in different social roles—as manager of a company and as head of a family—in which they abide by different and in fact irreconcilable principles for how to act. But as long as the social roles remain separate, no contradiction needs to become noticeable and be felt as disturbing. Analogously, scientists engaged in brain research may understand their work as that of free persons, while they consider the acts of nonscientists as a sequence of events that can be perceived as the manifestations of brain activities.

When people prefer to reject the description, "Acting is the manifestation of a brain activity," there is no use insisting that speaking like this contradicts the norms of ordinary language. Obviously, the norms of ordinary language can be changed. One of its norms had once been that women might be witches who enter into a pact with the Devil and thereby acquire superhuman power. Neuroscientists can take the view that they are fighting superstition like those who revealed the vocabulary about witches to be nonsense. And it is quite possible that they will succeed. This success will come about, however, as the result of a *struggle*. In this conflict, human beings react to proposals about how to describe

human beings, or (to put it with stronger pathos), they wrestle with one another about their self-understanding. Kant's basic question, "*Was ist der Mensch?*" (What is human?), is not answered solely by pointing to empirical discoveries like the results of sequencing the DNA of Neanderthal man. Also, collective decisions in which discoveries are being *weighed* enter into the answer. What relevance a biological fact has for human self-understanding is not established by the mere fact itself. Because humans live in contexts of morality, the law, religion, art, and science, decisive transformations in their self-understanding have consequences in all these areas. These consequences are not simply accepted by the powerful actors dominating these contexts. Someone who sees himself or herself as free and related either to a divine being or demons will interpret his or her own deeds, liability to punitive measures, works of art, and scientific theories differently than someone who believes himself or herself to be a metabolic system to be described deterministically in the language of physics and biology. Whether it is more closely the biological facts, judicial procedures, the rituals of religion, or the languages of art that tell "us" who "we" are, is in each case the outcome of a *struggle* for meanings.

Obscurants and Speculators

Philosophy knows not only the tendency, initiated by Austin, Ryle, and in the late writings of Wittgenstein, to consider the normative guidelines of ordinary language to be unchanging, to quasi-canonize them. Beyond that, individual scientists and scientific philosophers time and again take up a position in the struggle about the meaning of words for one or the other nonordinary vocabulary and try to single out the conceptual language of physics, biology, psychology, or sociology as the truly foundational one. Perhaps the oddest example of this is the attempt at privileging mathematical set theory as the ontological basis language.⁴³ The tendency to privilege one form of language at the expense of others in order to preserve the possibilities gained by this form of language, I will, following Whitehead, call the *strategy of obscurants*.⁴⁴ They are opposed by *speculative* tendencies in the intellectual world that defend the plurality of human speech and forms of life against the sooner-or-later tiring advantages of a single monopolizing form of speaking and living.

Obscurants and speculators behave toward the established forms and orders of speaking and living in opposite ways. Obscurants appreciate the achievements of established orders and, for this reason, try to protect them. Speculators primarily see the burdens resulting from the

preservation of orders. Often, the roles are distributed according to age. Those who have just endured an education that fit them into an order can well remember how painful it is to be fitted in. Now that the educational process has come to an end, they are rebellious as “young savages” and try to spare those coming after them the torments they had to suffer. Moreover, they see no reason that such a price has to be paid for order. On the opposite side stand the time-tested educators. The existing order legitimates their life’s project. They have enjoyed the fruits of order and have largely forgotten the torments of being fitted in or over the years have romanticized them. That is why they consider them appropriate prices to pay. Often enough, the struggle between obscurants and speculators is also a generational conflict.

This is apparent not only in the political but also in the scientific world. For Thomas Kuhn the struggle over establishing new paradigms is also a struggle between old and young that will have been decided only when the old ones have relinquished their positions of power.⁴⁵ In this context, Whitehead introduces the categories of fatigue and impulse toward novelty.⁴⁶

In the cyclical repetition of biological occurrences, all processes of life seem to be subject to fatigue. (Even the pineal gland’s production of melatonin slows down with age causing older people to find it more difficult to fall asleep and to sleep without interruption for relatively long periods.) This is true also for scientific thinking. As a process of life, it is not excluded from this fact. Orders of thinking may lose the strength of their persuasion in view of new empirical data. Even so, the possibility exists of flatly declaring data to be *irrelevant* in the face of which a well-established method fails. Accepting such data as relevant may indicate that a certain fatigue of the established methods has set in. One *wants* to be interested in what, when seen against the background of hitherto persuasive methodologies, looks exotic. It is creative rebellious individuals who keep groups of thinkers from floundering in methodical desolation by considering something relevant that until now was shoved aside. In this vein, phenomena of electricity had until the eighteenth century been considered not relevant but merely of anecdotal interest for theory formation in physics.

That something appears as relevant or as irrelevant has to do with the fact that scientific attention can be measured by degrees. Certainly, even physicists of the seventeenth century were acquainted with electricity as an esoteric fairground phenomenon. But they were not giving this phenomenon their full attention. Understandably, they focused their curi-

osity on those phenomena that their physical theories were able to explain. The fact that attention can be measured by degrees demonstrates why the realism-idealism controversy in philosophy is a simplification. A conversation at the next table in a restaurant may irritate me subliminally. But I try to pay it no attention. In the end, I can also turn to it, however, as to the source of my irritation and even get drawn into it. In this situation, the conversation is never something “given” me, nor have I “constructed” it. There existed an influence of the conversation on me and after that an influence from me on the conversation. All human participation in the world takes place as such interplay, as a dual motion. It is never only a matter of pure activity or passivity. Even the architect of a building, the author of a poem, the painter of a picture, and the composer of a piece of music have to acknowledge something: gravity, the sound of words, the options for combining colors and their covering abilities, and the technical options in the use of musical instruments. For all of them, there is something over which their creativity *has no control*.⁴⁷ But they do something with what has to be accepted, what is not at their disposal. Every perception presupposes attention, and in every attention that turns toward that which has to be accepted, something happens to what has to be accepted.

Gradations of attention lead to transformations of figure-ground relationships. The conversation at the adjacent table was in the background of my attention. What my partner at the table said was in the foreground. When I turn my attention to the next table, these ratios shift. Such shifts of attention—to put it emphatically—create new subjects. When the figure-ground relations in what is being perceived undergo a change, and in an extreme case even new habits of differentiating have to be developed so that the new thing on which attention is focused can become a verbal topic, then the perceiving subject is being changed. When, in puberty, the gender of other people becomes the focus of attention, the affective way the other persons experience the world changes. When the phenomena of electricity and magnetism become the focus of attention in physics, the whole worldview of physics changes. When a caste of warriors becomes resigned and its attention suddenly, perhaps through contact with a previously unknown religion, turns toward the fate of the sick, wounded, and frail, a moral world changes. Such paradigm changes lead to new habits of differentiation and new interpretations of old notions. Establishing them is exciting. Puberty, the emergence of a new scientific paradigm, moral upheavals signify stirring times in human sensibility and thought. People aspire to them for this very reason.

That is when obscurants get into difficulties. No time is worse for educators than that of their pupils' puberty, when the vivacity of a newly discovered emotionality also sharpens their way of seeing the adult world. Hardly anything is more disappointing to textbook authors grown old after decades of honorable service than a scientific revolution that turns everything they had collected and taught in the pursuit of their careers as scholars upside down. Never are the members of a society's elite more disoriented than when suddenly in a revolution moral standards turn from a valuation as marginal into majority acceptance. The increase in vivacity that accompanies every paradigm change for the representatives of innovation is confronted by the shambles left by those who saw themselves as models for those who are now easing them out. While some are rising toward a new world with the feeling that they are being reborn as new subjects, others are vanishing into irrelevance.

Interim Summary

We have seen that one cannot conceptualize Socratic philosophy as a theory, as a doctrine. It is an activity that aims at *disillusionment*, and not at the production of certainties. Subjectivity has been shown to be a specific manifestation that living beings are capable of establishing connections; it essentially depends on the use of signs. Subjects establish connections to something other with the help of signs. Processes of *training* create this use of signs in those human beings who are capable of subjectivity. The opinion that certain sign connections are necessary and eternal is an illusion attributable to the acuity of training processes.

Because certain (mathematical) sign practices are elementary to the continuity of certain forms of life, complying with them is considered a high priority. Deviations from these practices are severely punished. These practices, elementary to the perpetuation of certain forms of life, are the paradigms of reasonableness. Reason as a suprahistorical sign connection by which subjectivity could orient itself free of compulsion likewise is an illusion.

Transmitting true assertions in educational processes is an elementary practice of the human way of living. One can imagine in a genealogical reflection that this practice provides advantages to those groups that adhere to them. But such an investigation does not necessarily end in establishing more or less closed linguistic totalities, in theory-like noncontradictory semantic entities. Rather, it leads to the formation of jagged

landscapes of meaning. People do not move around in these landscapes primarily searching for modes of consensus and general truths. Instead, they display—sometimes even with pleasure—their forms of dissent in front of one another. They clarify their different experiences that they have had in the different regions of this landscape. At certain times during this activity, they even search for new conceptual terms because they notice that their experiences cannot be captured by the old words but, even so, should be paradigmatic for the future life of their group.

This view of language as a jagged semantic landscape through which people with different life experiences and divergent conceptual usages move, makes the notion of semantic holism as implausible as the idea that living and speaking are connected with each other like experience and theory. The holism of speaking and living is as much an illusion as is the holism of the causal organization of organisms. Nothing that has a history is such a holistic entity.

The experience of life is structured conceptually, to be sure, but only in exceptional cases by concepts that are organized so as to form a theory. Most habits of differentiation that humans have at their disposal are derived from nonscientific practices and have not been established through carefully deliberating discourses. Moreover, when human beings speak, they are not motivated exclusively by the need for making themselves understood and for transmitting relevant pieces of information. Not all of them are scientists. Rather, they primarily speak for the purpose of mutually explicating their life experiences and of passing them on to others.

Differences in the experience of life lead to different conceptual systems and these latter differences lead to differences in the way people live. When people who have different languages and ways of living congregate, fights will ensue that can change the forms of life. These changes can be more or less severe. As generational conflicts, they are perhaps known to all ways of living. In the history of science, they emerge as paradigm changes, triggered by new experiences and shifts of attention in the generation of empirical data. The equivalent of these processes in the area of nonscientific collective subjectivity are political and moral upheavals.

While humans have a need of security and continuity in their way of life, they also have to face the problem of fatigue and boredom. For that reason, they seek deviations, experiences of dissent, and renovation.

I would like to investigate next what consequences the misleading conception of language as a life-organizing theory has above all in the processes of education. This will call for a closer examination of the desire for creativity that is directed against fatigue and boredom. It is an aspiration

that has left a trail in educational institutions that is as wide as the longing for stability.

At the end, I turn to the question of how we can cultivate and bequeath our life experience that also gives rise to the language of science in the form of theories. It will become apparent that literature plays a key role in this venture.

Expertocracy and the Education of Individuals

Why do human beings want to continue a form of life? Why do they exert themselves in training their children to accept what has prevailed to this day? Why do they demand creativity from them? Why do they try to change their way of life? An important factor in this context may be the *self-preservation* of groups. In our philosophical genealogy, we saw that communities that transmitted assertions about something that was not there have a selection advantage. They were in a position to increase their *chances of survival*. In this genealogy, there were no privileged pronouncers yet and no aims that went beyond self-preservation. But humans want more than to survive once they have succeeded in that purpose. They want to live well and in a just system. Some even aspire to living happily. As soon as these higher goals emerge, most of the time privileged asserters also appear on the scene. They are people who know how to attain these objectives, being *educators* and *rulers* who design programs for the future, and represent them before the young and those who lead them. In reflections about its practitioners, philosophy has played an essential role from the very beginning. Education, government, and death are the decisive topics for a philosophy that seeks practical relevance in human life. In order to discuss this kind of philosophy, we have to go back once more into antiquity, to the disciples of Socrates. Raymond Geuss writes, for Plato or Aristotle

the philosopher is capable, on the basis of his knowledge and his mind for dialectic thinking, to give a reliable answer to the question about happiness. The philosopher's views were not thought to be the opinions of an individual or a caste but were esteemed as the voice of reason, respectively of objective truth itself. Consequently, the Platonic state is a radically antidemocratic government of experts. In the ideal πόλις, the philosophically trained leaders exercise an absolute right of command, and non-philosophers have to obey. In abiding by the judgment of the philosopher-kings, which is not bound by any legislative authority, also for non-philosophers rests the putatively greatest happiness in which they can participate. Philosophers prescribe to individuals how they have to act, and even a possibly democratically formed will of the predominant majority of society would have to give way to the philosophers' judgment.¹

It is difficult to judge what the ironist Plato has taken how seriously. Moreover, beside the stern image of the philosopher-king of *The Republic* (to which Geuss alludes here), there exists the much more moderate, even though much less powerful, picture of the political in the *Nomoi* (*Laws*). But if we, in following Geuss (and many others before him), pay serious attention to the proposal for governance of the philosophers, this would not be the rule of the Socratic questioners but of those who have seen the light of reason itself, who possess a perception of the idea of goodness, and who therefore have become reasonable and knowledgeable. We have left, at this point, the skeptical position of the lover of truth who has no assured assertive knowledge for orienting one's life, and we have moved on to a track that leads directly to the present time.

To be sure, Geuss does not believe that science in the modern era is the direct successor of the Platonic philosopher-king and can reclaim political authority for itself alone.² But even a cursory survey of contemporary philosophy shows that to this day, philosophers have not completely relinquished this role. Did we not observe that some of them still understand themselves as semantic schoolmasters, as specialists in establishing meanings? But who has given them the authority to administer the meanings or to supervise (in Brandom's sense) the "scores" that putatively are laid down in a discourse? Who has bestowed the competence on them to award the copyright on meanings? "No one!" we must answer. And this gives rise to the danger that a doctrinal philosophy, when it cannot legitimate its doctrines through explanatory successes, will presume that it has to administer the meanings for everybody—all this in order to justify its existence.

Most of the time, however, people will find means and ways to arrive at an agreement about the meanings of concepts that are important to them, without requiring the help of philosophers. If large groups of peo-

ple with different educational backgrounds are involved, there will inevitably be communication difficulties. Perhaps it would then become necessary to agree to completely new meanings or to accept those significations that are already established in one of the groups. A super- or *ur*-discourse does not exist because it is never the case that all people try to make themselves understood by everybody. Likewise, there does not exist a philosophical privilege to establish meanings that could refer to an original or transcendent form of speaking. The reason for this is that even philosophers like all other human beings move in those regions of the semantic landscape called ordinary language, if they don't subscribe to certain professional terminologies and special languages. Nobody has been everywhere in these landscapes or has been omnipresent at all localities where something about the language happens to change. Whether someone is a good "travel reporter" about his sojourns in language, whether he is suitable for the business of describing meanings and shifts in meaning of particular concepts does not depend on whether he or she is working in a department of philosophy or in an institute of physics or as a poet or as a bus driver.

The need of political decision makers for consultants with scientific expertise has steadily increased in the modern era. At the present time, that need has reached a status in which normative decision-making processes are inextricably connected with scientific analyses of the facts.³ Of course, controversies about meanings are greatly important in this situation. "What is a catastrophic development?" and "What is natural change?" and "Is there something like collective responsibility?"—these are questions that are raised legitimately in the debate about the climate, for example. Philosophers can perhaps be helpful in anticipating the political consequences that might result from one or the other decision in the conflict about the meaning of the concepts involved here. But philosophers have no access to the "genuine" meaning of "catastrophe," "responsibility" or "natural." They have at best a higher degree of historical education concerning the semantic development of these concepts. But this does not make them privileged educators, either of adults or of those growing up.

But there does exist in philosophical tradition a long and strongly developed awareness of the relevance that education has for advancing how humans live together. And it is well before Wittgenstein's reflections about training (as *Abrichtung*) that attention had turned toward the processes of education as *the* topic that would enable us to gain a deeper comprehension of the way human forms of self-understanding have developed. This philosophical awareness is concerned with education not

merely as preparation for the successful participation in the established kinds of social partnerships through the acquisition, inter alia, of the right skills, concepts, and theories. Consciousness like that, instead, recognizes in education an opportunity for the fundamental transformation of human circumstances, which is to say, it sees the utopian relevance of pedagogy.⁴

One's Own Ideas or Information

It was, for example, people like John Dewey as well as Rousseau, Kant, and Plato (of *The Republic*) who realized that education has an eminently moral and political significance. Dewey interpreted this significance differently, however, than the other philosophers mentioned, even though for none of these authors does education exhaust itself in the preparation of young people for life in the *existing* societies. Philosophical thinking about education mostly takes place beyond the normative and temporal limitations of professional pedagogy, which—in the eyes of academic education professionals—may make this kind of thinking appear idealistic or even unreal.⁵ All the philosophers mentioned were hoping for a *better* society that was to be turned into reality by way of education. Of course, “better society” means something different for Dewey than it does for Plato or Kant. Dewey’s reflections on education, unlike Plato’s, do not aim for a stratified and hierarchical society in which everyone plays his role at the place assigned by the philosopher-king and under the leadership of those who, having beheld the idea of the good, administer the highest knowledge. And unlike Kant, he does not see education primarily as a preparatory exercise in discipline and work as preparation for the constraint imposed by the moral law that has to be the central authority in a community obligated to *mankind* and not to the individual person.⁶ But he saw education, as did Kant, as *the* means best suited to bring about the improvement of the human situation, as the royal road toward more moral and happier circumstances. Dewey would probably agree with Kant who in his “Lectures on Pedagogy” wrote that it “is delightful to imagine that human nature will be developed better and better by means of education. . . . This opens to us the prospect of a future happier human species.”⁷

In his philosophy of education, Dewey aims for what, presumably, is also central to the Western knowledge societies: *democracy*. But his conception of democracy is much more radical than what is prevalent in the actually existing democracies (that more and more evolve into plutocra-

cies). Democracy in Dewey's sense does not exist yet because the people who can live with one another in a truly democratic society do not exist yet. Because nowadays the prevailing opinion has it that people are already in a position to react to their world and that individual freedom, political autonomy, and democracy have become reality in the Western industrial nations, Dewey's pedagogy appears to a good number of people to be an antiquated project or one that breaks down open doors. That would be a misunderstanding, however.

Dewey's concern is with the education of people who are capable of making a special kind of democratic community possible. We will see that "democracy" for Dewey in the final analysis represents more a *social* than a *political* project, one that includes much more than the techniques used to make decisions about the distribution and administration of governmental power and wealth in a community. Dewey's democracy is the *radical alternative concept to oppose the state of the philosopher-kings and of the scientific experts*. As that, it is far removed from having been realized. On closer investigation, it becomes obvious that the realization of such a community is a much more problematic affair than Dewey's unobtrusive terminology may at first suggest. The conception of this community is central to an understanding of human individuals. They neither exist merely as representatives of their species in procreative associations, nor are they as threatened individuals little more than parts of protective alliances. Dewey also does not have in mind the groups of those who confess one thing or the other (in the sense of a *church*) or who assert this or that (in the sense of a *doctrine*), when he speaks of community. Of course, even Dewey's "great community" would not be able to survive without self-preservation and protection from violence. But it should have no need of transcendence or knowledgeable experts in order to set its goals of communitarian action.

Also, Kant had a political and moral goal for the education of people who live together in a "republic governed by rules of justice."⁸ In his opinion, however, the development of human individuality was not necessary to accomplish this aim. Rather, a *standardization of the forms of life according to moral principles* was required. "For how differently do people live! . . . There can only be uniformity among them if they act according to the same principles, and these principles would have to become their second nature,"⁹ that is, as the result of education. Kant's educational program, then, focuses on standardizing human life in accordance with principles familiar to him—universal reason and morality. An education committed to this purpose is not concerned with "individual human beings, but rather the human species"; it is dedicated to the "idea of humankind."¹⁰

“Parents usually educate their children merely so that they fit in with the present world, however corrupt it may be. However, they ought to educate them better, so that a better condition in the future may thereby be brought forth.” Parents should not concentrate on the ambition “that their children get on well in the world” but that the world make progress.¹¹ Dewey follows Kant insofar as in education he is likewise concerned with a better social world. They both are, then, social-revolutionary pedagogues. But Dewey does not see this better social world in making real an ideal of humankind or an ideal of reason that would already be philosophically conceivable at the present time. For him, the future community and the education that is taking place in it will not be guided by a philosophical doctrine. Rather, the philosophical ideal that he sees consists in making a normatively autonomous community possible. Dewey’s pedagogy turns away from the status quo of human sociability in which experts and the powerful lead the great majority of people as long as they live. But he does not want to replace these circumstances with a philosophical vision of utopia that could already be established conceptually through a putatively higher insight. Dewey’s philosophy of education is directed toward people who are living together without simply adapting to prevailing circumstances but also without constantly having to be told by sages and experts what their reaction to reality should be.

The fundamental premise of a democratic community for Dewey is that all who participate in it have confidence in their own individual ability to be insightful. But it is exactly this confidence that an education in the culture of experts does not encourage. Following Plato a different way around than Geuss, he writes:

Plato somewhere speaks of the slave as one who in his actions does not express his own ideas, but those of some other man. It is our social problem now, even more urgent than in the time of Plato, that method, purpose, understanding, shall exist in the consciousness of the one who does the work, that his activity shall have meaning to himself.¹²

“Own idea” is an emphatic expression with Dewey. It is not without a touch of irony that he, one of the most severe opponents of Platonism, quotes of all things Plato in his educational philosophy. But while for Plato it is inevitable that in this respect most people remain slaves, Dewey works toward a polity in which every person is given a chance to develop his or her own thoughts and is able to react to their linguistic and extralinguistic reality from a position of autonomy. Those who acquire knowledge on their own also express themselves when they apply this

knowledge. A knowledgeable person ideally becomes a different person through this process of acquisition. But those who do not gain knowledge on their own, but have only *been informed* about things, also cannot express themselves when they give an account of and pass on to others what they know. Only in very few cases does information lead to a change of oneself, to what one subjectively goes through as a so-called educational experience. For Dewey, a school that treats knowledge as information is “a place where the child shows off to the teacher and the other children the amount of information he has succeeded in assimilating from a text-book.”¹³ This is also true of higher learning. However, if one has something to say because one has acquired knowledge *on one's own*, then one expresses *oneself* in a thought, even when this thought deals with somebody else. An idea that is not also a self-expression for Dewey is not a thought of one's own.¹⁴

Dewey saw the connection between education and the possibilities available for the organization of a polity as clearly as Plato. It is not possible to strive for security, autonomy, justice, and happiness with vaguely inclined persons in arbitrary forms of organization. Only people with clearly defined abilities can create communities with clearly defined possibilities. But because Dewey's political notions were completely different from Plato's thoughts, he consequently also tried to turn completely different pedagogical visions into reality. I've already suggested that, following Hans Joas, this political concept may be described as a *sacralized democracy*.¹⁵ A democracy of this kind is not a political technique for the administration of power. It is, rather, a *cooperative way of life* that can be attained only by human beings who possess a certain degree of *cognitive or semiotic autonomy*. But what kind of beings are able to express their own insights in their own way when they pass on or apply in their actions a knowledge that they have acquired on their own initiative? Who are they that have “ideas of their own”? Does Dewey imagine a polity that comprises entirely scientists, artists, and writers? For an answer to this question, we must understand first what it means to be an individual in a community.

A World of Individuals

If ontology is the “discipline, which studies that which is *qua* thing-that-is and those things that hold good for this in its own right,”¹⁶ then the idea that forms the foundation of the following deliberations may be called a *negative ontology*. Speaking about a shared Being (*ein gemeinsames*

Sein) of individuals is misleading and not conducive to an understanding of social reality insofar as every individual being is what it is and not another being. Negative anthropology considers cognition of the *human as such* to be misguided, or looks at it as a project that leads into human biology, into the study of *Homo sapiens* as a biological species (*Gattungswesen*), and thereby away from philosophy. A negative theology considers positive statements about God as untenable, as creating contradictions. In the same way, one can characterize the idea that the real world is made up of nothing but individuals that one does not recognize as individuals by thinking about their general being as the starting *point* of a *negative ontology*.¹⁷

What is involved here is an *idea* and not an assertion, insofar as any statements about *the* reality as such are completely beyond our control. The experiences of reality that we have are always only of its segments, and for purely argumentative purposes as an aprioristic doctrine of reality, statements of this kind are not justifiable either. Even so, such an assumption can direct the understanding (in Kant's sense of an "idea").¹⁸ This directive leads to a specific use of general concepts. The assertion "Peter is a German boxer" uses general concepts no different than does a narrative passage of the following kind: "Peter was born in Germany. Early in life, his father, a boxing coach, taught him boxing at the same time as bicycling. Both became as natural to him as walking and speaking."

In stories, general concepts are produced through the use of comparisons, metaphors, temporal denotations, and similar devices or, in Walter Benjamin's terms, *configurations* and *constellations*. These constellations of language signs then serve the stories as instruments of cognition in the sense of minute investigations of the individual being in its relationships to other individual beings. This also makes it possible for stories to produce cognitions that would not, of course, emerge when individual aspects are subsumed under general aspects, but would come about when the history that is "stored" in the constellations is being explicated, whereby the individual beings become what they are. This history takes place in constellations relating to other individual objects so that the constellation in the story (or in any other work of art) serves the purpose of "unlocking" the relationships of the individual objects.¹⁹

Peter cannot simply be classified as a boxer and as a bicyclist and here again as one of those who acquired these two skills early in life. Rather, from his perspective, both activities come equally naturally to him, perhaps because he learned them from his father concurrently when he was a young boy. The narration puts forward the *insider's perspective* that a person has concerning the fact that he belongs to a certain class, as

much as it presents the *history* that made him a member of this class. Thereby the general characteristic becomes something other than even the class under which individuals are subsumed. It becomes a way of how an individual feels about belonging to this class. There is the way Peter became and is a boxer, and there is the way Hans became and is a boxer. When we have experiences of generalities, then always in these historical concretions. We cannot encounter a boxer *as such* or come upon the color red *per se* so long as we take our experience seriously. Even if our experience might always have a conceptual depth-structure, as a concrete experience, it never exhausts itself in the implementation of this structure. We encounter Peter and Hans or this tomato and that strawberry. For this reason, it is, as a rule, stories (when they are successful) that more likely refer to our experience, rather than theories that merely thematize the relations (or gradations) of universal concepts. As an example, we can imagine that the above story continues as follows: "Hans also learned to box at the age of ten. But he never developed a liking for the sport. It was a compulsory subject at the school of the military academy, both of which he naturally hated. His parents had sent him to this boarding school because they did not want to take personal responsibility for his education." In brief, stories do not simply report about the characteristic traits of individuals, but they can also focus on how individuals react to the fact that they have certain general characteristics. In this way, individuals are not seen simply as "bearers" or "substrates" of separable generalities but as *reacting persons* with a certain history.

The thought that generalities are not separable from individualities is especially prominent in Aristotle's metaphysics.²⁰ On the basis of the modern ontology of function,²¹ it is possible, moreover, to see individuals as beings that in their interaction *produce* general structures in which they are capable of keeping their particularity. The universal that makes them possible as individuals with specific constituent qualities is produced by themselves in a looping effect: many people together form an army that creates and sustains them as soldiers; many people form an academy that creates and sustains them as scholars. Many human beings give each other linguistic signs and in this way develop an ordinary language that creates and sustains them as beings capable of communication. They give each other reasons and thereby create and sustain themselves as reasonable beings in a justifying and reasoning community. We are familiar with such circumstances from the realm of the organic.²² It is impossible according to this point of view, however, that the universal, separated from *individual beings* in an abstract form of existence will

bring forth individuals of a particular kind as a biological species, as discourse, or as reason. (This is different in Platonic teaching in which forms represent the general principles of origin or in Plotinus's emanation doctrine.) As will become obvious later, even in sense experiences, it is not primarily general respects, conceptualities, or characteristics, but first of all individual beings that are being grasped and related to each other. Individual beings form patterns or constellations and continue developing in this manner. They do not require general guidelines in order to grasp other particulars. Contrary to the tradition that extends from Plato to Kant and is predominant again also in our time, I am here soliciting support for the idea that it is particular beings whom we can perceive with our senses that form the "concrete basis of reality," and that it is not something transcendent and abstract that presumably must be postulated so that we can experience particular things as constituted in this or some other way.²³

A cognitive project guided by the thought that considers it paramount to gain insights about individual beings qua individual beings and does not try to "ascribe" them to generalities, not only assigns to *storytelling* an important cognitive function. It also assigns to such *art* as focuses on the individual, for example, to poetry or the pictorial art, a cognitive and not only an entertainment value. Making the "splendor of things"²⁴ perceptible, as individual things become recognizable in the particular constellations of their existence, is the purpose of many a work of poetry and the visual arts. The poetry of praise here is not merely the expression of a vivacious mood but a *mode of cognition* in which generalities no longer distract attention from the particular. The task is to analyze the historical *constellation* in which a specific thing has developed into what it has become at the very moment of its cognition. As will become clear later, this is not about grasping an individual being, of getting at an "inner core" inside something individual. The way generalities can be reduced to the patterns that individual beings form with each other, so also the individual beings are to be described as nothing other than the stories that they live through in such patterns with other individual beings. No essences are needed beyond the stories of the patterns and the individuals. Instead of saying that x behaves the way it does because it is an *example* of E, that is subject to *law* L, a *story* is told that is "stored" in that constellation in which an individual being lives at a particular time.²⁵ To this perspective, the exactness of a science that operates with precisely graded (units of) universals appears to be the result of *superficiality*. Only where mathematical gradation apprehends the differences between individual objects (in the Galilean cognitive strategy, as Kurt

Lewin has called it)²⁶ can it, with the help of numbers, come close to the precision of a story investigating the constellations between individual beings and such poetry as makes the particular its foremost concern, even though the metric characterization of an individual being does not also comprise the context of the constellation in which something individual exists.

The conceptual constellations of a philosophical system will never attain the concreteness of the aesthetic insight into an individual being unless the system itself transitions into narrative. Philosophical discourse does not tell a story with the support of metaphors. To be sure, Hegel tried to represent conceptual developments in his system, but even for him the individual being turns into an instance of the universal in a specific developmental phase. When something particular reacts to something universal in Hegel, it does so quasi in the name of the World Spirit.²⁷ Even more recent attempts (such as Badiou's) to critique the universal as a totalitarian theoretical or practical entity that has not merely an instrumental but a truth-unlocking character, privilege a theoretical system that is meant to show that there does not exist an overarching totality but that every individual being represents its own infinity in view of the finite conceptual means available for its description.

We know this attention directed at the individual from our personal association with other people. That someone is a Swiss, German, or Australian woman may be a correct but, other than for a border official, rather superficial characterization of a person. That the person in question is a man or a woman is perhaps relevant for other viewpoints but also less telling than a biography in tabular or narrative form. People cannot make do without universals that classify other people. These general categories are an efficient reality. But they remain abstract when compared to a life's story the details of which may arbitrarily be intensified.²⁸ Humans above all can relate to the general concepts under which they are being subsumed. They can refuse to be assigned to certain groups. They can be delighted to be counted among the geniuses, irate to be called morbid homosexuals, afraid to be considered suicidal.²⁹ This is where the general concepts of the humanities and social sciences differ from those of the natural sciences: the objects of the hard sciences do not react in a manner that we can perceive to the general terms in which one speaks about them.

It is easy to see that everything needs time in order to exist, that nothing can be there without a history in which it arises and gets into constellations with other individual beings that let it participate in general patterns. From the smallest elementary particle to the universe as a whole, it

is possible to see any being under observation as a particular entity with a history. As a rule, this history does not interest us, however, unless it involves people close to us or our hometown, pets, and a few special objects (mother's brooch, father's pipe). Ordinarily, it is sufficient to know, this is a dog, that there is a water-soluble powder, the other an electro-conductive metal, and so forth. It may interest us when poets and novelists zoom in minute detail into the history of these things and into the constellations in which they originated and exist. But this is not necessary for our everyday handling of these things. Our interest to know is limited in this case. But when we say to a person of our acquaintance in whose history we are involved, "You have to say that because you are German," or "Of course, you had to act the way you did because you are a man," and so forth, then we usually become guilty of a hurtful superficiality. When we know other people more closely, they proceed on the assumption that we do not understand them when we put them into certain categories but expect that we refer to their individual history and mention their special intentions as well as their reactions to their history. For this is their "full reality" as individuals.

Speaking of "full reality" in this context presupposes a gradable concept of reality such as has existed since ancient philosophy: something is more or less real.³⁰ Concreteness and reality here are interconnected: the more concretely a being is defined by its particular historical development and its present existential constellation, the more real it is. The more indefinite it is as something singular, the less real it is. What is identified by expressions like "*das Deutsche*" [what is considered typically German, M.W.] or "the bourgeois" is more abstract, hence more unreal than the being that is singled out by name, such as "Julius Caesar" or "Queen Victoria." I can't say precisely for how long "the German" and "the bourgeois" (*das Bürgerliche*) has existed and how these terms relate to the "French" and "the artistic." By contrast, it is easy to find out and to state accurately for how long Helmut Schmidt and Angela Merkel have been around, and I can ask them what they think of France and of art. Therefore, these particular beings are *concrete definite realities*.

An application of the hypothesis about the reality of particular beings in moral philosophy—and now we are moving back to our topic of education and democracy—concerns the practical relevance of what has been called self-actualization, a term that, as a slogan of Abraham Maslow's popularized psychology, nowadays has an anachronistic tinge.³¹ To cut off all essentialist-anthropological speculation about a potential "self"³² as an essence of a human individual, that has yet to be actualized because it

is mostly hidden, it is better to replace this slogan with the rather unwieldy term *Einzelwesenverwirklichung* (individual actualization). I am less concerned in this context with the notion that talents that have been dormant for a long time and desires that were nursed a good while can also be implemented. Rather, my focus is the critique of social circumstances that seek to level the historical differences between individual beings through *competition* and *consumer* situations. The issue is the contrast between two social worlds: one in which different individuals who acknowledge their differences and their different histories encounter one another, and another one in which nothing but resources are produced and consumed and to which not only nonhuman individuals belong but of which in the final analysis even humans themselves (as “human capital”)³³ can be a part.

A polity in which human beings cannot be open, that is, real in their difference from others, blocks their potential for leading a happy life. For, whereas justice refers to acknowledging the general law (“Everybody is equal before the law”), freedom and happiness as practical goals of human life require acceptance of the unique life history and its manifestation in the social present: it is a *particular* individual who has decided to be this and not another individual in this and not another life-historical constellation and in his or her actions continues to abide by this decision. It is a *particular* individual who tries to go on with his life defined in these or those terms as his happy life (or to escape, as the case may be, from an unhappy life), aspiring to a particular life as *his own* story. From this perspective, a happy life requires the “realization of peace” in which individuals can, in cooperative relationships without domination, derive the consequences that they desire from the story of their lives.³⁴ Both the development of individuals and their reflexive cognition of the possible “melody” in the story of their lives (of their individual happiness) that they would like to continue and, finally, the becoming public of the consequences of their developments—all this needs time. If humans are not allowed sufficient time in their self- and communicative relationships because, for example, they constantly have to be busy adapting to external economic demands, this aggravation will have debilitating consequences: they can then neither find out which patterns in their lives’ stories they want to continue and which they want to terminate, nor can they find out how to communicate to others things about the life that they have decided to live (if in fact they could make this decision). There are many possibilities how a happy or unhappy life can express itself, though language, of course, is of the greatest importance as a medium of expression.

That is why prescriptions that one has to speak in this and no other way, even as the person speaking is struggling in her choice of words to express the experience of her life, is a form of domination that can prevent self-knowledge and acceptance.

The realization of peaceful acceptance among the particular biographical stories is the aim of Dewey's democracy. Education for autonomous understanding is meant to be the basis for making one's own judgments, for cooperating with each other under their guidance and, finally, for leading a happy life. Those who lack the confidence to recognize even something small on their own initiative will be far from mustering the assurance needed to perceive what kind of a life they have lived until now and whether they would like to continue living like that or change. A person like this will not be able to see through his own life's story because he will lack to confidence to understand if a certain constellation of his life's story that he has just entered is beneficial for him or not. For, the honesty and the courage one must summon in order to recognize the story of one's own life most of the time surpass those capabilities that are necessary to see through external circumstances. A person, who lacks the self-confidence needed for this insight, will also not be able to resist when others stipulate that he (or she) must enter into a certain constellation that is significant for a particular time of life. When the parents say that boys, if you please, may not love boys and have to enlist in the armed forces, then someone who thinks himself incapable of scoping things out on his (or her) own will not protect himself (or herself) from this kind of pigeonholing. In order to actually have one's own experience of life, one has to possess the competence to recognize, on one's own, without help, the story of one's life and the situation that has now resulted from it, and one must be able to take one's own evaluation of one's private circumstances (that usually will be an affective one) seriously. People who are always only being informed about what is the case will also have experts tell them what is the case in their lives and how to go on at this stage. But there are no experts for one's own life.

That the factually existing democracies are not democracies as Dewey defines the term is easy to understand now: in most of their educational processes, they look at individual human beings less as unique persons who have to learn how to understand and evaluate their own life's history and how to set it into a relation to the community's life. Instead, adolescents are treated primarily as a future *resource* for the job market that requires certain so-called key qualifications. But what exactly does that mean?

Resources and Personal Encounters

An individual being that functions as a resource is not perceived by the producers and consumers of this resource as an individual but as the bearer of general characteristics. The life's story of this person is the production history of certain desired generalities. The historical constellation in which a certain tree or a certain child or a certain head of cattle has come about is of as little interest to a timber or beef producer as it is to the consumer. To them, only the quality of the wood and the meat (that enables the producer to obtain a certain price on the market and the consumer to fulfill a particular purpose) is relevant. A fishmonger describes a trout as two pounds of fresh fish that is very suitable as an appetizer, while a poet put it like this:

Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man. . . .³⁵

Even though this is not about a particular trout but about "brook trout" in general, their evocation focuses on the constellation ("deep glens," "amber current"), the *history* of their habitat, and the organisms themselves as definitive historical genera ("world in its becoming," "all things . . . older than man"). It is easy to imagine how from here attention is poetically pinpointed on the individual entity, as when a birch tree with "frail shoulders" is said to dictate in her "Diary": "Today I carried the hawk."³⁶ By contrast, the individual used as a resource, has neither a personal *character* (*Gestalt*) nor *history*, but on the basis of the qualities attributed to him, a *relative* market value. If it is true that the real world is a world of individuals, then this view of the world's entities as an accumulation of resources is a *disfigured* and *alienated* one. A perception of this kind overlooks the factual: individual entities with particular histories in particular constellations. In a world of disfigured and alienated circumstances those who want to consume specific things they value as embodying need-gratifying qualities project on everyone their currently relevant commercial interests. Stone becomes x square feet of construction material, trout is sold as y pounds of appetizer, the other person is converted into human

capital. This shows not only ignorance about the histories of stones, trout, and people. It is also fatal for those who see the world in these terms.

In a comparison of global situations in which subjects are a reference to resources with those in which subjects do not face consumable individuals, one can characterize the personalistic and social or also mentalist terminology as one that is used in places where one wants to relate to something as a *being that is not disposable as a resource*. A head of beef cattle in a slaughterhouse has no name, no inner states, and its history is of no interest. By contrast, a domesticated dog has a name, has needs, is smart or dumb, and will not be eaten. It is obvious that in animistic cultures, in which mountains, bodies of water, trees, and animals are seen as animated beings or are addressed as inhabited by gods, that is, are treated *like a personal counterpart*, these things do not solely serve as consumable resources. If one depends on a particular animal for food, then in these cultures one has to justify oneself before the animal for killing it, the way one must explain to a friend why one needs him today and asks for his help.³⁷ Conversely, talk about people as “human capital” indicates that persons in certain contexts of a market economy are no longer seen as personal, inviolable counterparts but as a production factor that can be set off against other such factors. The vocabulary of mentalism, then, does not necessarily refer to ontological suppositions that in the end serve to explain perceptions, thought processes, and actions through immaterial substances. Instead, this language refers to social circumstances in which one wants to characterize something as *not disposable* or *inviolable*. Repressing the mentalist vocabulary—especially where people talk with and about one another—does not signal the transition from a mentalist strategy of explanation to a different one but points to the “resourcification” of human relationships. In relationships of this kind, there is no longer an encounter between subjects, and no resonance is possible any longer between subjects and objects. The reality of the inviolate histories of individuals is no longer *given recognition*. Moreover, this reality is actively being effaced. Someone who sees the world as a storehouse of resources waiting to be used in the implementation of his interests also disfigures himself to the extent that he becomes an unhistorical pure center of ambition for whom something either just happens to be available or not, but who no longer encounters anything and anybody, no longer begins, continues, or terminates a history with anything and anybody.³⁸ There is no history to the gypsum that I use as plaster on my walls but perhaps to the stones I brought home from a hike

and put on the papers on my desk. No history connects me with the liverwurst I eat, but I do share a history with the cat that lives at my house.

It is also important for the method of philosophy not to recognize the discourse of mentalism as explanatory but as a manner of speaking that is used wherever human beings refer to inviolable histories of individuals. As a rule, philosophers believe that they could explore an area of the mental in the *philosophy of mind* as a part of factual reality in the same way that biologists investigate another segment of nature, that of the vital. The question whether a being, as one with an inner life, should be addressed in the language of mentalism or not can be answered, however, if the considerations presented here are correct, only in *normative and collective* terms as a response to another question: What relationship do we want to assume toward this being, a consumer-oriented one or one in which we recognize its history and uniqueness? Do we want to explain this being, or do we want to encounter its history in order to become acquainted with its necessarily historical reality? The question whether a cat has a soul or not cannot be answered in the same way as whether it has a cerebrum or doesn't. In order to find an answer to the latter question, I have to look into the cat's cranium. There is no place where I may look for its soul. But once I find out things about the cat's history, if perhaps even my history and its history are to a small degree interwoven, then the animal becomes for me an inviolable historical individual being. And for this reason, I will speak about her as a person or a being with a soul. The problem of the *philosophy of mind* whether human actions have to be explained only with recourse taken to natural laws, or, to put it differently, with recourse taken to intentions and convictions, is posed wrongly. The truly relevant question is whether I want to look at the action of a human (or a cat) through the history of their lives, or whether I want to explain this action neurologically as body motion; whether I would like to encounter the respective being or prefer to objectify it.

But let us return to the question of education. Market needs of the resource "human capital" also influence people's *educational processes*. Just as trees that serve as the resource of timber or cattle as a resource of meat do not *have* or *lead a life* but are *raised* and *bred* to have certain general qualities in order to be successfully marketable, so also humans must in the course of instructional processes acquire certain "qualifications" as general attributes before they are put to use as human capital. The practice of turning something into a resource these days, then, no longer stops at the educational processes of people. When all human relationships are reinterpreted as markets in the great saga of man as a market

participant, human beings will also turn into a resource for satisfying sexual needs, for the transaction of so-called lower or higher duties, or for the organization of economic and educational processes.³⁹ Their sexuality, their physical and psychic endurance, their intelligence, or their talent for organizing things thereby are turned into general dispositions with which they need to be equipped as individuals and in which, if necessary, they have to be aided (by cosmetic surgery, fitness programs, meditation courses, intelligence training, and educational projects) to warrant their value and marketability. In this context, schools and colleges change into sites for the production of different types of human capital and cease to be spaces in which to live and reflect. Just as the life of a tree or a cow is merely the necessary preliminary stage for its utilization as wood or meat, the development of different kinds of students in various institutions of instruction becomes the initial stage for their being marketed as human capital. This is a process that is referred to as “reification” and can be considered a sure sign that indicates *processes of alienation* between humans.⁴⁰

Life and Education

The notion that it is the purpose of schools and colleges to prepare people for use in the job market is an issue against which Dewey argued and carried on polemics well over a hundred years ago in his pedagogical writings. For him, a school has to be a place where human beings can have *life experiences* as individuals, that is to say, that they experience personal stories that constitute them as historically unique persons.⁴¹ Human experiences of life are always experiences in a *community* because it is characteristic of human life to take place within the sign connections of communities. The result of this, in his opinion, is the need for a “social education” that must be related to the facts of life.⁴² The actual schools of his time, however, he considers oriented toward a general (canonized) learnedness, promoting “selfish” and “individualistic” ways of working and based on a perception of society according to which everyone is in the final analysis fighting only in their own interest for a good place in the job market. This attitude that, Dewey thinks, may have had its justification during the European settlement of North America, was transplanted into the modern United States as an educational system inherited from feudalism. But for Dewey, it is a frame of mind that is hardly compatible with a socialization aiming at a democratic society because it mistakenly prepares children for an “individualistic struggle for

existence” instead of properly educating them for autonomy and the ability to work together.⁴³ The background of these methods of education is presumably presented in the grand stories of Darwinism and in narratives about “rising” in a stratified society. It is very easy to see that the currently prevalent narrative of the human as market participant follows these stories seamlessly: in the market, one needs to prevail, must attain a high valuation, has to be rare and in demand. Here also, the others are primarily competitors. This makes it understandable that contrary to all insights of pedagogy as to the value of a type of schooling that turns toward individuals and, as much as possible, allows them to arrive at their own insights, little has changed in the schools to enhance the lives and happiness of individual people. Reform pedagogy that envisioned the ability to participate in democracy was merely an interlude in the development from social-Darwinist education to training for the global education and labor market on which “the Germans” have to make themselves fit for their competition with “the Chinese” and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) with its PISA Tests (Programme for International Student Assessment) regularly assesses this fitness. Dewey was concerned with neither individual success on the national labor markets nor with the ability of nations to persevere on the global market. Instead, he and his daughter tried to institute a school system that

associates learning with doing [and] will replace the passive education of imparting the learning of others. However well [this latter method] is adapted to feudal societies, in which most individuals are expected to submit constantly and docilely to the authority, an education which proceeds on this basis is inconsistent with a democratic society where initiative and independence are the rule and where every citizen is supposed to take part in the conduct of affairs of common interest.⁴⁴

In liberal capitalism, it is not important at all whether everybody participates in public affairs according to democratic processes. Perhaps it is even undesired, inasmuch as despotic states with a pseudo-capitalistic economy like China (in which people most of all learn obedience) demonstrate that much higher profits can be made there much faster. Only in places where it is expected that human beings come together to form a public do the educational institutions also have an obligation to prepare for cooperation. Only in places where educational institutions produce cooperative people can a public of this kind become a reality. When the market of competitors replaces the space of the public, schools will prepare for the market because parents want their children to be prepared

for the social world as it exists. By contrast, when schools produce cooperating people, this kind of citizen will refuse to join the competitive environment of the markets.

The abilities to develop autonomous insights and to cooperate (which is what Dewey expects schools to provide, so that emphatically democratic polities can come about and not embattled labor markets) lead to a new understanding of *discipline*. In institutions of training that adhere to feudal circumstances, “discipline” means that schoolchildren learn to control and to limit their individual needs for motion as well as for knowledge so that they can submit to the prescribed strategies for absorbing information. Pieces of information that enable the individual to increase the collective’s capacity for competition must be processed. On the other hand, discipline that prepares for the democratic way of life in a school in which the pupils move about the classroom “usefully, intelligently, and voluntarily, without committing any rough or rude act,” means the “ability to do things independently, not submission under restraint.”⁴⁵

It is not to be expected of students who, in order to succeed in competitive situations, learn above all to adapt to standards whose validity they have never *accepted* in their own history, much less have *developed independently*, that they will lead autonomous lives according to their own standards and in cooperation with others. Only those who have been educated in Dewey’s sense can lead autonomous lives according to their personal standards. Education as *Bildung* in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s concept of “forming oneself” is to be understood as the development of the ability for gaining self-knowledge. It is the effort to “become understandable to oneself” and “to become free and independent in one’s actions.”⁴⁶ An education of this kind is what Dewey’s type of school is meant to convey. Nowadays, this goal no longer exists as anything other than a phrase in a pedagogical sermon.

Freedom, Necessity, Creativity

Philosophical reflections such as Humboldt's and Dewey's are one thing. The other are investigations of modern scientific pedagogy and developmental psychology whose empirical research ascertains data about which form of interaction between students, respectively between educators and students, is *the most successful*. As we shall see, the difference between the philosophical doctrine of schooling developed with a utopian intent, and scientific pedagogy depends on what in this context is meant by "successful." The philosophical doctrine of education here is not simply the speculative preliminary step of empirical science the way Aristotle's inspection of the natural species and of the reproduction of living beings was the preliminary stage of empirical biology, or the theory of human understanding by Locke and Hume preceded cognition psychology. The difference between the philosophical doctrines of education and scientific pedagogy is the contrast between an investigation of human development under established aims of development that are recognized as realizable on the one hand and, on the other, imagining new, as-yet-unrealized developmental aims.

According to the self-estimation of empirical research on education, this kind of study can (on the basis of empirically verified knowledge) determine how to organize schools. Objections raised against the scientifically confirmed ideas of how to organize the educational landscape will appear to be motivated by ideology. Even views in educational philosophy

that still play a role in some debates concerning educational policy will then be attributed to ideology. In this situation, one generally overlooks the fact that what is debated here is not an alternative between an antiquated philosophical doctrine of education and a modern scientific and empirically buttressed one. At issue is the question whether decisions about the development of individuals and communities can be made by *experts about life* that orient themselves by the *established* social world. What this is all about, in other words, is the fundamental and difficult question what role scientific expertise can and should play in structuring the lives of people to be educated.

In a scientific culture, this question will, of course, be answered by pointing out that the expertise of empirical science is the final authority in these questions, just as in religious cultures, it is quite beyond doubt that the clergy will be granted this function. Only where an *expanded understanding of democracy* forms the basis for this decision can it be obvious that the authority of the empirical sciences must be limited where debates about the developmental aims of human beings take place. The relevance of nonscientific, philosophical, or normative-political reflections for the organization of the educational system can be imagined only where “democracy” does not only mean a *political* but also a *social* idea.¹ Because it is not conclusively established what may become of a person or society, fundamental reflections about developmental goals by necessity have a utopian character. Whoever merely wants to think about which possibilities can be extrapolated from any given realities simply refuses a debate about new developmental purposes. Empirical sciences like scientific pedagogy can for this reason make absolutely no decision about what kind of people we want to become and how humans should live together. They can merely investigate which effects certain forms of instruction will have and if they can attain the aims that a society wishes to accomplish through education. But empirical science itself cannot answer the *normative* question, what particular aims we expect an education to attain.

Even scientific pedagogy and developmental psychology receive their educational goal—what is expected to amount to “successful” learning—*from outside*. Success at school is measured by professional (or work) success, and this success is tabulated in part according to the income that students of any level generate after graduation. This standard is questioned, however, by the philosophies of education discussed above. According to these philosophies, it is not the task of any type of school to make young adults “fit” for the job market where competitions for salaries take place. Such “fitness training” perpetuates the noncooperative, competitive society. Whoever desires a different society cannot educate

students for success in the existing society. For Dewey, it should be the goal of schools to make *new* social circumstances possible. The question of which kind of school makes new social circumstances most likely may be answered by empirical research. The question of which social circumstances should be aspired to in the future is definitely not.

Children, who have been informed about issues of current relevance and who have been disciplined within the perimeters of the generally expected forms of behavior, can succeed in the job markets of a society that is averse to the possibility that persons with a voice of their own have experiences of life and express them in public. But if one wants *not to continue* such a society, one will also not want to continue the corresponding type of school. Exactly, this is the aim of the normative educational philosophies since Plato. Their concern is with a different and, they believe, better social world.

The Great Community

According to the social idea of democracy à la Dewey, human life is to be regulated through an interplay of individuals and community in such a way that this polity develops further to become a "Great Community."² In it, people work together in a constant inquiry into values and goals without obtaining any advantages "from outside." By the same token, the community sees to it that the abilities individuals need in order to participate actively in the inquiry are being supported and can develop. For Dewey, this kind of democracy is the name for "the idea of community life itself." This means the right community in the sense that no persons or structures exert domination over the individuals but that education enables them to develop their own ideas about goals together without thereby taking recourse to any kind of *transcendence*: whether in the form of religious notions of a beyond or as rulers and experts lording it over them.³

The rejection of religious notions of the beyond as normative orientations leads to the necessity of taking one's own life history between birth and death seriously in political terms and not to consider it a prelude to something else. A community life organized in this purely immanentist way replaces religious ideas of redemption with the mutual search for goals. For this reason, the idea of a searching community is for Dewey the successor of the religious or holy community (of the church) and, in following Hans Joas, can rightfully be called a *sacred idea*.⁴ In this community, priests and other transcendently privileged asserters are

given as little recognition as are philosophical administrators of values who believe they can give advance assurances on the basis of presumably nonnegotiable intuitions about ideas concerning what is good for the community.⁵

As early as 1899, Dewey proceeds from the assumption that he is living in a still “inchoate public”⁶ in which, however, the insight that allows the formulation of a social and ethical concept of democracy has already taken hold:

Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community. The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy.⁷

Dewey attributes the fact that social democracy has remained only an ideal rather than being actualized, even though *political* democracies do exist, to two reasons. First, mankind in its entire history has not succeeded in developing the degree of autonomy and independence that would enable it to organize the developments of its communities without being oriented toward transcendent beings or authorities. In Dewey’s own words: “Men have never fully used the powers they possess to advance the good in life, because they have waited upon some power external to themselves and to nature to do the work they are responsible for doing.”⁸ Second, this historical fact is to be ascribed to the reality that the forces of social progress have not become strong enough yet. In education, they do not yet work toward the development of a community of independent activists. It is the fear of destitution and failure and not the ideal of autonomy that drives social progress. Dewey does not proceed from the assumption that this will change in his more immediate future. Social democracy will remain an ideal:

It is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of an ideal: namely, the tendency and movement of some thing which exists carried to its final limit, viewed as completed, perfected. Since things do not attain such fulfillment but are in actuality distracted and interfered with, democracy in this sense is not a fact and never will be.⁹

But in contrast to an intelligible character or prenatally determined will of human beings, in contrast also to Plato’s republic that exists only “in the skies,”¹⁰ Dewey’s ideal is one without transcendence. It is purely *immanentist*. That is why this ideal is different from the Christian concept

of redemption insofar as it can at least *potentially* be made real through man's own strength and is oriented toward individuals' concrete notions about life.

Ideals relating to transcendences (abstract ideals, as Dewey calls them) and as, since Plato, they exist in practical philosophy for individual life as well as for the political and social community, by contrast have at first a paralyzing effect on the actual life of the communities. Individual people resign over the possibility that something in their practical lives can in fact be ameliorated considering the high aims that "actually" would have to be realized. In societies that are oriented toward transcendences, the here and now is less important because it is only in the beyond that everything can be set right.

Dewey sees a connection between transcendent ideals and the lack of autonomy. First, transcendent ideals are created as a substitute for the fact that due to insufficient semiotic autonomy, one is in no position to react to reality. For a while, the ideals may like one's fondest dream serve as an imaginative compensation for a reality felt to be inadequate. But there is a point of reversal at which the discrepancy between ideal and reality is experienced as too painful. This is when desperate attempts to realize the transcendences can create intensified relationships of control among people, and even terror. Then, suddenly, every possible effort must be made to improve a putative rotten reality. Human beings and a social reality that are so far from corresponding to the unattainable ideals are regarded as so useless that one can damage and even—the greatest sacrifices have to be made—destroy them without problems for the abstract good.

Consequently, Dewey in the face of National Socialism sharply criticizes the "German political and philosophical mentality" that, through the creation of transcendent ideals, first shirks the duty to transform life and, afterward, in the name of these ideals, institutes a totalitarian rearrangement of concrete empirical reality at any cost.¹¹ Dewey's skepticism about the chance of realizing a social democracy, then, does not manifest a pessimistic or resigning attitude. Dewey merely takes into account how improbable it is that a community without transcendence will come about in which autonomous individuals will grow up or in which autonomous individuals will evolve who may together form a community without transcendence. If the one presupposes the other, how can it be expected to develop? Would not both sides have to be present all at once?

In spite of all these difficulties, Dewey's ideal of democracy remains concrete. He does not see it as relative to an infinitely distant future. It is not an ideal that can be imagined as real only in the long run. Instead,

now and again small communities of free individuals can come together and actually create “alternative ways of life” without the beyond and authorities. They can serve, then, as a concrete standard for the developmental processes of whole societies, just as the platinum-iridium meter bar in Paris has been the concrete prototype for all forms of length.

A standard of this kind is also the starting point for possible criticism directed both at individuals who do not develop their abilities and at institutions that seek to perpetuate themselves at the expense of the developmental opportunities of individual people. Only in a community in which everyone is convinced that independent action and thinking have to be supported so that common inquiry into the best goals for life is initiated, one no longer has to hope for the Platonic philosopher-kings to show which way to go. From this perspective, the great community is at the same time the *precondition* and the *result* of the activity undertaken by individuals with an education that fosters independence and the ability to work together.

Dewey's great community should be interpreted as the collective counterpart to Nietzsche's ideal of human creativity of values and aims that is purely immanentist and free of any transcendence and authority. But Nietzsche's key word in this context is, famously, the *Übermensch*, the *overman* (in Walter Kaufmann's translation). It is not an ideal community that produces creative individuals, and for Nietzsche, it is also not creative individuals who make an ideal community possible. His hope for the future is not socially but biologically connoted. He believes in the “breeding” (*Züchtung*) of an autonomous being, the “higher man,” in comparison to whom “man as he has existed until now” (the *bisherige Mensch*) represents merely some kind of embryonic stage.¹² This lends quite a different “tint” to Nietzsche's immanentism (especially when seen from our contemporary vantage) than that of Dewey's idea of a “great community”—even though both are imagined as ideals for a time *after* the end of otherworldly religions and transcendent metaphysical systems. In either case, the issue is the emergence (through *Erziehung* [education] and through *Züchtung* [breeding]) of human beings who are to create values and goals *out of themselves* and who no longer depend on others or on the fiction of a (Platonic) world beyond and above with its administrative caste of priests and philosophers to order their lives and give them meaning. Of course, any form of human creativity is delimited by birth and death and by the mechanisms that have to be established so that communal self-preservation is possible. These are not marginal borders of human creativity. Hence, it must be all the more important for immanentist

conceptions that the short span of life is taken seriously and is being used for participation in the community of symbols.

Nietzsche was convinced that people in the Europe of his time even though they understood themselves as members of an enlightened culture and even though Christianity had lost its relevance are not capable yet to live without transcendence. Perhaps, so Nietzsche appears to suppose, the pre-Christian Europeans of Homer's time had been able to do so because the celestial realm of the Homeric gods and the realm of the shades after death engender no meaning and purpose *in* human life. This is something that humans had to create on their own during the span of time between birth and death, perhaps aided by the gods' favors. Educated by Christian teaching, and thus accustomed to the fact that what gives a purpose and value to human life is *yet to come*, that it will take place not here and now but in a *beyond*, their concrete creativity was made ever more feeble until their ability to imbue their communal life with a self-created purpose and value vanished altogether. With the demise of Christianity as the dominant cultural factor, mankind will next, so Nietzsche prophesies, due to its by-now-pronounced inability to create a meaningful and valuable existence without transcendent ideals, be submerged in nihilism and try to veil the senselessness of its existence with intoxication, be it political or sensual.¹³

People who get along without a beyond, but who also no longer require ecstasy as a narcotic that conceals the awareness of how devoid of meaning the existence in this world is, but who are able to give to finite human life a purpose and a value from within themselves, like a Leonardo bridge without supporting buttresses—people like these, so Nietzsche believed at the end of the nineteenth century, are *yet to emerge*. The Enlightenment, in his opinion, has yet to take place. A clause like “The meaning of my life is something that I create for myself; it issues from the logic of my spiritual (*seelisch*) life, is changeable, and I recognize no authority that could instruct me about it”—this clause is true for but a few people; by Nietzsche's reckoning, during the epoch of European nihilism, it is not true yet for anyone.¹⁴ The culture in which everybody or at least a majority of people can agree with this locution has not yet arrived.

Similar to Nietzsche, Dewey sees the religious notions of a beyond as projections of human ideals for life in this world; it has not been possible, however, to realize them before now.¹⁵ They are projections of cooperation, of the freedom from sorrows and fears that a future mankind is called on to make real in the great community by coming together and

creating mutual goals and values instead of competing with and dominating one another. Only when human beings are free of the external standards of competition will they possess the freedom and creativity that enables them to produce from within themselves values and goals.

Dewey's social democracy, then, is more than a variant of political theory, one that would plead for direct democracy in contrast to representative democracy. Both in a direct and in a representative democracy is it possible that the social background before which political actions take place is, from an immanentist point of view, completely senseless. Individuals in both political systems may have been reduced to the role of consumers. It is possible in either form of political democracy that its citizens consider their lives to be aimless and without meaning. Political structures cannot guarantee self-reliance and creativity. The best they can do is try to keep basic conditions open that permit social institutions in which the development of individuals as participants in the *inquiry* can be encouraged. But political democracies can just as much effect the constraint and exploitation of the mental abilities expended by individuals who try to get a clear understanding of their life's histories, as they can permit the pauperization of their lives.

The Reality of the Individuals and Happiness

This has brought us to the question of how to form an image of these people—more precisely, of *free* human beings who live in a community without transcendence. What does it mean that they are capable of having their own ideas, of exercising semiotic autonomy? Our question had been whether the catchword *inquiry* suggests a community of scientists and artists? It is definitely not one of *contemporary* scientists and artists insofar as they are also part of a market and are subject to competition (that of the education or art market) and to standards of success that do not result from their own creativity.

“Liberty,” Dewey writes,¹⁶ “is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in rich and manifold association with others: the power to be an individualized self, making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association.” The community is imagined as the union of humans in which a joint search for values and goals can take place without reservations and religious taboos. On the one hand, everyone involved in this search depends on the diversity of individual abilities. The community needs the differences of its members in order to achieve something that no individual can attain

on his or her own. On the other hand, individuals in their differences from one another become real only, when each of them sees what their specific abilities contribute to communal work. Becoming real as an individual in one's own right and for others and on this basis leading a life that one shapes, as much as is humanly possible, through personal reactions to the world is, however, a form of happiness. Freedom and happiness of this kind are not "educational objectives." They do not need to be reached because free and happy humans can accomplish more and, for this reason, are better at increasing wealth. Instead, Dewey is concerned with enabling people to create their *own* social and life patterns rather than being told by others what to do because of supposed "inherent necessities," for example. It is the ancient ideal of *autarkeia* that is being revived both for individuals and for the community. A person by itself and a community in existential destitution where there is famine and the threat of enemies are not autarkical. A single individual or a community ruled by despots is not either. Where destitution and subservience rule, a rhythm of living freely cannot emerge for individuals or communities. But happiness consists in having found such a rhythm, a pattern of life that one would like to carry on indefinitely. Where no inquiries for such a rhythm can set in because hardships have to be overcome and threats have to be eliminated, life may have a certain intensity and as the effort to survive also have some meaning, to be sure. But one will hardly want to call it a *beautiful* or *happy* life. In Pericles's funeral oration for the first "who have fallen in the war" of Athens against Sparta [in the winter of 431 BCE], Thucydides emphasizes these aspects: The constitution of Athens, he writes, is not a copy of anyone else's but the result of free choice and probably "a model to others." "And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other." And there is a rhythm of "contests and sacrifices regularly throughout the year; in our own homes we find a beauty and a good taste which delight us every day and which drive away our cares."¹⁷ What is praised here is the *beauty* of communal life that helps the individual person overcome inevitable depressions. The community as the product of personal proficiencies creates something that in turn gives support to particular persons as they live their lives, while it affords them space in their own search for happiness. Left alone, they would be exposed to hardships and dejections that would make their search for the happy life impossible.

The constructive and organizational, the craftsman's and the artist's skills are, when taken by themselves, merely forms of individual potential. But when they are engaged in a common project, such as building a house or designing a jet plane, these possibilities are real in a way that

everyone can recognize. No human individual can erect a skyscraper by himself or construct a modern jet by herself. In a society that appropriately supports and brings together the constructive, organizational, manual, and aesthetic abilities of its members, these skills can become recognizable, however, for everyone in the works of the communities and at the same time lead to results that go beyond the capabilities of any one individual person. This imbues the free activity of individuals with a meaning that goes beyond individual accomplishment.¹⁸ Being able in a free society to become real as *this* specific individual and being *recognized* as a necessary contributor to a common meaningful purpose is also a form of happiness. Being able to contribute one's own share to a meaningful task of this kind does not mean being absorbed by the "general public" or merely tolerating differences between individuals. Rather, the work achieved through cooperation testifies to the necessity for individuals to be different. On the other hand, whatever is achieved by working together promotes, so long as it still exists as a goal and not yet as reality, the development of individually very different capabilities, and thereby the reality of individuals.¹⁹

In other words, it is not just scientists, engineers, and writers who have been given the chance to formulate a thought of their own and to know something in detail. It is especially the function of specific knowledge that goes into the craftsman's work that Dewey strongly emphasizes in all of his pedagogical writings. While working in a particular craft, different individuals have not only (perhaps *also*, that is as apprentices by their master) been informed but have themselves accumulated experiences from their work and the use of materials and, hence, have found out how something is done. Gaining this know-how has changed them, has made them into people with experience in these things that thereby have become *their* things. The way they have once found out how something works best is reflected in the way that they will do something in the future. That is why they express themselves as people of experience in what they do, and thereby they become real for others through the effectiveness of their activity as craftsmen. In a very elementary way, this may already happen through their manner of speaking. But self-experience in ordinary language and expressing oneself verbally one way or the other is not the only means of making one's own thinking about something public and thereby real. Even a craftsman who does not hold forth has particular thoughts about the project on which he works together with others.

Happiness, understood as a successful life, describes the fact that one's own opportunities are becoming real in the process of living with one's

own, self-chosen pattern. The happy person can with self-reflection affirm this process of living in the form that it has assumed and would like to continue it. This person wants to continue existing as part of the world in the manner in which he (or she) lives and acts.²⁰ But in order to turn one's own potential into reality, one would first have to have become acquainted with that potential. And this process of self-knowledge is always mediated through an autonomous knowledge of the world. If we only look into ourselves, we do not see our possibilities. This means that humans have to act knowledgeably in the world in order to experience what is possible to them.²¹ This, according to Dewey, is the direction in which school should point us. And if we also succeed in joining a community in which the actualization of our individual possibilities is the condition for the realization of a work undertaken together, then a meaningful connection will have been established that can change our life into a happy life.

This orientation toward happiness in the conception of education presents a sharp contrast to the currently predominant "mental capitalism."²² Its principal intent is an education that provides the "key qualifications" to compete as successfully as possible for resources—be they material resources or the resources of attention and reputation. The fundamental situation in capitalist society is competition. A loser in its struggle will seem to get into or in fact already is in trouble. Dewey's pedagogical conception, by contrast, aims at an education that makes students become aware of their own potential and allows each one of them to imagine how to realize it in a community so that individual happiness and a sense of community arise together. Because meaningful connections cannot be initiated in situations of competition but can be created only through working together, the search for meaning is incompatible with a way of acting that is motivated by tit for tat or victory and defeat. That is why people in capitalistic societies are haunted by the feeling that they are leading meaningless lives with no prospect of happiness. Or when they do strive for meaning and happiness, they try to reach these goals outside of their workaday reality. What has turned out to promote meaning and happiness is not something that is carried off after contests but is passed on as a gift: the ability to produce and understand work accomplished together with others, be it in a trade, in technology, or in art, literature, and science. In mental capitalism, however, all these works and the abilities that make them possible are commodities. They are not produced and distributed for their own sake. The ability to produce and understand these works is not *given away freely*. Rather, every kind of ability to produce or to understand something is *sold* on a market.

Even training and education no longer serve to bring about meaning and happiness but function as sources of a reputation or, directly, to acquire wealth. Schools and universities are to be attended for the purpose of acquiring the certificates that are beneficial in competitive struggles.

The moral pressure to conform, the normative influences of a market, and the strategic moves in the fields of competition even prevent individuals from looking for the right phrase to express their life experiences and to describe their communities. Humans who constantly *compare* themselves concerning their morals or according to certain standards of consumption will hardly become real as individuals. They will experience the community in which they live as the place where they have to prove themselves, where they have to garner attention and a reputation. They will not consider the community as the condition for meaningful purposes that go beyond their ability but toward which they contribute something. That is why the comparative processes of education are competitive depersonalization procedures that prevent self-knowledge and the creation of meaning and block the available opportunities for reacting to the world. The result of this education is that communities degenerate to become markets, and life turns into a senseless contest. There is nothing left but commodities.

Of course, general moral and semantic rules have to be established in educational processes so that, before the realization of further-reaching democratic ideals, a way for humans to live together and communicate sensibly is at all possible. Even in Dewey's community, the (previously mentioned) training cannot disappear. Even here, the exercise of power may be necessary. Concurrently, the ability for self-perception and for self-expression, for reacting to the prescribed moral and semantic rules must be facilitated so that everyone can potentially at some later time react to the power that sometime at the beginning of his (or her) life they have experienced.

Dewey's model of individual actualization has been criticized as a Romantic transfiguration of artisanal and artistic creativity.²³ This critique also involves the general status of the category "creativity." Are only *some types* of action creative, specifically those of the craftsman and artist—which Dewey emphasizes so strongly in his pedagogy—but not most work in modern society that is based on the division of labor? Or is *all* action creative? Which would make creativity a characteristic of human action as such?²⁴ Or does creativity have an even *more general status* that transcends what humans do?

Creativity as the Final Category

In the tradition of German idealism and Marxism, the becoming real of a human individual was thought to be a specific process: as one in which a creative individual objectifies itself in an object and then recognizes itself in this product of creation.²⁵ Against the background of this model, there seems to exist no possibility to become real in those courses of life in which individuals cannot objectify and then recognize themselves in an object they have produced themselves as craftsmen or in a work of art. And it is no doubt true that being compelled to do a kind of work that one does not want to do and that does not bring about a product that one can regard as one's own product—"alienated labor"—is an element that constricts individual lives and in many cases makes them unhappy. However, it is just as implausible that a craftsman's or an artist's creativity in the performance of his or her professions is a necessary and sufficient condition for the realization of individuals.

Dewey was criticized that his concept of self-realization applies only to professional artists or craftsmen. But evidence suggests the possibility that even their professional activities are *not* the expression of a personal experience of life and knowledge of the world but a *means* to earn money. This would mean that the relevant craftsman or the artist does not express himself or herself in his or her work but manifest the fashions and stereotypes that happen to be most in demand in his or her milieu in order to reap the best possible profit. In this case, the persons in question do not react to the world from which they come but adapt to it and repeat its patterns. The fact that many young people list "artist" to be their choice of a profession²⁶ may have something to do with their persistent expectation that an artistic activity is a probable outlet for personal concerns. Even so, one would misunderstand the creativity of individuals and Dewey's reflections on *education* if one were to see the artisanal-artistic *pursuit of a profession* as a condition for the reality of individuals.

Rather, it is mostly the type of artisanal and artistic activity that does *not* qualify them for professional certification and does *not* aim at an economically defined living that gives them the opportunity to experience themselves as *autonomous* beings. Dewey explicitly emphasizes that professional qualifications should not be intended in a school's involvement with art and craft.²⁷ In his view, craft and art should play a major role in schooling, without students of either gender having to make any decision in favor of a *particular* trade or a particular art as their profession.

Instruction with tools and with implements for artistic creation is to enhance the sensibility of one's own perceptive abilities and of one's own awareness that one is doing something with a particular material.²⁸ Craft-oriented and artistic activities, he writes, are meant to develop confidence in one's own perception of the world ("What is the consistency or quality of this wood, this stone, this text?"). The ability to actively confront the world and in this to follow self-developed standards would be enhanced through schooling of this kind. The success of such an education, then, would become apparent even outside the areas of craft and art.

The way one relates to one's own body, how one moves, meaning how one deals with other people erotically and politically—all this can be either the manifestation of external stimuli and the result of an effort to do justice to these labors, or it can be the evidence of an autonomous and self-assured experience of world and self—of an *experience of life* based on an active confrontation with external givens. Grappling with obstacles of this kind, such as how a thing has to be drawn considering one's own perception of this object and being able to react to standards (perhaps by an "I see it differently"), is easiest to learn through an activity that involves crafts and artistry. This activity gives rise to an individual story of the confrontation with and reaction to something that has been there, and this story is the story of an individual who in his reaction to the world he found creates himself as a being capable of perception and reaction. Potentially, persons are individual beings—they can be distinguished from all other persons according to their inherent potential. A process of education can suppress this potentiality and try to make everything as much alike as possible. Or it can aim at foreseeing this possibility and bring it to light in the course of the education. In the best case of a successful education in this second sense, an individual who has become real in such a manner no longer can be fooled by others and knows what to do with his life. Reflectivity, "selfdom," and creativity should not be understood as genetically determined but as abilities that lie dormant in living persons. They can be developed more or less strongly depending on how strong a confrontation with the world one had been engaged in during childhood.

Dewey's conception of the ability to react and of individual actualization is not a symptom indicating the loss of a clear purpose of the human as a species. It also does not try theoretically to support attempts whose purpose it is to preserve the ability to remain an unmistakable individual in view of the attribution of general social roles in societies where the division of labor prevails. The intent is not self-realization as a way of cre-

ating and sustaining originality in modern mass societies.²⁹ Furthermore, reviving Hegel's concept that individuals have to lead a life for the public at large (*die Allgemeinheit*) plays no role in what here determines the relationship of individual and community. Much as Dewey was a Hegelian, his understanding of the "great community" is surely more than a mere direction about how to transform the Hegelian public at large. For, the individual who reacts to his world needs this reaction to create the community in the first place that in turn supports the individual in his ability to react. For Dewey, the individual is not simply the general in its concrete manifestation. His ability to react brings forth the collective creativity of the community. And the community's creativity makes the most varied reactions of the individual possible. In this way, individuals and a great community are their mutual creations. In such a community, the latitude increases for individual reactions to the world. The social world, then, is not considered to be one more area to which, aside from the facts of natural life, it is necessary to adapt. Whether adaptation or reaction takes place is not certain from the beginning. Instead, it depends on the degree to which creativity has evolved.

Justice, liberty, and happiness emerge as different, sometimes perhaps also as competing aims of human life in a community. For Dewey, however, they are interconnected. All three goals can be pursued only where individuals with the ability to react are present, where humans know how to respond to their world. Someone who can be manipulated easily does not acknowledge the presence of injustice. That person may not want to shape his own existence and will not search for an unending melody in his life. Only a community that grants all its members equally the right to sustain themselves, that protects them from violence, and that prevents them from exploiting one another creates the private space that individuals need to react to the world from their respective standpoints. Only where security and justice have to a certain degree been realized will private spaces for the individual ability to react come about. But this ability to react can unfold only when it is being supported. This is why a just educational system has to be established. An educational system is unjust when it promotes only certain forms of reaction to the world and neglects others (for example, only linguistic ones but not those that are nonverbal). This puts individuals with certain inclinations to react at a disadvantage from the very beginning.

Because happiness in the lives of individuals depends on their ability to perceive themselves in their own reactions to the world, a just educational system and a community that creates a private space for individual reactions are again necessary, though not sufficient conditions for their

happiness. A multiplicity of ways to react in turn creates manifold possibilities for action within the community that comes about through the individuals. A community that grants its members only a single option of how to react to the world is in this sense unjust.³⁰

When it is seen against this background, the concept of creativity can, in Whitehead's sense, be generalized far across the actions taken in the human world.³¹ For, *each* individual discovers the existence of a multiplicity of circumstances in the world and of other individuals. But if he or she as an individual is meant to be distinguishable from what is already there, and insofar as this individual also lives for himself or herself and delimits himself or herself from his or her world, this person has to be different from what already exists all around. In his or her own development the individual can, in the final analysis, rely only on his or her own perception of the world. Concerning these perceptions and their consequences for the individual's actions, no one can act as his or her substitute.

Reacting to the world can be imagined (when we follow Whitehead)³² as a process that unfolds in two phases. In the first phase, that quantity of the world that exists in relation to an individual is *synthesized*; that means it is summarized in the person's own, specifically individual perspective. In a second phase, a *reaction takes place* to these very given facts and circumstances. These phases are not strictly separable because the way the given things are summarized already represents a reaction to them—what is emphasized, what is shoved into the background, and so forth? Whitehead calls this creating contrasts.³³ For this reason, the origin of a distinguishable individual—and a being that is indistinguishable is not an individual—is always a *transformation* of the world that has to do with creativity. The idea of a world of individuals is connected with the idea of the world as the process of *universal* creativity. When individual beings emerge and vanish, the world changes permanently through the creative contribution of each individual being in its self-creation into reality. In creating themselves, individual beings do not turn a preexisting essence into reality. Instead, they react to the world from which they emerge. Their essence as individuals is the history of their reaction to what is there before them. At first, they differ from their world only according to their potential. Not until they take hold of their possibilities with actions and make them the starting points of their reaction to the world do they truly become individual beings.

This history of reaction can be more or less “strong,” meaning that an individual being can, during the process of its emergence, change the world from which it arises more or less strongly, can add to it many or few new things. But all individual beings, from the electron to the hu-

man, add something to the world, considered from the space-time perspective of their origin. For living beings and for beings with minds that are capable of remembering how they have heretofore reacted to their world, this process of creativity can *become stronger on its own*. When a being remembers how it has perceived and reacted to the world and notices that this reaction has transformed the world, then this being can develop an *awareness* of its own effectiveness. Let us look more closely at this connection with the help of an example.

Rhythms of Education

To a child drawing a tree, the white sheet of paper, the pencil, and the tree are not the only given things. This child also experiences his or her own effectiveness in the world on the paper as a reaction to the tree. If a teacher suggests on the basis of the child's drawing that she should look at the tree again, then in an ideal case she has been given not only the tree and its own drawing. But in view of her earlier reaction to the tree in the drawing, this tree, the drawing, and her own ability to react to what it has been given appear in a new light.³⁴ Now the child will react *in turn* to these new given facts and in this process not only be face to face with something constantly different and new as given objects, but she will also develop an ever stronger awareness of her own (in this case, pictorial) ability to react. If this awareness is distinct enough, it can also become relevant in quite different areas, for example, in a conversation in which I can adopt the terminology of the person opposite and can react to it creatively. In Brandom's scorekeeping model,³⁵ however, a conversation can only consist in adapting more or less closely to the existing semantic rules and in pointing these rules out to each other. But even an athletic game never exhausts itself in a process of adaptation. Within the framework of the rules, the ballplayer looks for opportunities of reaction that open a new and more advantageous situation of the game. A boxer, again within the established rules, looks for new responses to his opponent that may count in his favor. All this is always about the creative discovery of opportunities within the perimeter of established constrictions.

The oscillation, first, of acceptance and synthesis of the world's multiplicity and, second, reaction to this multiplicity is analogous to what Whitehead calls the *rhythmical character of education*.³⁶ Whitehead calls it the "main position" of his educational theory that the "dominant note" of education "at its beginning and at its end is *freedom*, but that there is an intermediate stage of discipline with freedom in subordination . . . ,

that all mental development is composed of such cycles [of freedom, discipline, freedom], and of cycles of such *cycles*. . . .”³⁷

These cycles are organic processes of development that can also be described as processes of adaptation and creative reaction to the objects to which one adapts. They constitute the *self-development* of a living being. “The students are alive,” Whitehead writes, “and the purpose of educators is to stimulate and guide their self-development.”³⁸ Schooling that conveys nothing but “dead knowledge” and “inert ideas” is not an education because it fails to promote the self-development toward individuality but merely supports the purpose of continuing a certain routine that is desired in a form of life. In the final analysis, barren knowledge that does not promote the self-development of individuals is for Whitehead an “evil.”³⁹ His reason is that the more knowledge is, with discipline, poured into a mind without it being able to react to this, the more it becomes dulled, the more it loses its capacity to react, the more its ability to realize itself as an individual is being destroyed. If one (following Leibniz) is convinced that the development of as many diverse individuals as possible is a *good*, then the prevention of the best possible specificity is a metaphysical evil and not merely a preclusion of an individual life’s happiness.

Reacting to the World

Freedom and wisdom are the two concepts that Whitehead associates with the ability for practical reactions to the world. Wisdom he defines as the pragmatic mind-set for reacting on one's own impetus to circumstances that one has personally recognized.¹ There must first exist a *free interest* in the facts of the world. Beings of a higher species are born with this interest. It exists *before* all educational processes. But as little as the manner in which facts to which one has to adapt are bundled into categories is a manifestation of free creativity, inasmuch as one type of classification may already reveal private areas of opportunities for reactions, while another one may not. Because the interest mentioned above represents the first reaction of a higher species of living beings to the world, it is an early indication of the freedom to act in the sense of realizing opportunities. But this interest must be transformed into knowledge in an educational process that aims at a further increase of real possibilities. The reason is that knowledge comes about only through the disciplined acquisition of material evidence in processes of synthesis in which one systematically searches for *connections* between interest and things with the help of signs. Establishing them where they are not apparent can be considered a fundamental tendency of intelligent beings that does not have to be inculcated so much as kept under control.² Acquisition must, however, be followed by a practical reaction that is appropriate for the original inquiring interest. In order to make the discovered or created connections clear to oneself and to others, they must moreover be communicated by means of signs.

In other words, we have here at least four interwoven aspects of relating to the world that are difficult to single out: first, the alert attention directed toward other individual entities in the world, also referred to as *receptive intentionality*; second, the creation of connections between several individual entities, or the search for *systematicity*; third, the reaction to the individual entities and their connections, or *responsivity*; fourth, the search for other sign-using entities to facilitate an exchange with the world and the reactions to it, or *communicativity*.

If, however, children eager for knowledge get into a school in which they are from the beginning and then at every opportunity admonished to hold their interest in reacting at bay and to adhere with discipline to the established categories in the order of facts, their enthusiasm for developing their own classifications of facts and ways of responding to the world will sooner or later be *destroyed*. In the worst case, it is replaced by the fear that the presumably necessary adaptation simply could not succeed. In educational processes, *responsivity* and *communicativity* to this day appear to be very much less supported than concentrated attention (*receptive intentionality*) and the ability to memorize semiotic sets of systems. My impression is that children must first of all pay attention and acquire a command of sign systems that are presented to them. The interest in contributing something to the world one does not know yet (and *de facto* can never get to know “completely”) vanishes, when this contribution is never welcome and never can take place. The permanent disciplining of receptive attention, if it does at all create a succinct sense of self-confidence, meaning one that comprises in detail the pupil’s own physical and mental possibilities, will produce people who are convinced that they themselves cannot make a contribution to the world. They may come to feel that they are passive *onlookers* who had better be satisfied with summing up the world by preestablished methods so that they can adapt to it. That our classifications of the world and with them new possibilities of reacting are being invented seems to occur not because of but *in spite* of the education provided by schools.

The so-called subject-object split in which humans see themselves as onlookers in the world has been criticized in twentieth-century philosophy again and again. It is the result of those forms of education that turns humans into spectators of rather than participants in the world. Orders of nature and society can be looked at as *given* complexities that humans confront, whose developments they can simulate in computer models and use as a resource. Or they can be seen as that from which

individual humans emerge and into which they have a retroactive effect. To do this, humans must understand themselves both as products of that world to which they direct their attention and must have the confidence that they can react in turn to that from which they arise.

It is only through reaction to the facts that the reality of life is *evaluated* and that the individual person experiences itself as a being capable of and entitled to evaluating the world's circumstances. Moreover, the world's circumstances are recognized as changeable through the individual person's involvement only after this involved person has experienced itself as capable of reacting. The capability of evaluating the given provides the foundation for a free conduct of life that takes one's own differences seriously. For Whitehead, this shows that in educational processes the disciplined absorption of facts has to alternate with their free and wise evaluation of what they mean for life.³

An educational system that neglects this rhythm will produce know-it-alls who feel incapable of action, feel as if paralyzed in the face of the many details they know. They will deny that an evaluative reaction is possible, given the complexity of inherent necessities and semiotic systems. For them, wisdom is tantamount to a kind of innocence to which only someone can succumb, who is not cognizant of how complex the facts of life are and no less so the theories one needs to speak about such a world. They will counter every evaluation and every suggestion for action with the objection that, just the same, one has failed in taking so many specific details into consideration. That is the way people live whose depressing misgivings have incapacitated them.

But according to Whitehead, it has to be accepted "as an unavoidable fact" that there exist "more topics desirable for knowledge than any one person can possibly acquire."⁴ Even more and more efficient databases and computing capacities are not going to change this. The desire for more and more knowledge is also a compensation for the loss of wisdom and the inability to act—a compensation that only increases the inability to act that it is intended to overcome. The presumably all-pervasive lament about the world's intricate complexity, the inability to evaluate and react, as well as the call for a general and, best of all, institutionalized "knowledge for orientation" could be the outcome of educational institutions that through "undiscriminating discipline" produce confined and unhappy "dulled minds"⁵ that admittedly know much but no longer have the heart to do anything that deviates from semantic and other precepts. Such minds are unable to imagine a world that differs from the one in which they originated.

Freedom and the Ability to React

How is one to imagine this connection between the ability to react and freedom, especially because one does not usually associate “reacting” with freedom? As a rule, freedom is interpreted either as spontaneity (as the ability to start a cause-and-effect sequence) or as a kind of action in which the one acting is in harmony with his or her self. The first concept of freedom goes back to Kant.⁶ It entails the problem that in our causally structured world (in which energy preserves itself) either something remains that cannot be ascertained (by the senses), or freedom is interpreted as a constant interference in the causal course of things at places in the world where the principle of the preservation of energy is not violated (for example, as a “decision-making process” [*Entscheidungsprozess*] in quantum physics).⁷ Freedom as congruence with oneself, as the ability to give reasons for one’s action and to affirm it, requires a relatively firm structure of desire [*Wollen*]. I want to smoke and can also give reasons why I smoke, in contrast to the addict who wants to smoke but cannot justify his desire and on a second level does not want that he wants to smoke.⁸

In my opinion, reacting to the world from which one originates is, by contrast, to be interpreted neither as the spontaneous beginning of a chain of cause and effect nor as a self-reflection with reasons about one’s own desire. The concept of “reaction” originally comes from natural philosophy and physics, where it was associated with the idea that each effect exerted on an object will cause the object to produce a counter-effect.⁹ “It is necessary for the agent to submit in turn to the patient [*Necesse est quod agens repatiatur a passo*],” wrote Albertus Magnus in the thirteenth century.¹⁰ Hobbes interprets the entire world of perception as the result of a reaction by the sense organs to an action directed toward it by corpuscles from the outside world.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, the concept has a *political* career in connection with the polarization of the political sphere in postrevolutionary France.¹² The forces resisting the revolution are first referred to as “counterrevolution,” *contre-révolution*. Mirabeau recommends a “reaction” against the resistance of the clergy against the revolution. For Marat, reaction means the issue of the court’s fight against the revolution (“Be fearful of the reaction!”).¹³ Thereafter, “reaction” quite generally becomes the word to denote those powers that confront progress arising from the people. Even Nietzsche, while not sharing the notions of progress in postrevolutionary France, sees a connection between reaction and *ressentiment*. A person of resentment only reacts, is not spontaneous and full of courage, does not directly follow the

will to power but tries to prevail perfidiously and in devious ways.¹⁴ This concept of reaction has, politically and morally, negative connotations. My emphasis on the ability to react to the world seeks to leave this negative implication behind.

Human existence is subject to biological, historical, cultural, and situational circumstances, which it can escape only in particular cases but, most of the time, not at all. The ineluctability of most existential situations can be interpreted as the criterion of their reality. Every existence draws its possibilities for action (and biologically also its energy) from these circumstances. That is why it would be erroneous to assume that one could completely ignore them. If one follows Whitehead in imagining the genesis of an individual entity as a process of concrescence of the factors producing this entity, then it is difficult to distinguish circumstance and reaction. That is the case because the manner in which circumstances concresce in an individual entity already manifests the genesis of a reaction by the evolving individual to its conditioning circumstances.

Let me give you an example to illustrate this fact. Two siblings are both exposed to the same parents and objects in their home. But for one of them, the mother is more important, and for the other it is rather the father. For the one, the garden means more than television; for the other, it is the opposite. Distributing significance to circumstances in this way is already a kind of reaction to them that determines one's own history. Whoever tells himself that in the past he has not used the garden enough and has spent too much time in front of the TV will behave differently than someone who thinks he missed the important documentaries on TV and has instead been weeding too often. In this respect, reacting to the circumstances of one's existence is also a reaction to one's own history as a condition of one's existence. In other words, it is self-reflexive insofar as individuals are identical with their history.¹⁵ This evaluation of the circumstances and of one's own history is concerned with *processes of forming a gestalt* in which the one aspect is being evaluated as significant, the other as negligible, one strand in one's history as absolutely to be continued, the other as better forgotten. And as with classical gestalt perception (rabbit or duck, faces or vase), the issue here is not the start of causal chains or justifications but *interpretations* to see something as something. I see the TV set and the garden—what is located in the background, what for me stands out in profile. I experience mother's strictness but also her commitment to my interests—what is the emotional background, what is the emotional figure to which I react?

The ability to react to the world from which emerges the history that constitutes my life, my existence, depends on the ability to form, to

recognize, to interpret a pattern, and then, preparing for a reaction, to vary it. The repetition of patterns through imitation and habit is the beginning of every life's history; this is how infants learn a language and many body movements.¹⁶ At a certain age the patterns can be varied more and more, provided they are recognized and not merely imitated. Someone who recognizes the shadows of a bush in dark spots in a forest will react differently than someone who sees them as wild animals. Freedom in this conception means that one can recognize the preestablished patterns and then step back from them and continue them differently instead of merely adapting to them through imitation. What makes this kind of stepping back possible? The obvious answer is language!¹⁷ But that is too simple.

Aspects of Distancing and Experiences of Contradiction

As a rule, distancing begins automatically at a certain stage in the person's development, specifically when it becomes apparent that rhyme or reason, sense and order to which the child or juvenile in question is expected to adapt are *contradictory*. For, not only is natural language no theory, but also ways of life in which this language is used are no unequivocal combinations of reason and sagacity that can be understood to be unambiguous and free of inconsistency. But in educational processes, people often act as if this were the case. As soon as there is incontestable evidence that those who proclaim the rules and administer obedience to them are themselves breaking them, disappointment and anger breaks out among the school kids: disappointment over the fact that rules do not provide the orientation they had promised because they turn out, after all, not to be absolutely valid; and anger at those who, in the name of the rules they break themselves, constrict and punish the students. An especially impressive document describing this situation of estrangement is Franz Kafka's *Letter to His Father* where we read:

your whole method of upbringing was like that. . . . What was brought to the table had to be eaten, the quality of the food was not to be discussed—but you yourself often found the food inedible, called it “this swill,” said “that cow” (the cook) had ruined it. Because in accordance with your strong appetite. . . . you ate everything fast, hot, and in big mouthfuls, the child had to hurry. . . . Bones mustn't be cracked with the teeth, but you could. . . . The main thing was that the bread should be cut straight. But it didn't matter that you did it with a knife dripping with gravy. Care had to be taken that no scraps fell on the floor. In the end it was under your chair that there were the most

scraps. At table one wasn't allowed to do anything but eat, but you cleaned and cut your fingernails, sharpened pencils, cleaned your ears with a toothpick. Please, Father, understand me correctly: in themselves these would have been utterly insignificant details, they only became depressing for me because you, so tremendously the authoritative man, did not keep the commandments you imposed on me.¹⁸

An even more drastic manifestation of a disappointment provoked by contradictions, that do not refer to personal relationships but to a whole culture, can be found in a book by Imre Kertész, who as a youth was in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. A person who has "grown up in Europe's ethical culture" and has learned there the commandment "Thou shall not kill," Kertész writes, but who then finds himself in a camp in which "mass murder had become common practice, a day-to-day routine so to say," has to give serious thought to what he has really learned heretofore: obviously "an illusory value system" in which "millions of school-children, satchels on their backs, trudging to school" where they learn that killing is wrong and are taught mindfulness, "only to be reunited again as perpetrators and victims in the anterooms of the crematoria by the ditches dug as mass graves. . . ."¹⁹

This is *not* a case of weaknesses and relapses, weaknesses on the part of the legislators to keep their own rules, or relapses out of cultured circumstances in which the rules are valid into a barbarism where they have been annulled or are altogether unknown. It is, rather, the proportion of ideal and reality that becomes apparent in these contradictions. The one to be educated believes that he is being adapted to reality. In fact, as he notices in the distancing moments, he is being adapted to ideals that those who do the adapting are themselves at times unable to live by. This is what raises doubts about the rules and those who represent them. But because the rules were instrumental in elucidating reality and have given an orientation to one's own actions, this disappointment and rage also make the elucidation of reality and the orientation in one's actions disappear. Three possibilities are left: first, a life *without* the ideals that have proved to be nothing but an intentional disguise for the factual absence of sense and values (practical nihilism); second, a life that accepts the discrepancy between ideals and reality, which is obviously what the parents do (idealism); and third, a life in which the attempt is made to establish a new relationship between ideal and reality (pragmatism).

In order to understand this situation better, it is helpful to augment our deliberations about a world of individuals. For, the ideals to which individuals find themselves exposed in their process of education are clearly general ideals that are meant to structure how *many* humans live

together. The distancing experience caused by contradictions indicates that the general validity of the rules and ideals does not harmonize well with individual behavior, that it cannot be subsumed under the rules and ideals. But how does the reality of general rules and ideals relate to the reality of particular individuals? After all, our introductory “hypothesis” was that it is the unique individuals who are real. But how does a human individual who has doubts about the reality of the ideals relate to the world from which he or she originates? In order to understand this, a more thorough discussion about the concept of experience is necessary.

Experiences cannot be repeated. The first eating of a strawberry is different than the second eating of a strawberry. Eating a strawberry in Hawaii when the sun shines is different than eating a strawberry in Kiel when it rains. Eating a strawberry at the age of six is different than eating a strawberry at age eighty. Eating a strawberry while remembering strawberries is different than eating a strawberry while expecting whipped cream, and so forth. Experiences take place in spatial, temporal, and life-historical contexts, which turn them into unrepeatable processes. Human individuals *are* the experienced history of their lives that are reflected in their bodies and their habits. Because no two persons, on account of their being situated in space and time, have experienced the same history, every human being is unique. If humans are *histories* of experience, if they are being educated and formed so that they can have certain experiences, then *time* plays an essential role in understanding one’s own life.

All living creatures may exist in time because no life can exist without a genetic prehistory and the formation of individual habits. Both require time. We know, however, that starting at a certain age, the temporality of our life and that of our fellow humans’ lives is *given* to us. We know, after we have reached a certain age, about the finality of our existence. And we expose our children to certain processes of education and formation at certain phases in their physical and mental development because we know that only at certain times in human life an experience with a certain effect on the rest of our existence is possible. Education follows from the awareness that humans have of their lives’ temporality. Their ability to react to the world and to their own experiences is as limited as is the time during which they can realize their limited abilities. Insofar as humans want to react to the world and want that their descendants react to it, insofar as humans want to shape their life and want that their descendants shape their lives, they must take their finiteness seriously.

For this reason, education exists only where humans have created for themselves images and ideals of the *possible development* of people in their world and where they take an active role in these developments that (un-

like for other living creatures) take their course only in part automatically. If it is the parents' desire that their children not live in the same circumstances as they themselves do and give their lives a *different* form than they were able to do in their own lives, they will value an education with ideals that differ from those of their own schools. They will then have to imagine other possible forms of life. An essential role in this process will be taken up by fictions that describe the conduct of a life that is guided by ideals other than those that orient one's own existence.

The Captive Imagination

Experiencing unrealized ideals can mean that one experiences the subjective weakness of educators in shaping the world according to their ideals, or that one perceives the objective difficulty of reacting to the world with plans for changes, or it can mean both aspects. Observations such as these about the possibility of realizing ideals are not primarily concerned with the desire for social advancement or the effects that arise from the fear of social decline, even though this is a part of the concern. They are observations on what connects politics, happiness, and education that have been pursued ever since Plato's *Republic*. Even then, Plato notices that circumstances in his city-state are so desolate that, strictly speaking, within this state no education is possible any longer that would bring forth humans who will improve this situation. He thought that one would have to found a new city with young people, send the old folks away, removing the youngsters from the corrupt environment, as we might say nowadays, in order to be able to exert an influence that would actually improve the community and individual life.²⁰ Plato's *Republic* is perhaps the first concrete (though not democratic) philosophical utopia. In the modern era, it is projections of "noble savages" that give shape to such imaginings of another, better human life. On the other hand, it is dystopias like George Orwell's *1984* or Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* that show what happens when ideals again and again are proclaimed but then are trampled underfoot.

In the Platonic image of the *Politeia* as a community of unjust and unhappy people, it is impossible to establish an education that produces just and happy citizens. For Plato, therefore, the cycle of the mutually reinforcing bad individuals and bad communities must be broken, which may, however, be accomplished only rarely through "emigration" from the "bad circumstances." And, of course, even with Plato, it is questionable how seriously this whole construction is meant. For, the factual

impossibility of such an emigration also could lend to the whole text a dark tone of resignation: that, in fact, an improvement of the situation is altogether unrealizable. Within circumstances judged to be bad, amelioration is, practically speaking, unachievable, and only a complete new beginning can be seen as a way out that in reality, however, is beyond anyone's practical ability. But anything that is imaginable or thinkable is itself determined by circumstances because *they* determine the imagination as much as they decide what it is possible to do. For this reason, the diagnosis, "Honestly, one would have to make a completely new beginning, but, in practical terms, this is impossible," is nothing but an expression of the realization that one's own capacity for imagination and detachment is held captive by the prevailing circumstances that have been found to be false. The creativity to develop new ideals does not extend far especially when individuals are being prevented from reacting to the world on their own. Yet it is in exactly such situations that the highest degree of creativity would be needed. But the more improbable the emergence of ideas about new circumstances for living is because only a few people are capable of imagining them, the longer will those situations be continued that are felt to be false.

One can clarify even this incongruity with the help of a picture. The muscles of a person suffering from a lack of motion atrophy, his heart weakens. Because this is a fact, every movement turns into an effort for him, and he avoids it. This makes him even weaker. In a community of overdisciplined and unhappy individuals, the force of imagination wanes. Consequently, every change seems incredibly strenuous and menacing so that it remains undone. Hence, their forms of life calcify more and more. But changes would require a radically new description of human relationships that in turn presuppose an ability to react and the strength of imagination that under the circumstances described will come about only with a high degree of improbability, and so forth. Thus is created a "downward spiral" of unjust or unhappy situations that no longer are strong enough for self-correction. The self-description of the individuals and the descriptions of their world now appear to be inalterable.

Historicity of Human Relationships

The historicity of how the disturbances and the ideals of life are possible has been analyzed succinctly by Ian Hacking, who makes a distinction between the historicity of things and that of people:

What camels, mountains, and microbes are doing does not depend on our words. . . . What is curious about human action is that by and large what I am deliberately doing depends on the possibility of description. . . . This is a tautological inference from what is now²¹ a philosopher's commonplace, that all intentional acts are acts under a description. Hence if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence.²²

In 1900, no one had the possibilities for action of a programmer or jet pilot. Today, no one any longer has the possibilities for action of a cavalry officer or imperial court jester.

But it is not only the possibilities for action or the human forms of reacting to the world that are subject to a historical drift. Even the possibilities connected with this to describe one's own life and thereby give it a shape that one wants to sustain will change with history. At the time of Augustine, among the Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries, people in North Africa could describe their life as a drowning in the swamp of sin. At a certain critical moment, when salvation no longer seemed possible, this process could in a conversion completely reverse itself [*umschlagen*] and lead to the knowledge of God and to piety.²³ This possibility of self-description has practically become obsolete (perhaps with the exception of members of evangelical circles in North America). By contrast, the possibility of describing oneself as "master of the universe"—after studying physics and mathematics in Cambridge and forgoing a career in research or teaching but instead accumulating a fortune as a successful stock broker in London, keeping lovers in diverse metropolitan centers, and collecting expensive cars and estates—did not exist. The technological, economic, political, and religious state of affairs within which human life takes place, together with the biographies described in literature and in film, constitutes the public framework within which abilities for actions, self-descriptions, and imagination move along.

There is no use in this context to ask if Saint Augustine did really live the kind of life he describes in the *Confessions*, or if this book merely illustrates the schema of a Christian conversion vita. It is just as pointless to ask if Migliozi in his book about the life of a broker describes the *real* life of a financial shark or merely explicates a pattern.²⁴ When the actions and the life of humans have been given a certain shape, they are always also the product of linguistically (or pictorially) created pre-existent general patterns. This creation obtains its reality and individuality also through these patterns, and it does not stop being a real individual because these very patterns have shaped a part of its being—no more

than my foot stops being my real foot because genes have contributed to its shape that in the distant past perhaps have shaped the hoofs of primordial horses.

A central tenet of postmodernism has it that individuals, their actions and their lives, don't really exist because descriptions of actions and living personalities are culturally determined and drift with history while their lives are being shaped by preexisting patterns. This notion proceeds from the false premise, however, that the individual person has to be the *opposite* of what has been shaped by collective patterns. But the attempt to present one's life as the story of a sinner converted to Christianity (Saint Augustine) or as that of a "master of the universe" (like Greg Smith),²⁵ does not mean that the individual actions and the personal course of a life disappear. There will, after all, continue to be particular actions and individual biographies that constitute the ultimate reality and will survive the course of time or be destroyed by it, even though these actions and life stories are shaped by general patterns that on their part drift with history.²⁶ For, it is particular persons who go through the experience of happiness and misery, justice and injustice, freedom and coercion.

Self-Reflection

Before it is possible to describe and continue one's own actions and life according to a particular pattern, one must first of all form a personal image of how this life has been *until now*, what kind of human being one has become through the "external control system" of education that likewise, of course, follows patterns from which one may wish to take a distance as an adult. To put it differently, self-reflection is the prerequisite for a person's reacting and continuing his or her self-education.

The requirements for self-reflection are multifarious. They extend from the ability to recognize one's own image in a mirror or one's own voice while speaking to having command of self-reflective linguistic expressions like "I" and "me" and include the competence to remember protracted phases of one's life and the ability to report about them. This last aspect may suggest that only those persons are capable of "deep" self-reflection who can visualize their lifetime through storytelling.²⁷ But isn't it true instead that those who have had a life are the worst ones to tell about it because they tend to forget the unpleasant parts and to gloss over them in accordance with their ideal of themselves? To answer this question, one needs to realize also that stories told from memory are not simply reflective in the sense that the person who wants to clarify

what kind of a person she has become “simply tells in her own voice” how her life up to now has passed. Instead, the stories of one’s own life also take place inside *narrative institutions* that have been made available for this effort: the report on a personal experience as a class assignment, the diary entry, the confession, the medical case history of a patient, the juridical admission, and so forth.

These narrative institutions have been called biography generators.²⁸ They provide forms for telling the story of one’s own life and in turn are subject to a historical drift, indicating that there exists a historical ontology (in Hacking’s sense) both of the remembered and the desired life. And new biography generators can bring about a new ordering of the past, for instance, when Achilles before Troy is interpreted as the victim of posttraumatic stress disorder, which gives a whole new analysis to the particular cruelty of certain combat actions beyond the categories of “hero” and “hubris.”²⁹ The different forms of remembering make it possible to choose *selections* from the nearly infinite stream of life’s experiences. A medical anamnesis is a different story about different things than a Catholic confession, and both differ significantly from a confession before a court of law. The selection is made according to what is specifically *relevant* for the purposes of the biographies. As a rule, philosophical theories do not pay attention to this selective relevance of biography generators.³⁰ Whichever form a biography may assume, it seems in any case possible that it appears plausible or implausible to its recipient. Why is that so?

Focusing on the “self,” Daniel Dennett has spoken of a “center of narrative gravity.”³¹ He describes these centers as *abstract objects* and not as physical components of the objects for which they are constructed. The construction of a self takes place via a story, and for this reason, the being that is addressed as a self must be given, before anything else, a narrative of its life. This happens, for example, when parents talk to their infant child that cannot yet say “I,” either praising it for something with the words, “That was real nice of Peter!” or scolding it, “But Peter may not do this again; this is very bad!” Utterances of this kind produce three effects. First, they establish a connection between an event and the person spoken to. Peter is being addressed as having done something, as the one who caused an event, and when he understands the utterance, he identifies himself as the cause or agent of an event: “Peter did this.” Second, depending on whether Peter is praised or scolded, there will arise pride in him or shame: Peter did this, and it was good or bad. These feelings of pride or of shame and humility, as Hume has already seen, turn the attention toward me as the one who did it. They cause

a reflexivity that constitutes me—so we can say with Dennett—as the center of gravity in this microstory: Peter threw the cup on the floor, and for that, Peter gets punished, and that hurts.³² As life goes on, these stories become more and more complex. If a human at first understands her- or himself in general as an acting being through the fact that others have a story of what she or he did, then a human understands her- or himself as *this* human being by remembering in which stories she or he was, still is, and also in the future will be enmeshed.³³ First, an individual recognizes itself as the active cause of this or that event, then another act will in turn arise from this deed, and out of this will grow the story of a past life as the constructed sequence of the memorable and narratable events and actions of this person. The conception of a fixed self that these stories told by others and the person herself have created can even be presumed to exist as a reality on which the experiences and actions are based, when, for example, Christian conceptions of the soul are combined with these stories.³⁴

In his third rule, Descartes uses a metaphor for *deduction* in which, contrary to what takes place in intuition, something known [*etwas Erkannntes*] appears as a “link in a long chain [*longae alicujus catenae*]” in a “continuous and nowhere interrupted activity of thinking [*per continuum et nullibi interruptum cogitationis motum*].”³⁵ Even though it is impossible to have a clear view of the whole chain, we can nonetheless on scrutinizing the structure “remember that the intermediate links are interlocking with their adjacent links from the first to the last.”³⁶ The evidence for such a connection, then, is not that of immediate intuition, but “deduction in a sense gets its certainty from memory [*memoria*].”³⁷ Because Descartes does not specify the rule according to which the individual clauses are connected with each other like links in a chain, his description is as valid for a *mathematical derivation* as for a *story*. Even a story can, after all, be plausible or implausible. Even a story may contain breaks or clear transitions. What is required, however, is a narrative *paradigm* of the transition in the story, just as a paradigm of derivation in the deduction is required in the form of the proof as an analogous image.³⁸ These paradigms of transition are supplied in the case of a life’s story by the biography generators and the ideals of how to conduct a life because they make it obvious what is a plausible and what is an implausible transition. In the case of theory, the paradigmatic sign connections that through images establish new semantic linkages are what make a proof possible. In the same way, that the creation of a new mathematical proof provides the creation of a paradigm for rational transitions

in arguments, so stories create paradigms for transitions in memorable life experiences. From the myths about the figure of Oedipus and the improbable experiences of Ulysses to the experiences and memories of the art historian Austerlitz, from Werther's sorrows to Martin Salander's bankruptcies and his returns to economic prominence, and including the adventures of the childlike and murderous picaresque rogue Joel Spazierer—in all these stories the experiences and the possibilities or impossibilities of how human individuals may react to their worlds are expressed paradigmatically in such a way that other humans can organize their experiences and possibilities, respectively impossibilities of reacting in analogy to them.³⁹

The ability for self-reflection, then, does not require that *I myself* possess the linguistic competence or even less the talent of a storyteller to remember lived experience paradigmatically. The ability to engage in a rational argument does not depend on whether I myself find a new mathematical proof either. All I need to be able to do is duplicate it in school. Likewise, when I am called upon to re-create my whole life (and not only specific moments) as I remember it, whether it was just or unjust, successful or a failure, I must at least be able to read the paradigmatic stories inherent in human lives with appreciation.

This ability must be acquired on one's own initiative and is itself in danger. Like the ability to deduce rationally, it has been developed in different strengths in different people. But ever since humans have been telling one another stories of their ancestors' lives, have been reading biblical stories, seeing tragedies in the theater, and studying novels, they are in a position to create and to apprehend paradigms for an entire life as instruments of self-reflection by individuals. All these stories tell about successful and failing lives. There is no deduction of who has violated which rule or to which principles a community fails to do justice. Instead, these stories unfold the inside perspectives of individuals who are exposed to love, betrayal, carelessness, decline, violence, and injustice. In the paradigms of these stories, people can learn to see mirror images of their actual life and criticize it. Ever since there has existed a culture of storytelling, this common means of thinking about their own individual stories is available to them.

Much less frequent than the ability to take in narrative paradigms of this kind is the talent to create them. How was it possible for Sophocles, Goethe, or Sebald to create Oedipus, Werther, or Austerlitz? How do new paradigms of the experience of life arise? Answering these questions surpasses my competence as much as the question about the origin of new

mathematical proofs. I must leave this to experts in narrative theory and the aesthetics of literary production. But I would like to maintain that just as mathematics is the historically evolved and continuing-to-evolve organon of human rationality, so the story represents the organon of individuals' self-reflection, no matter whether it emerges as the plot of a novel, drama, or film or as the narrative structure of a ballad. We will see in the next chapter how the two are intertwined with each other, in other words how engaging in rational arguments and telling stories can be thought of together. This much is true, at any rate: without memory and without narrations, reflectivity in the stories of a lifetime does not exist. Individuals are nothing other than the stories of their lives, and without memories and stories, they possess no life-historical self-awareness, no ability for reflection.

Looking Back

Before we turn to the relationship of argument and narration, we should look back briefly to where this part of our deliberations has taken us by now. Our focus at first was concentrated on the training for rational assertive subjectivity. Then our concern was with the educational process of individuals that follows after this training. We saw that individuals also seek to lead a *particular* or *their own* life, independent of the elementary forms of training and the imitations of fundamental practices. Individuals are not simply subject only to norms of rationality. They also want to live in just circumstances and to become happy.

In this context, we encountered two opposing forms of education and communal life: first, the informing and disciplining type of education and community life under the leadership of experts. This first form, following Raymond Geuss, we connected with Plato and identified as the one that defines our contemporary circumstances. The second form obtains its orientation from Dewey's educational ideal and his conception of living together in a great democratic community. As did Plato and Kant, so did Dewey see the possibility of realizing new forms of living together as tied to new forms of education: only humans who see themselves as capable of knowledge and who are confident to react to the world can live together as semiotically autonomous beings in a democracy without requiring transcendent legislators. So that people can live together at all, general rules must be valid. In order to be able to experience oneself as an individual and to experience the world as well as react to it, an appropriate degree of self-awareness and creativity have to be developed. To this

end, Alfred North Whitehead has proposed a rhythmical education in which processes of disciplining that are designed to establish general rules and in which power is also exerted, alternate with phases of free experimenting and of unrestrained creative activity.

If individuals seek to realize themselves in ways other than those preordained for them, they must develop new conceptions of different courses of life and ideals of living together. Their imagination can produce these conceptions only by *discarding* the valuations of established ways of structuring lives and communities. This kind of collectively disposing of dead traditions takes place in fictions that represent a different world than the one from which those who imagine alternatives have originated themselves. To be sure, circumstances in a certain world produce a certain kind of humans. But human ingenuity also makes it possible for them to think new worlds and to create them through their actions. This thought is a variant of Marx's idea that "circumstances make man [*Menschen*] just as much as men make circumstances."⁴⁰

It is primarily literature that provides the material for self- and world reflection by telling paradigmatic stories about failing and succeeding human lives and in this way analyzing the contradictoriness that humans for the most part experience anyway and by giving it a succinct form. Humans can, with the help of literature, try to imagine different lives and different communities the same way they can imagine, proceeding from new mathematical proofs, that the meanings of mathematical signs could be other than hitherto accepted.

Telling Stories about Assertions and Arguments

In response to J. M. Coetzee's lecture about animal ethics that was a reading from his novel about the fictional writer and animal ethicist Elizabeth Costello, Peter Singer wrote a fictional dialogue between Peter (himself) and Naomi (his daughter), in which he criticizes Coetzee as follows:

But *are* they Coetzee's arguments? That's just the point—that's why I don't know how to go about responding to this so-called lecture. They are *Costello's* arguments. Coetzee's fictional device enables him to distance himself from them. And he has this character, Norma, Costello's daughter-in-law, who makes all the obvious objections to what Costello is saying. It's a marvelous device, really. Costello can blithely criticize the use of reason, or the need to have any clear principles or proscriptions, without Coetzee really committing himself to these claims. Maybe he really shares Norma's very proper doubts about them. Coetzee doesn't even have to worry too much about getting the structure of the lecture right. When he notices that it is starting to ramble, he just has Norma say that Costello is rambling!¹

Elizabeth Costello is asked if her novel *Fire and Ice*, set in the Australia of the 1930s, draws upon her own youth. She answers in Coetzee's novel, "No, I was a child in the 1930s. Of course we draw upon our own lives all the time—they are our main source, in a sense our only source. But no, *Fire and Ice* isn't autobiography. It is a work of fiction. I made it up."²

Translating Experiences through Fictions

What we have here is, of course, a statement about fiction in a fiction. Even so, one can analyze it systematically. The philosophical literature about truth in narrative art frequently discusses the question, whether the characters and places, the descriptions of events and actions have a meaning (in Frege's sense) in the real world, whether they "refer" to actual persons, places, events, and actions. Yet even if the persons, places, events, and acts do not really exist but are fictional, as Elizabeth Costello asserts about her *Fire and Ice*, this story may describe experiences—those of competition, of joy, envy, disappointment, happiness, or anything else that the author did in fact have. To these experiences she might refer when she says that her life is her only source.

An author may be involved in an accident, or one of his children may die. In a novel a fictional person may get into a rather different kind of accident and lose her child in a completely different way. Nonetheless, in fiction the author can refer potentially more truthfully or authentically to his experience than in an accident report by the police or in a medical file, which are not interested in his experiences but in facts that can be ascertained regardless of his subjective impressions, such as time of day, speed at moment of impact, or condition of the vehicle, all of which can be ascertained regardless of his subjective impressions. In discussions about truth in literature or fictive arguments, it is frequently overlooked that fiction does not primarily make assertions about particular things or historical processes, or that assertions about particular things or historical processes are not the real purpose of most literary activities.³ Rather, the aim of these literary constructions is often the *translation of experiences*, in which process the external circumstances during the actual occurrence of the experiences may very well differ from those described in the fiction that is meant to "translate" the experiences.⁴

When Singer reproaches Coetzee for entrenching himself behind a fiction and for distancing himself from the arguments that he produces in his fiction, he does not appear to consider the gain in reflection that such a distancing makes possible. Arguments begin with premises. Premises themselves cannot be proved. They are expected to be plausible. Often, premises are plausible because the one who initiates an argument has had certain experiences. In a fiction, this experience itself can be reported, though not in a documentary report about facts, but in a fiction that tries to translate an experience that did in fact take place. We may characterize the translation of experience through fictions as an *educational*

process. For what happens in aesthetic experiences is, on the one hand, identification with the subjects described in the fiction that have an experience; on the other hand, a distancing from this experience takes place. The aesthetic experience, then, is always already reflected experience.⁵ The identification with a fictive subject that has a certain experience is, to be sure, different than one's personal experience, but it can have similar consequences. For example, someone may, because he read Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or after he saw a performance of Wolfgang Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür*⁶ of 1947, change his attitude about war, or even become a pacifist. Whoever has personally been in a war, of course, has had different experiences than someone who read a novel or saw a play about the topic of war. But the fact that works of art like these are studied in school has the purpose of translating experiences to the students that may change their (perhaps superficial) views about war. At the same time, they seek to reflect the experiences that are the topics of these works of art. After all, it is much easier as a rule to speak about aesthetic experiences than about the actual traumatizing events in war that often enough leave the directly affected subjects speechless.

In the case of modern experiences of war and of other social complexities, it can even be argued that they are *no longer possible* other than as aesthetic experiences. The complexity of modern social circumstances and the fact that they are mediated make it difficult to experience the respective realities immediately, without mediation. Even though the events of a battle in a technological mass war may have a direct effect on a particular person, he cannot any longer have a reasonably clear view of them.⁷ In this context, Alexander Honold has pointed to a "comprehensive loss of experience" after the "cultural rupture of the First World War," specifically to "the vanishing ability to experience contemporary social reality."⁸ In an ideal case, the aesthetic experience can accomplish a synthesis that the experiences of the nonfictional can no longer attain. Of course, there exists the suspicion that these accomplishments of a synthesis do not "correspond" with reality. But that has always been the case. Fictions have never *depicted* reality, and an aesthetic experience never exhausts itself in merely *corresponding* with whatever nonaesthetic experience.

Functions of Reports about Experiences

Reports about experiences can be connected to arguments in different ways. They can function both as premises and as reactions to arguments. This is exactly what Coetzee demonstrates in *Elizabeth Costello*.

For example, Coetzee describes Costello giving a talk on realism and on Kafka's report of the ape to the academy. She is presented as, on a ship, giving a lecture on the significance of the novel. The story is told of her speaking about animals.⁹ These are the lessons—lessons about humanism and about realism in literature as well as lessons on the lives of animals—that have been excerpted from *Elizabeth Costello* for the volume titled *The Lives of Animals*.¹⁰ Peter Singer's reaction to these texts suggests that by embedding the arguments about animal ethics in fiction, Coetzee would make it *easier* for himself than a "really" arguing philosopher, leaving a backdoor open for himself through which he would be able to flee (if necessary), so that one could not hold him responsible for the premises and conclusions of these arguments. In fact, however, this fictional embedding does not offer an opportunity for escape but, as we have seen, a possibility for reflection: arguments are based on experiences, and these are personal experiences. One has one's experiences with an argument. The evidence of the premises with which someone introduces an argument, most of the time, goes back, as we have seen, to certain experiences of life. Because the presentation of the arguments is oral, it is an experience of those listening to it. The person presenting her arguments experiences how her audience receives them. The recipients experience whether an argument convinces them or not. The presenter of the argument experiences whether she was persuasive or not.

An essential role in this connection is given to Elizabeth Costello's *comparative assertion* (which as such is, of course, not an argument) that factory farming and factory slaughtering of animals somehow resembles the annihilation of humans in the Nazi concentration camps. This comparison in the fiction provokes protests from a Jew because it is taken as making an analogy of the Jews with animals readied for slaughter. "The Jews died like cattle, therefore cattle die like Jews, you say. This is a trick with words which I will not accept."¹¹ But Costello's radical assertion was concerned with people who "closed their hearts," with their refusal to use their "capacity to imagine themselves as someone else." According to Costello, "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination."¹² And then Costello refers to her best-known book, *The House on Eccles Street*, in which she continued spinning the life of Marion Bloom, a figure in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Earlier, in a conversation about *Fire and Ice* whose central character is a man, Costello gives an answer to the questions, was it easy for her as a woman to write a book from a man's perspective. "Easy? No. If it were easy it wouldn't be worth doing. It is the otherness that is the challenge. Making up someone other than

yourself."¹³ This remark can also be applied to Coetzee who in *Elizabeth Costello* has as a man written a book from the perspective of a woman. It appears that Costello (and Coetzee) thinks of the imagination the same way Descartes thought of the will: as unlimited.¹⁴ But she considers the imagination, in contrast to will, as *flexible*. We can try to make a determined effort to envision the existence of others *from the inside*. We can be lazy and with an indolent heart pay no attention to the inner world of others. Or we can endeavor to block our imagination so that we do not have to visualize how other beings feel when they are in a certain situation.¹⁵ The way those who had premonitions or knew what went on in the Nazi concentration camps not only must have been indolent in their heart but must actively have limited their ability to imagine so that they could live in however vague a knowledge beside and with these facilities, so, according to Costello, people nowadays must not only have an indolent heart but intentionally block their imaginations when they think about the circumstances under which, as a rule, the meat that they consume is produced.¹⁶ But this type of parallelism in the book (and in reality) breaks a taboo: the Holocaust must not be compared with anything. "She should have thought twice before bringing up the Holocaust," as an objection to her has it.¹⁷

In a similar way, the book explores the rhetorical effect of another argumentative clash that has nothing to do with a comparison. Elizabeth Costello is asked why she does not eat meat. She gives (as her son, who has experienced many interviews with her, remarks) her standard answer, a response that "comes from Plutarch's moral essays," that she is "astonished that you can put in your mouth the corpse of a dead animal" and "that you do not find it nasty to chew hacked flesh and swallow the juices of death wounds."¹⁸ This remark, he says, "is a real conversation-stopper: it is the word 'juices' that does it."

The Elizabeth Costello of Coetzee's book has a sister, Blanche. "Trained as a classical scholar," she entered a Catholic order to become a "medical missionary" and "has risen to be administrator of a hospital" (that primarily takes care of children infested with AIDS) in "rural Zululand." Like her sister, Elizabeth, she is a born fighter. In a speech on the occasion of being awarded an honorary doctorate in the humanities, she produces altogether sound historical arguments and not merely comparisons and with her reflections manages to offend her audience as much as Elizabeth did with her analogous remarks on animal ethics. Blanche is a mirror image of Elizabeth. In her speech she historically derives the *studia humanitatis* from "textual scholarship" devoted to the Bible. This work, she says, was done only in the interest of translating God's word correctly, and the

effort's justification was that people hoped to find *orientation* and even *redemption* through the biblical texts. This hope was then transferred to the study of other texts but was disappointed by them. At first Hellenism, the ancient Greek humanism, became an alternative to the orientation of Christianity and during the development of the humanities turned into the purpose and subject matter of education. (Later in this context, Blanche mentions Winckelmann.) It was at this time that humanistic studies separated themselves from their original objective, the exegesis of the Bible, and became independent: "*that is how we should live—not in the hereafter but in the here and now.*" But this purpose had long disappeared. It was nothing more than an illusion that no longer meant anything to the people of Europe after it had been revealed as unrealizable. "When Hellenism failed . . . humanism went bankrupt."¹⁹ Even so, many young people as "hungry souls" have for centuries after continued to turn to academic studies of literature and languages, hoping to find orientation for their lives and insights about themselves in the texts of Shakespeare and Goethe, Cervantes and Tolstoy, Balzac and Eliot, Lampedusa and Musil. But all of that was disappointed. These texts do not have the desired strength, she says, and their interpreters no longer are interested in the need that drives young people to seek out the study of these texts in the first place. That is why the *studia humanitatis* as a source of disoriented relativism "are truly on their deathbed."²⁰

"Who does she think she is," one of the professors of literature who had attended the honoree's talk "heatedly" exclaims in a conversation at the end of the ceremony, "using the occasion to lecture us!"—about our own discipline and its condition; one would like to add, she is after all no more than a former philologist of a dead language, a "missionary from the sticks in Zululand."²¹ The speaker's historical sketches and arguments, her probably honest statements about herself do not fall on fertile ground, are not considered seriously but are deemed an affront. Blanche Costello is made to experience that her arguments do not elicit insights but indignation.

But perhaps her arguments are valid? Perhaps Coetzee, the former professor of literature at the University of Cape Town, also agrees with them? Perhaps Blanche is right that originally the humanities were studied in hopes that the individual person, and indeed mankind, could be improved by texts, by the study of certain so-called classical authors, the way medicine was able to raise the level of human health. Perhaps the original readers and humanist scholars hoped that religions and ethical experiences of the highest relevance are being transmitted through these texts, and that they believed them to be valuable for this reason.

Does not Elizabeth Costello also believe that she transmits highly relevant ethical experiences when she reports about her perception of how it feels to eat animals? And does not Coetzee try to transmit experiences of this kind in his literature? Is that his reason for so intensely depicting the mass killing of dogs kept in holding pens by animal welfare people in rural South Africa?²²

It is Coetzee who depicts the Costello sisters as mirror images of each other. He uses this technique to transmit the experience of cultural confusion, instability to his readers. No text seems any longer available on which one can rely for orientation. And it appears that no experience can be called on any longer to provide the kind of paradigmatic deterrence or orientation that would make “us” feel the need never to do anything like this again or to emulate that kind of behavior as exemplary. Coetzee’s literature is the attempt to transmit this ethically relevant experience. And currently, the absence of cultural orientation is the most significant ethical experience. In his texts, Coetzee wants to depict the experiences that anyone must undergo who is fighting a losing battle in the search for orientation, when he or she is perceived as an arrogant moralist or is ridiculed as a naïve do-gooder. Cheerful conversation suddenly stops, and you are looked at as a spoilsport who doesn’t merely want to entertain with his art and who obviously tries to educate, who makes a certain “demand” on people, going so far as to claim that literature has originally always wanted to do just that, and literary scholarship has for this reason taken its texts so seriously.

When Coetzee lets a character participate in his fiction, he reflects this experience at the same time. He does not simply deliver a commentary on one of his books, for instance, by saying, “In this book, I would like to transmit my experience with human cruelty toward animals to the readers so that they come out of their callousness.” By showing how one can “run into a wall” with this type of report about an experience, he reflects its potential effectiveness. The reader may not only relate to this report but also ask himself why he reacts to it exactly like the fictional audience that remains unconvinced by an argument, wants to hear nothing about an experience.

Let’s return once more to Blanche Costello’s thoughts. She may quite well be right: the impulse that started the linguistic efforts that originally were expended on the study of the Bible’s ancient languages was at first also transferred to other texts that held the promise of something similar to the message of “Holy Scriptures.” Perhaps she is right to say that the idea that the *studia humanitatis* should be the center of every university originated with an existential expectation and that these scholarly

disciplines nowadays represent nothing more than a stale illusion or a career engine. “She may be an outsider,” Blanche thinks to herself, “but if she were to be asked what in her time makes up the center of the university, what is its core discipline, she would say: making money. That’s at least what it looks like from Melbourne, Victoria. And she wouldn’t be surprised if things are the same in Johannesburg, South Africa.”

Perhaps her audience reacts to the historical arguments with such anger because they are true. Coetzee tries to transmit this well-known experience to the reader: those who hear good comparisons and valid arguments react with shock and anger when these arguments and comparisons, uncomfortable and unflattering to them as they may be, express the truth. Students, who realize that the humanities no longer offer orientations and among whom word has gotten around that a cynical relativism is prevalent here, prefer to turn to *business studies* because, after the bankruptcy of humanism, economic success is left as the only orientation. Professors in the humanities suffer from this loss of students. But they have nothing to put up against this loss because they are engaged in nothing but the routine of being administrators of texts from which they themselves can no longer derive any orientation. Are they to deliver sermons as historians, philosophers, and literary scholars? Are they to talk about what Herodotus, Plato, and Schiller can teach us today? Are they to go back to the moth-eaten nineteenth century? They tell themselves that they are paid as rigorous scholars and not as Sunday orators who have to deliver edification. But at the same time, they detest *business studies* and those students who turn to them in droves and stay away from their lectures. They fear for their positions. For, the university administrations understand that the point is no longer the education of humans but the training of leadership personnel. Therefore, they threaten to abolish those disciplines that don’t pay their own way. Academic education in the form of training is important only as long as they can charge high tuition fees. For this reason, it is only natural that they center their universities around *business studies* and not around the humanities so that their institution can attain a good position in academic rankings, which in turn will attract solvent students who can pay appropriately high fees for the degrees to which the job market gives preference. Could the picture that Coetzee draws of the university in 2003 (the year *Elizabeth Costello* was published) not perhaps be a true representation, an image that he validates, on the one hand, through his own depressing experiences as a literature professor and, on the other, be a reflection of himself as a literary author?

The discussion about *humanitas*, about Hellenism and Christianity between Elizabeth and Blanche Costello, throws a new light, moreover,

on the lessons about animals. For, the Christian conception of humans as the images of God and everything else in nature as at their disposition—a concept that sometimes is derived from the biblical story of creation—can also be seen as a reason that humans perceive a deep ontological chasm between themselves and the animals that gives them permission to consume the putatively soulless animals. In the book's fifth lesson, Elizabeth Costello draws attention to human nakedness that is not "available to animals, who cannot uncover themselves because they do not cover themselves." That is why a gesture of self-revelation in which "the life and beauty we are blessed with"²³ is not available to them. Does Coetzee mean to suggest here that the Gnostic-Christian contempt for the flesh and for animal life that was alien to Hellenism's cult of physical beauty is a root of our disdainful way of dealing with animal life? In Coetzee's book, bodily beauty appears as a "blessing" that is of importance not only in erotic but also in charitable situations, for example, when a younger Elizabeth Costello fulfills the wish of an old man dying of cancer to show him her naked breasts. As far as I know, the philosophical debates about animal ethics and vegetarianism have not made a significant issue of the cultural meanings of flesh and of the cultural differences in the representation of such affective relationships as greed, hatred, love, and care toward flesh. Do they not provide the first impetus for certain affective patterns of contempt that go hand in hand with a type of greed that is fixed on consumption, be it of the eating or the sexual kind? Is the adoration of carnal beauty not the prerequisite for a non-reifying eroticism toward the body in blossom and of charitable devotion toward the sick and disintegrating body? It seems to me that Coetzee intends to suggest this idea through the mirroring configuration of the third and fourth lesson of his book on the one hand and of the fifth lesson on the other. But it plays out just as well in the relationship of the two agitating Costello sisters toward each other. He does not need a tractate for this purpose. A mere report about his fiction, such as mine, sounds flat, quite in contrast to his fiction.²⁴

Reeducation

It should have become clear how easy it is for fiction to show different sensibilities for values. Honor, beauty, freedom, health, truth, justice, and happiness may be perceived as values for the perception of which the educational systems of different societies provide differently "good" sensitivity training.²⁵ Efforts of this type have the effect that those who have

undergone the appropriate *éducation sentimentale* develop a ranking in which the one value is explicated as the “truly important one,” the other (lower ranking) one as only “seemingly important.”²⁶ Trying to speak in favor of *different* fundamental values before an audience that has gone through a certain kind of education will hardly work. The arguments simply are of no use and bring about no insight. Moral arguments, if they are not altogether formalistic, are constructed against the background of value hierarchies. In one case, it may be justice that is seen as more fundamental than happiness (this is what a Judeo-Christian education system stipulates); in another case, the fundamental value is happiness rather than justice (as the aim of an education influenced by Buddhism). The only partially reasoning advocacy for basic values other than those with which the audience is familiar will then appear as a form of “sermonizing” or moral zealotry; those who are being addressed feel (rightfully) drawn into the project of a “moral reeducation.” They are to be persuaded to rethink their actions and those of their fellowmen according to the demands of a different paradigm.²⁷

This is the situation of reeducation in which Elizabeth Costello finds herself with her vegetarianism in her son’s family and at the dinner given in her honor. The same is true of Blanche Costello and her Catholicism in the company of the humanists at the celebration of her honorary doctorate. Because the Costello sisters proceed from different premises than their audiences and try to persuade them to *change* their presuppositions, those listening to them feel coerced. They sense a different compulsion than that of an argument. They begin to notice that they are being forced into an attempt at training and *reeducation*, and they resent it. After all, as adults they have already finished their education. “Who does she think she is?” can be heard as an indignant exclamation, a response that children who for years are exposed to such processes of education do not, as a rule, let loose in the face of their adult educators. For, with them not an existing order of values has to be replaced by a different one, but one has to be “installed” in the first place: sensitivity for certain basic values is to be produced through appropriate training.

These—and many other passages of the book—depict encounters that people with a rhetorically arranged, distinct argument will likely experience in the context in which they present their arguments. That is possible only in a fictional text or in the documentation of a factual argumentative exchange in a concrete conversational situation. Coetzee’s text takes into consideration whether it is a woman or a man who presents an argument, whether his or her performance is rhetorically brilliant or rather clumsy (like Elizabeth Costello), whether he or she argues

authentically, that is, with truly her own convictions as premises (like the Costello sisters) or not. He depicts how different persons react to certain arguments, including pious Jews and analytical philosophers of mind like Elizabeth Costello's daughter-in-law, who considers the premises of her mother-in-law's arguments against eating meat to be sentimental anthropomorphic projections. Even the effect that arguments have among relatives is included, because Elizabeth Costello wonders whether her sister Blanche's attack on the *humaniores* is an attack on her, the writer. Sibling rivalry is part of these reflections as something that can play a role in the production and reception of arguments. The book focuses on a wide field of different social, political, religious, and philosophical circumstances on the side of the producers and recipients of arguments. But these lessons are not simply given like lectures. Instead, the circumstances in which they are produced and reflected are themselves objects of close attention in the book.²⁸ That is why it transports no doctrines but becomes philosophical in the Socratic sense through its fiction. For, Plato shows how an argument convinces the partners in Socrates's conversation and Socrates himself, or does not convince them, how it hits, delights, or angers them.

The Obscene

A moment ago, I said that the fictional text sensitizes for certain values that can be deployed as fundamental values in a moral course of arguments, that it can be part of an *éducation sentimentale*. That is to say, fiction apparently should be looked upon as something altogether to be welcomed in philosophy and pedagogy.²⁹ After all, should not all of us strive to become more sensitive?

In his lesson on the problem of evil, Coetzee inserts here another reflection. His heroine Elizabeth Costello reads a book about the conspirators of July 20, 1944, which also describes their execution in the cellar of the Bendler Block in Berlin. She is shocked and mesmerized by the description of the hangman's words, the humiliating treatment of the execution's victims, the cruel form of death by strangulation that Hitler himself is said to have ordered.

A short time after having read this book, she receives an invitation to a conference in Amsterdam about evil, and she decides to report there on her experience with the relevant passages of the book. The evil that was in Hitler, she says, was passed on to his hangman, and the author

of this execution scene is passing it on from this “butcherman” to the reader. This cannot be right, she adds; it is obscene to imagine such scenes and to describe them. “We can put ourselves in peril by what we write. . . . For if what we write has the power to make us better people then surely it has the power to make us worse.”³⁰ To discover that one does not want to be told anything about a cruelty, that one does not want to learn *en détail* from the description in a story how a person is being murdered but that one cannot put a depiction like that aside, is obviously a realization that for Costello amounts to a change for the worse befalling her own person. It is the arousal of her own malevolence through cleverly chosen words. Any writer who conjures up such malevolent scenes in his own imagination damages himself, Costello thinks. The imagination of torturers and the imagination of those who describe torture, she claims, exist in close proximity.

Where does Coetzee stand on this issue? The situation here is especially intricate because it is he who in his fiction also writes the scenes that Costello reads. The obscenities she prefers not to have described to her are imagined and described (and rather in detail, to boot) by Coetzee as cruelties that should better remain unimaginable and indescribable. Is this a case of the old controversy between art as instigation and art as catharsis? Does what happens here amount to sensitizing readers in the connoisseurship of torture or is it a deterring experience of cruelty that awakes the reader’s determination to prevent circumstances in which something like that is possible without exceptions?

The question is this: if someone admits that fiction may have a pedagogical function and grants it the ability to translate experiences that introduce argumentative sequences of thought, must he not also accord it the opportunity of translating experiences of cruelty that arouse a sadistic desire for brutality? And must someone who acknowledges this possibility not argue in favor of literary censorship? (Which is also an issue in the lesson about evil in *Elizabeth Costello*.) But on what basis is one to argue against the translation of fundamental experiences if these very experiences enter into premises of arguments or determine the selection of certain premises?

Obviously, there is a connection between experiences, the plausibility of certain premises for arguments, and the carrying out both of arguments and of actions. But this connection itself is neither argumentative nor necessary as a cause. One of the people listening to Elizabeth Costello’s lecture about evil in which she condemns imagining it considers that she may be too much of a “weak vessel” to have the strength for

dealing with this type of descriptions without being infected by them. Couldn't other readers, he suggests, those, unlike her, "made of sterner stuff," cope with these experiences better, and "learn from" them, "and come out stronger rather than weaker, more determined never to let the evil return"?³¹

The experiences of the imagining writer and the imagining reader are conjoined in the act of reading. But they are not identical. The writer, he or she, cannot navigate what is going on in the reader's imagination and even less what argumentative consequences the reader's conceptions, his or her aesthetic experiences, will have. That is why the connection between experience, thinking, and taking action remains indeterminate. It is not compelling, as is the conjoining of the various assertions in an argument. Two premises and one deductive rule demand certain conclusions. Coetzee's fiction itself reflects this fact by focusing attention on possible different effects that the same text has on different persons.

Intensified Reflectivity

Clearly, fiction is anything but an escape mechanism for an author who wants to make assertions but does not himself, like the author of a purely theoretical text, want to answer for its arguments, as Peter Singer surmises. By putting his thoughts and words into another person's mouth and letting other people react to them in a fictive setting, Coetzee can show the arguments at work. He can present the context in which they do or don't do their work, in which they persuade, disappoint, or evoke fury. He can even describe the energy they cost their author and the helplessness into which the reactions of her audience plunge her. Fiction makes it possible to unfold the experiences and insights on which the arguments are based that at times are intuitive (as in the case of Elizabeth Costello's convictions about consuming animals). Fiction can also show with whom the respective comparisons will bring about insights, and with whom they will not. The imagined experiences that characterize the beginning of Elizabeth's comparisons and of Blanche's arguments can be plausible to certain persons, can appear fundamental to them and guide them to obligatory basic attitudes, whereas others object to her presentation as to an impertinence they would rather evade.

Is that a plea for relativism? No. It is not a plea at all because we are not in a courtroom. It is a story about imagined experiences and arguments that are being presented on the basis of experiences. In the second lesson, Costello says about the novel:

The novel, the traditional novel . . . is an attempt to understand human fate one case at a time, to understand how it comes about that some fellow being, having started at point A and having undergone experiences B and C and D, ends up at point Z. Like history, the novel is thus an exercise in making the past coherent. Like history, it explores the respective contributions of character and circumstance to forming the present. By doing so, the novel suggests how we may explore the power of the present to produce the future.³²

Fiction does not investigate and does not find arguments or causal connections but finds connections between *experiences*, *causal events*, *arguments*, and *actions* and the social and political circumstances in which these connections take shape that will then constitute what Costello calls “the fate” of a human. Fate that is equally shaped by his experiences, his character that processes these experiences (or maybe not), his abilities to think (or maybe not), his determination and courage to act and the external circumstances in which this character and its actions evolve and unfold. Argument is merely one *factor* in this “conjuncture of fate” that itself is not a rational system that could be defined by causal or inferential structures alone. For this reason, it could not be “replicated” in a theory. Even where this fateful nexus works rationally (*begrifflich*), there remain uncertainties and ambiguities with a function of their own.³³ This does not make the nexus of fate irrational. Its effect on arguments that are embedded in it simply cannot be prognosticated and controlled completely—and that is exactly what a literature demonstrates that has attained a level of reflection of the quality we have encountered in Coetzee. It tells stories about these conjunctures of fate and about the micro-fates of the arguments within them. One cannot try to reflectively duplicate a connection of this kind, cannot understand the fiction that “contemplates” it, without being aware not only of the existence of experiences among themselves and of experiences and actions—connections that likewise are neither of a merely causal nor purely rational kind—but also of the following: experiences *happen* to humans, and humans *have* them. Not all persons are capable of having all types of experiences. It depends on the respective sensibility that they have developed during their cultural education what possibilities for experiences they have. Arguments take place within these complexities. The opportunities for experiences are the element in which humans take up arguments or reject them. They never exist in isolation, except in a philosophical primer. As a rule, they also never power any sort of “world affairs.” An argument’s quality in the sense of its effectiveness depends on whether the experiential connection in which it is presented

is favorable toward it and what “occurs” to it socially. Perhaps an argument stirs up a mob and leads to a lynching. Even that is a possibility, one that hardly may depend on its logical quality, however. In life, arguments do not simply confront other arguments. They encounter affects, dispositions to act, as well as individual and institutional indolence.

Following Koschorke, one may compare the argument to a rite that takes place in a sacred space. In a sacred space, one can distinguish a ritualistic center from the periphery. The altar is a place where concentrated quiet prevails. In the back pews of the church, children may be playing cards. In the center of the ritualistic space, even the slightest nuances of meaning are being apprehended. Toward the periphery perhaps disquiet arises, only a vague appreciation of the central act exists.³⁴ In a similar way, the everyday social and political area around the argument, which is what philosophers consider central, frays in terms of space and time. For example, students of philosophy still have a clear understanding of an argument in animal ethics in the lecture hall. Out in public, it runs into the interests of members of the butchers’ union and confronts the feelings of meat connoisseurs. The argument is perhaps no longer fully understood, is partially ignored, distorted, and forgotten. One can tell stories about these kinds of fates that happen to arguments in order to clarify for oneself the role of argumentative rationality in life. A story like that leads to insights we may call philosophical. The idea that the course of philosophy itself is also the engine of man’s fate and of world history, as one can find it in Hegel and Heidegger, is barely advocated any longer nowadays. But philosophers these days will also not want to restrict the relevance of their arguments to lecture halls. Yet anyone who wants to make it possible that the relevance of arguments extends beyond the university must pay attention to the contexts in which arguments have to be effective as soon as they leave the halls of academe.

Concreteness and Critique

Narratives, whether they occur in novels, films, or ballads, seek to translate experiences, as we have seen. And if it is a matter of “successful” art, also this translation is a success. We will not forget the characters, actions, and events with which the story has dealt. Good texts and films do not simply help us to pass the time but change us in ways similar to life experiences that are completely unrelated to art. But what exactly is meant by “experience” in this context? The popularity gained by the critique (motivated by Kantianism) of the immediacy of experience has made common property of the conviction that a concrete reality that conceptual or linguistic universals have not prestructured is altogether inaccessible to us. But that is not true.

That the world can be seen as a coming and going of individuals, who form patterns with one another that change as these individuals come and go or that likewise come and go—this nonprovable initial hypothesis means that individuals, in contrast to the patterns they produce, are *unrepeatable*. Our experience originally refers to *them*—to these individuals—and not from the outset only to the repeatable patterns. But because language operates with repeatable patterns, with universal concepts, or general terms, it is only with great difficulty that we can focus linguistically on the original experiences of individuals. That is of the essence for our concluding thoughts on the critique of generalizing speech and the tendency to fall silent. For, the universals of language form a pattern that connects humans with one another, not only at one particular time but across generations. This pattern remains relatively stable beyond the life span of

particular individuals. The universals of language are a pillar of human solidarity.

But every person also adds innovations to language as he and she react to the linguistic forms in which he or she grows up.¹ Language enables people to point other people toward many things, among them their own experiences that are important to their lives. They can use language to evaluate their experiences as desirable or undesirable. And they can communicate with each other about circumstances into which they have gotten and that lead to certain experiences that may have to be evaluated as negative. *Criticism* essentially has to deal with the question of how humans create circumstances together in which certain experiences become possible or impossible. Because humans prefer that something analogous to a certain experience does not repeat itself, they try to change the circumstances in which they live. The tendency to fall silent after all arises from the realization that such linguistic criticism has merely a limited effectiveness, and that all attempts to translate experiences by way of language are imperfect. For it is obvious that certain situations cannot be avoided in the future, even though they have repeatedly been criticized in impressive reports based on experience and with good arguments. A veteran, for example, may tell about his horrible experiences in the war in order to transmit them to his (female and male) audience, intending them to serve as evidence that the facts of war will not be repeated. A story of this kind may be a critique of presently occurring social developments that seem to be moving toward war. But from Aeschylus's *Persians* (472 BCE) to Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, there are narratives that achieve such a translation of experience. Even so, they have not been able to prevent the wars that broke out after these works of art. Some (not all!) veterans do not want to participate in a war again. And some who have understood the works of art just mentioned, may, after having seen them, consider the prevention of wartime cruelties an essential obligation. All the same, they have hardly ever before been capable of preventing the social developments that lead to wars.

But it is not only the putative or actual educational and critical ineffectiveness of art that gave rise to doubts about the concept of translation. Rather, the question more fundamentally is whether it makes any sense at all to state that humans have experiences of something unrepeatable that they evaluate and nonetheless to believe that they can "translate" their unrepeatable experiences via the medium of language. This sounds contradictory but is so only if one does not differentiate between the unrepeatable experience of an individual and the circumstances in which this experience occurs.

Factual Events

Let's imagine a family with a dog and a baby that cannot yet speak, taking a walk through a forest on an afternoon late in summer. Suddenly, a thunderstorm arises. There is lightning and thunder. The baby in its buggy screams, the dog howls, the birds no longer twitter but shriek. The woman says, "A thunderstorm!" The man says, "There is a hut ahead—we'll find shelter there." People who have language and nonspeaking beings are reacting here to an event that unites them in a mutual present. The woman does not know how the man experiences lightning and thunder. They both don't know how this is for their baby and what the dog and the birds now perceive. But it is obvious that all of them suddenly behave differently because something happened that they *experienced together* insofar as they react as a group. It is evident that the baby's screaming, the birds' shrieking, the dog's howling, and the utterances of the two adults are a consequence of this event. Animals and humans may perceive events quite differently, but their abrupt behavioral changes, with or without verbal output, show that they share a present of events, even though they may not (be able to) speak to one another. Sharing such a present can be called *having an experience together*. It also seems to be very likely that both the speaking and the nonspeaking creatures will evaluate the situation that certain experiences trigger inside them in similar ways, that is, as *menacing*, even though only the adult humans are able to describe it in such terms.

If we accept events like our example as concrete reality, then the idea that the real world is accessible only via language, that only those beings have a world who have a language, loses much of its persuasive force.² Something real happens, something concrete takes place, and as that it can be experienced together: at dawn, the birds begin to sing, and soon after we may see a red sky. When the moon during a solar eclipse moves before the sun, the birds fall silent, and we see everything turn gray. A child jumps into cold water, and he is gasping for air, but he notices that this is completely different than at the moment when, stiff as a board, he had jumped off the wall and he couldn't catch his breath. I bite into a strawberry for the first time and hear my mother's encouraging words. The dog, frightened, snaps at my hand, and a burning pain streams through it. I touch a pig's bristles for the first time, and it grunts. I awaken and once again don't know in which room I am, how my body is positioned in space, and that leaves a sensation I have experienced once before. The boiler explodes, the horses crash out of the stable, and we see their eyes

agape with fear. Grandfather stops breathing, everyone in the room falls silent, and I become aware of a mood I had not experienced before. There are concepts for naming all of this. But it was experienced in a certain way without it having been named as it was named here. Something similar was also experienced by beings who do not name and assert yet, for example, little children or animals. In some examples, the person involved remembers other experiences that were similar or “just like that” (awakening and not knowing where one is). Sometimes he or she feels sure to have this experience for the first time just this moment (eating the strawberry, grandfather’s death). Sometimes it is part of our experience to experience what other beings go through in a particular situation (the panicked horses, the mourning adults).

This concrete reality is not only accessible to us when we have some universal term available for classifying the experienced reality as this or that. We experience events with a particular intensity for the first time and only once in life at this intensity. That is the concrete element in what we experience.³ The concreteness of the experiences that we live through cannot be exhausted by concepts.⁴ But we can remember them, especially the first time they happened, which makes this occasion the paradigm for further “analogous” experiences. Even so, the event that is being experienced in the mutual presence of different beings can be identified vaguely as the vanishing point of their different ways of experiencing, and some beings can afterward refer to this event together as a real occurrence, for example, by pointing to it (“You remember, the thunderstorm last week?”). But there is no need for a shared way of life and for a shared language in order to have a part in the present and what happens in it.

It may be that for many people their lives are primarily an “unreeling” of habits in which the consciously acquired and shaped habits of differentiation that we call concepts play an important role. In a life that adheres to habitual patterns, the unrepeatability of experiences seems to be covered over. The reason for this, however, is merely the fact that attention has been focused on the repetitive patterns of how people act and not on the unrepeatable events that always happen even in a life completely structured by habits. Nothing much appears to happen in such a life. But in fact, no life seems to exhaust itself completely in habits and in keeping busy with generally established differentiations. Life never takes place in nothing but culturally and individually fashioned rhythms. Rather, something else happens all the time that can be experienced as a disturbing intrusion and as alarming and therefore is “pushed” out of the focus of attention.⁵ People can share habits and habitual ways of mak-

ing distinctions, however, by joining a form of living with mutual language. They also can share the experience that something *is happening* with beings with whom they do not exist in a mutual form of life, even though they are unable to communicate to them *what* happens. This is so because they experience what has happened differently and have not developed shared patterns of reacting to events like the one they just went through. This prevents them from being able to make their difference of experience a topic of discussion for one another. The distinction between a concrete event, which is the mutual vanishing point of experience in a shared present, and the experience itself as well as the individually differing way of living through it is important at this juncture.⁶ The “triangulation” in the community of the experiencing beings who relate to the same event in different ways of experiencing it guarantees the reality of the event independently of the respective way of experiencing.⁷ Experiencing the event may be different for every experiencing creature. For this being, however, the fact that he/she lives through an event together with others is absolutely beyond question.⁸

Because the habits of behavior and differentiation constitute the way beings with speech live, the error arose (due to a misreading of Wittgenstein) that individuals exist only in repeatable patterns. We now see, however, that they are connected with something unique not only individually but that they also grasp unique events together outside of the repetitions they share. But even when they are connected with one another in the experience of a present moment, this does not mean that they experience exactly the same thing. From the differences of how they experience present times, the problem of successful communication arises that in turn may be characterized as the futile attempt to repeat something that is unique in patterns that are repetitive. My attempts to repeat the unique manifest themselves in my search for the correct words, the correct concepts, the correct habits of differentiation that make it possible to pass on to others what I experienced. But inasmuch as concrete experiencing is conceptually inexhaustible, in the final analysis, this transfer cannot really succeed. Yet these attempts are important all the same. They show that beings present times differently and, above all, *that they themselves as the ones who experience are unrepeatable*. A writer's attempt to translate his experience to others through literature is for this reason also a way of making differences visible, is a means of showing that in this world the same present times are being experienced differently (from different perspectives, against the background of different biographies, etc.). The unending explication of what these people experience—the explication of their internal perspectives that take place during the sequence

of shared present times in differing processes of experiencing—is an important transaction of literature. We are interested in literature because it refers to shared present times but to differing ways of experiencing within them.

Literature that succeeds in depicting how a person or a group of people experienced a particular present can open the eyes to humiliations and sufferings that others who experienced the same present differently did not notice before.⁹ This imbues literature with an implicitly *critical* competence because the fact that experiences of humiliation and suffering as well as a completely different kind of experience can occur at one and the same present indicates that experiencing humiliation and suffering is not simply just a private matter. It may indeed be the same constellation of the present to which the different way of experiencing refers and from which it can emerge concurrently. The representation of a different way of experiencing in each case will show, then, that one particular way of experiencing cannot by itself be taken as paradigmatic for the perception of a present. Therefore, presenting internal perspectives of experiencing in literature has, where it succeeds, nothing to do with the voyeuristic interest in showing something private. Instead, it can be interpreted as a critique of the tendency to universalize certain perspectives of experiencing, without this critique having to go back to the generality of a theory.¹⁰ When this critique succeeds, it arouses the idea that things ought to be different, that people should change the way they live together. The depiction of sorrow-laden internal perspectives, then, combines criticism with a utopian impulse.

But philosophy has not always granted literature the reflexive competence that we have accorded it with reference to the works of J. M. Coetzee (and one could extend this qualification to vast areas of any art form). To be sure, the idea that art is the organon of philosophy is an old topos of philosophical thought. It can be found as early as in Schelling.¹¹ It is only rarely, however, that the artistic imagination has been credited with the ability to sensitize people for the life experiences of others through an *éducation sentimentale*, or even with its capacity for constructing constellations in which completely different mutual experiences would be possible than those that actually took place.

Negation and Reason

Theodor W. Adorno, for example, has throughout his life claimed art for philosophy. He did so as a critic of conceptual abstraction and of system

philosophy after Kierkegaard. In 1957, Adorno granted an aptitude for social criticism even to the poem. At that time, he wrote for a radio lecture: "The work's distance from mere existence becomes the measure of what is false and bad in the latter. In its protest the poem expresses the dream of a world in which things would be better."¹² At that time, Adorno still distinguished between "great works of art" that can turn against ideology, and the products of the culture industry.¹³ But in his posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno seems no longer to be quite confident in this ability because he states there that even the utopian aspect of art remains subservient to what is already in power: "Art is no more able than theory to concretize utopia, not even negatively. A cryptogram of the new is the image of collapse; only by virtue of the absolute negativity of collapse does art enunciate the unspeakable: utopia."¹⁴ The *shock* triggered by the image of collapse seems to be the only thing for Adorno that is left to art as it challenges established life and the paradigms of thought and action that it values. Art is no longer able to provide new and different paradigms. The utopias that arise even from what for Adorno would then be nothing but circumstances *to be negated* are part of these circumstances and make them appear as ultimately correctable after all rather than as situations necessarily to be terminated. It seems to this perspective that any reaction to the world that constitutes one's own background could not really be counted as criticism because this critique originated and emerged from the same world. No reaction can be considered the beginning of the destruction of the world from which it arises. Instead, each reaction seems compelled to perpetuate its "world." No lotus can grow from a swamp. For Adorno in his last years, creativity beyond negation clearly no longer exists, or it exists deeply veiled. Even the artistic imagination remains largely dominated by the prevailing circumstances. For this reason, it can, in our language, react to the world in no other way than in patterns of reaction that are permitted in this world and have been preshaped by it. The only appropriate form of reaction left to the artist's creativity, putatively, is complete refusal—is radical negation.

From Adorno's perspective, even Dewey's pedagogical ideal of "the great community" is to be rejected as a utopian concept that not coincidentally evokes religious conceptions of paradise. Dewey may believe that he can cultivate the ability of individuals to react through the use of certain forms of independent learning and recognition. But he does not explain how a kind of creativity is possible that makes a different life possible than the one from which this very creativity itself has emerged. And in this book, even I had to be amazed at the creation of fictions that

become paradigmatic as if they were a miracle and I had been unable to explain them.¹⁵ More recent theories of creativity, regrettably, cannot be of help at this juncture.¹⁶ For, in the final analysis, what is involved here are situations that are difficult to distinguish theoretically: those of *continuity* and *discontinuity*. The more precisely one knows the originating circumstances of something, the more improbable it is that something gives the impression of being absolutely new. This is also true of human circumstances of life and their drift. Adorno's pure negativity, respectively his inability to see criticism and real utopias coupled with each other, are likewise based on the strict differentiation between a continuous and a discontinuous development. But this differentiation is untenable.¹⁷

Which reaction to a system of dominance or education is one that *continues* circumstances, and which is one that *terminates* them? Most of the time, the death of individuals is considered a safe criterion of discontinuity. In this case, the guillotine beneath which the reigning aristocracy met their end at the time of the French Revolution would be the indication of the true break with the past. The negation of individual lives, however, is clearly no criterion of the actual termination of certain social circumstances. Executions of this kind are in fact more likely a symptom of an uncertainty about how to do away with the old wretched state of affairs. For it is a truism that through negative violence, all too often only the despots were exchanged (nobles by members of the bourgeoisie, these by party functionaries, military men by priests, etc.), while the fact that a group of people dictates to others how to live, speak, and to experience stays the same. Neither art nor violence can guarantee that reactions to the world do actually lead to something that is perceived as a fundamental transformation of this world. Basically, Adorno no longer knows new beginnings in human history, a fact that becomes apparent also from his and Horkheimer's choice, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, of Odysseus. For them, it is Odysseus, tied to the mast and listening to the sirens' song, who, as the first bourgeois, initiates the fatal development in the domination over self and nature.¹⁸ Already, the first European epic is a sign of the wrong life.¹⁹

Perhaps the uncertainty, and with Adorno the resignation, about how helpful art can actually be to attempts at ending situations of dominance is one reason that art no longer plays a role in the more recent critical theory of Jürgen Habermas. In contrast to Adorno, it is Habermas's belief that critical theory can be developed altogether by way of the *theory of rationality and communication*. He looks at art as an intellectual project that in the final analysis cannot do justice to the standards of rational-

ity. His reason for focusing on the theory of reason and for the marginalizing of art as a reflective and critical agency is that the degradation of a certain concept of reason in the philosophy before and during National Socialism (in axiology and in the philosophy of life) encouraged the irrationalism of Nazi ideology.²⁰ No one will want to deny that propaganda art played a fatal role during the Third Reich. This need not mean, however, that art as an unreasonable project in contrast to rational science is not capable of cognition. After all, physics and biology also allowed themselves to be seduced into creating a “German physics” and a dubious racial anthropology.²¹ For this reason, I consider it shortsighted in general to attribute only to communicative and especially to scientific reason—after the irrationalities of fascism—a function of improving the social circumstances (in the direction of a form of communication that is less restrained by control). Art is not merely a manifestation of contingent subjectivity. When it succeeds, it does not remain noncommittal, but as we have seen, it frequently opens a view into the world. It fulfills this function in multiple ways. For example, in the exactness of a description or in unveiling widespread self-delusions. Perhaps art is not capable of helping to free communicative actions from claims to power and to turn them into rational colloquy in such a way that it implicates their inherent “conditions for processes of consensus formation” so that these are no longer outmaneuvered by power interests.²² But *which* reason other than that of the theory of communicative action is capable of this? This question alone must strike a Kantian like Habermas as odd. For, there cannot exist several “reasons.” The unity and uniqueness of a philosophically administered reason, however, arises only where one abstracts from the multiplicity of human forms of reflection and strategies of cognition. When this kind of diversity is scrutinized, as in a differentiated investigation of the various scientific procedures of cognition, then also the distinction between rational science and nonrational art becomes implausible. Clearly, the delimitations between science and pseudoscience are hard to draw and almost impossible to achieve with the normative theories of reason available to philosophy, if one considers, for example, the history of alchemy and chemistry or that of genetics and race doctrines. And Popper’s falsifiability criterion, no doubt, would fail hopelessly in view of the multiplicity of mathematical theories that for many empirical sciences provide paradigms of rational thinking.²³ A sharp contrast between rational science and nonrational art is only plausible if one flatly denies the status of a rational strategy of cognition to everything that does not correspond to certain philosophical criteria of reason and even puts aside the cognitional efforts of art as irrational

because not explicated methodically. It seems obvious to me that art is also concerned with the knowledge of reality and that it changes its procedures in the interest of better achieving this goal.²⁴ The respective strategies that the arts as well as the sciences employ in their search for knowledge depend on historically evolved, contingent paradigms. The arts, however, at the same time strive in their works (not in methodological treatises) for a critical reflection of these paradigms.

Despite its proximity to what Husserl and Schütz have called *Lebenswelt*, the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas appears to orient its attempt to make human circumstances more rational entirely by the purely *theoretical-academic* cognitive concepts of philosophy. An adjustment to the multiplicity of the actual scientific and artistic forms of knowledge does not take place. This is why Habermas's theory of communicative action as well as Brandom's theory of the deontic game can claim to be a theory of rational reflection in the first place. From the time that Kant questioned the ability of chemistry, biology, and psychology to ever become sciences,²⁵ it has perhaps been a characteristic of *normative* theories of reason in philosophy that they are themselves concerned with what de facto is pursued and accepted as a rational strategy of cognition only as an object that elicits an *evaluation*. It is barely accepted in this tradition of theory that in mathematics, physics, biology, and history but also in the art of the novel and the theater *paradigms* for acquiring knowledge of the world are being developed more or less explicitly. But it seems to me that an answer to the question which strategy of cognition and action might be best suited for unveiling undesirable power relationships and perhaps even for doing away with them, would most of all necessitate studying the multiplicity of the forms of cognition. Might it not be especially the tendencies favoring unification in the cognitive strategies that make the task of criticism so difficult? Was there not a time when even the project of experimental empiricism was a subversive extra-academic science that had to struggle for years before the rationality of its cognitive procedures were accepted and in this process developed a considerable critical potential, even in facing mechanisms of social control?²⁶

A precise inquiry into the cognitive procedures of different sciences and of their history will show, I believe, that theory and narrative, scientific and aesthetic reflection can be delimited from one another only with difficulty. I consider it naïve to be convinced that from the draftsman's geometric proof through algebraic deduction and the experiment in physics all the way to biological reasoning of the kind that Charles Darwin, for example, practices in *On the Origin of Species*, or to the dialectic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, there exists a *common* and *uni-*

form way of gaining knowledge and convictions in the form of the rational argument *as such*.²⁷ Statements about “scientific reason” most of the time are merely a symptom of an absence of information about the history of science. As long as theories of rationality abstract from the concrete cognitive strategies and deductive practices used within and outside of the sciences, they are not dealing with anything real in the human world but are belaboring a philosophical construct to whose invocation one has become used to, to be sure, ever since Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but that on account of its abstractness cannot unfold much critical potential in facing the problems of the scientific world.²⁸ This general concept has the advantage, however, of making the utopia of the noncompulsive compulsion of reason possible. Clearly, this philosophical reason requires no historically established paradigms. If one is being educated to live with reason *as such*, one does not need to be trained toward a paradigm.

Furthermore, even works of art can, in a controlled (though not methodologically explicit) manner, strive for the translation of actual experiences, which is to say that they function like a scientific empirical report that is beholden “to reason.” In most philosophical theories, the life experiences of individuals that are formed through their reactions to the world and whose potentially paradigmatic character is made visible in art plays no role. The explanation for this is that most philosophical conceptions suggest that it is unnecessary to investigate concrete cognitive strategies of people in order to understand what is (reasonable and) rational. Instead, these strategies should be supervised normatively because “philosophy” (and that will inevitably be a *particular one*) does know a priori what is rational. But perhaps in the factual business of science there do exist projects whose cognitive strategies can be reconstructed and continued in the lifeworld as well as those where this is not the case and all of whom have nothing to do with certain philosophical conceptions of reason equally. Is this not exactly what happened when Newton pursued both his mathematical theory of gravitation and his alchemy? Neither the actual self-descriptions of academic and nonacademic cognitive projects nor the philosophical norms of reason are, in my opinion, suitable for discovering what is a rational project from which a critical potential can be gained, and what is ideology with an academic or artistic veneer. It is possible to discover even outside the empirical laboratories of the universities, that is, in the scriptoria of the poets and the studios of the artists, procedures for learning about reality that are carefully thought out and anchored in life. The multitude of projects that describe themselves as “scientific” and “rational” has become enormous

when the standard of Kant's university, for example, is applied. Is the discipline of "Banking and Finance," because it has been added to the university curriculum, a rational science that serves the critical knowledge of the world, whereas the essayistic technique that Robert Musil practices in *The Man without Qualities* is merely a means of creating an entertaining artefact that has nothing to do with rational insight into the world? Could one not also see it precisely the other way around, that is, that "Banking and Finance" is the doctrine of an economic technique with the help of mathematics whose rational basis, however, remains unclear, while Musil chose his fictional procedure as a means with which to attain better insights into complex psychological, social, and political connections?

Experts in Criticism

The alliance of philosophy with an abstract understanding of rationality contains the danger of trying to establish *experts in criticism*: academically established advocates for the norms of reason. Of course, they would not be Platonic philosopher-kings, who define the evaluations in a society. But persons even so, who, independent of certain cognitive procedures in the sciences or art, know truthfully what is rational. Even Marx and Engels, the diagnosticians of social irrationality and "false consciousness," who think about the reasons that those who live in circumstances that are unjust and that make them unfree and unhappy do not overthrow them, are still subject to this kind of cognitive perspective: they claim for themselves a perspective that is committed to the reason of economic realities, an outside perspective on the lives of people, from which they can observe society objectively, while those who have been condemned to acting within society cannot really come to understand how they live but remain bound up in an ideology.²⁹ Even here, art does not appear as a cultural phenomenon capable of cognition.

The pragmatic turn in the critical theory of society does indeed grant to those who act an autonomous ability for reflection and distancing, which makes them independent of the experts in criticism, respectively makes them critics in their own right.³⁰ But the pure immanentism of the "great community" à la Dewey who no longer recognizes *any experts at all* for the lives of individuals or their societies, for most critical social scientists is probably not a concrete alternative to a social science that works with nothing but statistics and simulations. This science has abandoned any claim to critical intents but merely seeks to optimize the

abilities for governing in the established societies through a better survey and administration of data but no longer tries to *react* to them critically. From a perspective that follows Dewey, however, it is specifically the particular cognitive procedures as developed by individual artists without necessarily having to turn them into academic schools (even though, of course, here also exist widespread styles and schools in artistic work) that represent an opportunity for reacting to the world independent of experts. Whether the correlative reaction will then be considered an insight of general relevance depends on whether it can gain paradigmatic status.³¹

The difficulty one encounters at this juncture consists in the question how the claims to objectivity vis-à-vis processes of life can be evaluated. Based on his knowledge of many physical and psychological processes of life, a physician claims that he can objectively evaluate my personal ailments. He knows the paradigms of the illness. The social scientist who has collected much data concerning recent and past societies claims that she can be an objective judge of social circumstances in which my personal life takes place. The more I am dissatisfied with the state of my health, the more I feel myself to be ill, the more urgently I will call for a physician to tell me what my true situation is. And “The more disaffected the status quo [of a society] is with itself, the greater the demand for research in the social sciences, and the more one relies on the validity of their results.”³² The physician and the social scientist then apply *universal concepts* to my life, concepts that in the case of modern scientific medicine are also derived from theories, so that I can describe myself as a diabetic and inhabitant of a social point of heightened attention and behave according to this description by, for instance, changing my nutrition and moving to a different neighborhood.

As Ian Hacking has emphasized, all general descriptions of what is human are combined more or less explicitly with evaluations like “physiologically normal,” “ill,” “incurably ill,” “privileged,” “socially endangered,” “without a chance,” and so forth. Even the implicit valuations of general descriptions result in *intentions* because every human who is described in this or that way can *react* to these descriptions in the same way as to anything else in the world. The descriptions change the persons described as soon as the people described get to know the descriptions. If the physician says that I merely have warts and am not a potential skin cancer patient, I will react with relief and not undergo an operation. If, due to my age, gender, and educational background, I am classified as without a chance on the job market, I will perhaps try to improve my skills and so on. Nonhuman objects, on the other hand, do not react to

the general descriptions that refer to them, whereas humans can even reject them. Homosexuals reject being described as “perverse,” persons in a persistently sad mood may reject the diagnosis of “depressive.” An expert who with good reasons states that this mushroom is poisonous insists on a different claim to objectivity than the family doctor who tells me that I am a depressive. For, the identification of the poisonous mushroom comes with the prognosis: anyone who eats it will die. But just as the classical concept of objectivity is lost in quantum mechanics where the measurement of the location or impulse of a subatomic particle changes the particle’s location and impulse in a manner beyond “recalculation,” so the description of humans changes their “household of intentions” in a manner beyond revision. This means that there can be objective experts of criticism concerning human life only as long as those who lead the examined life know nothing of the general concepts that are being used in criticism.³³ But what would be the relevance of this kind of criticism?

When Adorno says that the “appraising knowledge of people” in “personnel policy” tends “toward fascism,” he sees the application of general concepts to individuals solely under the aspect of *selection*, against which those who have been selected can no longer defend themselves.³⁴ But to see humans *not* as individuals, even including oneself, is a part of most strategies of distancing that no individual and no community, according to Hacking, can completely dispense with.³⁵ People who are capable of reactions will take the expertise of physicians, social scientists, and other specialists in the human sciences at least as a form of stimulation for their thinking and will ask themselves to what extent they can, with the help of the experts’ terminologies, reflect better about themselves and their own situation than without them. They will not simply perceive them as a *factual report* about themselves because they know that they themselves are not merely facts but *persons capable of reaction*. It may be that the majority of people does not possess an ability to speak for themselves in this way because it is not clear enough that every human being can theoretically react to any general description that is given to him or her.

It is perhaps no longer anchored in our awareness that humans, when they speak about other humans, always already speak *with* humans, who can reject the way that people speak about them. Those who work in the human sciences try more and more to garnish their cognitive projects with the same claims to objectivity as solid-state physicists or marine biologists do theirs. De facto, however, objective expertise about individuals or human communities can exist only where this knowledge circulates

only in the circles of the experts. But then, this objectivity would hardly be able to unfold a critical potential. For this reason, there also cannot exist a critical philosophy that rests on *doctrines of the human* or on *general reason*, taken either from current thought or from the tradition of philosophy and defined as objective. Critical philosophy, in the way it talks about man and reason, must be antidoctrinal as long as it is concerned with freedom—understood as the human capacity for reacting. One cannot describe humans with the same objectifying approach one applies to facts and then expect that they increase their capacity for reacting to the world in which they live.

Against the background of our hypothetical and minimalist view of the world as one made up of individual beings who enter and depart life, even the *experiencing* individuals in a trivial way are beings who enter and depart life. They can reject, at least theoretically, all characterizations that go beyond that, except that they were born and will die. Between birth and death, they search for happy experiences and a successful life. They can do this only when they can evaluate their own lives and can shape the stream of their experiences that defines their lives to their own design. For this, they must be able to react to the world. Just as there can be no objective doctrines about humankind or reason that increase their ability to react, so there cannot exist doctrines about happy ways of experiencing and about the successful life. To say that a satisfying partnership and professional activity can lead to a happy life is pointless because this does not tell the individual with which person and which activity he or she should best spend his or her life. This is something that only each individual can find out in his or her own way of reacting to his or her experiences with activities and other people. Therefore, no doctrines can be written about the successful and failing life as concretely experienced connections of occurrences. The only way to come to terms with this is through stories—by representing the internal perspectives of experiencing individuals.³⁶ These stories will be of general interest insofar as they are exemplary. They provide insights into human life that one may also call “rational,” if one so desires.

Refraining from the use of concepts like “reason as such” or “science” does not mean abandoning the distinction between rational and irrational or between science and pseudoscience. These differentiations cannot be determined, however, without reference to the paradigms of human cognitive strategies, whether they are of a scientific, artistic, or practical kind. But they are meaningful as long as they remain connected to concrete paradigms of forms of speaking, deducing, and acting that are rule bound and that therefor can be continued. Judged by the standards of early

twentieth-century medicine and psychology, Wilhelm Reich's doctrine of orgonomics, for example, was pseudoscientific because it used the unambiguous concept of "energy" too loosely and did not stay within the semantic rules established for it without promoting new ones. What Reich attempted instead was to construct on this (relative to his time) vague concept a therapy that for this reason lacked a solid foundation in science. The universal magnetism of Kepler's cosmology, by contrast, at his time was scientific because there existed virtually no knowledge about the principles of the magnetic forces and because "magnetism" was a relatively unspecific concept. Today, after the development of electromagnetism in physics, Kepler's doctrine about the attraction of the planets by the sun and among one another appears like an "esoteric" and pseudoscientific anticipation of Newton's concept of gravitation. Contrary to what sometimes was conjectured in the nineteenth century, Georg Cantor's set theory and the hyperbolic (differential) geometry of Beltrami and Klein were not "at variance with reason," even though the use of the concept of infinity entailed several dangers of contradiction, and the axiom of parallels makes sense intuitively. But these mathematical theories have provoked research programs and helped to create new paradigms of formal thinking that one nowadays considers to be fundamental to modern mathematics, as for example the consequences of Cantor for Hilbert and Gödel and Whitehead's endeavors in the interest of a more generalized mereological geometry.

If our considerations in chapter 3 have been correct, then there is training [Wittgenstein's *Abrihtung*, M.W.] at the basis of all obedience to rules. The trainer must to a certain degree dominate the trainee. Every discourse, every rational system is directed by rules. At the "bottom" of every system of this kind one will find, however, the domination of those older and stronger over those younger and weaker. The discourse completely free of domination, the compulsion of reason that is *altogether* free of pressure, the *continual* "decolonization of pedagogy"³⁷—they are all illusions, if it is correct that reason as such, independent of concrete human cognitive procedures at a specific historical phase remains a construct and new paradigms of obeying rules cannot be introduced argumentatively. What must be done instead is to promote them and then to enforce them vigorously through education.

Even in practical affairs it is true: the communality that humans need in order to gather together so as to keep their fear of death under control is not only the general truth of a shared deductive system and of rational rules of practical reason. Rather, they must also increase their individual *power* in the creation of a community and, according to principles they

share, *create* a monopoly of violence that serves the interests of survival of its individual members. Humans depend on this power of the community if they want to escape what Hobbes has called a lonely, short, and brutish life.³⁸ Once the community has been formed, it must also be preserved. An unresolvable tension will continue to exist between the actualization of the individual's potential and the community's preservation, which, for example, Sigmund Freud described in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.³⁹ The training ground for the creation of generalities remains present in every community. If one means by the peaceable mutual acceptance of individuals the absence of power structures, then this absence cannot be total and be realized in all phases of a human life. Human life cannot begin rationally, and it also does not seem to be able to end rationally. At its beginning is the systematic study and exercise of the paradigms relevant to a way of life. At its end is the destruction of the possibilities of reacting to the world. What is imaginable are merely more or less autonomous communities in the sense that more or fewer individuals, ideally all of them together, bring about a reaction to the world in which no one lays down—in the name of God, humanity, or a suprahistorical universal reason—for the others how to react.

But anyone who wants to distance himself or herself even from the circumstances (that always include processes of training) at the beginning of any life must aim for a utopia other than Dewey's: that of the community of those who are *hesitant in their judgments, shy away from assertions, and are inclined to keep silent*.

Arriving at the End of Asserting

It is not immediately obvious that where asserting ends, silence could arise not only as a threat but emerge as philosophy's "highest promise."¹ Most of the time, silence is above all understood as the symptom of a *resignation* that hardly anyone will consider a promise of philosophical development. It is worthwhile at this juncture to take up again the metaphor of language as a toolbox that Wittgenstein made prominent.² Whoever has the use of a toolbox and tries to extract a dowel from a concrete wall, first with a screwdriver, then with a pair of pliers, and finally with a hammer and chisel, but without success, may despair of his toolbox and kick it (or the concrete wall). Likewise, someone who tries to express the particular in language may despair of his attempts and at last fall silent. But it is also possible for someone to stop doing any manual work because he no longer considers it necessary and, for this reason, has no further need of his toolbox and gives it away. Can any person stop wanting to know the particular, no longer consider it necessary to express it, and for this reason fall silent? And what would then become of that person's subjectivity? It had been subjectivity, after all, that we defined as the ability to use signs in order to establish connections among people.³

Speechlessness and Forms of Silence

Most people probably see no difference between *silence* as the *unwillingness* to say something and *speechlessness* as the *inability* to react verbally to a certain matter of fact. But it is important for us to pay attention to this distinction. The fact, for example, that ideals of justice are known while one must experience that “most people probably do not really want to be influenced by these principles,” provoked Ralph Waldo Emerson’s perception “that most men [are] living in ‘secret melancholy,’” which “Thoreau a few years later transcribes as ‘the mass of men liv[ing] lives of quiet desperation.’”⁴ A kind of speechlessness is described here that arises out of desperation over the fact that a gap cannot be closed between the validity of certain ideals of justice and unjust reality. It is the quiet desperation over the unwillingness of one’s fellowmen to actually apply their own ideals.

But silence can also be a *radical* form of criticism: by quietly turning away, one shows that one no longer wants to have anything to do with something or someone, is no longer a part of it. The silence of Jesus during his trial can hardly be interpreted as desperation or resignation in the face of the chances conjoint with speaking in his situation but more likely as radical criticism: “But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him: ‘Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?’ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.”⁵ As soon as Jesus had accepted his mission as a sacrificial victim, a speech of justification became senseless. It could have expressed only that he disagrees with what must happen with him. But in fact he *turned away* from the contexts of indictment and justification. He understands himself as a necessary sacrifice that is offered also *on behalf of* his accusers but not as a participant in this trial organized by humans. He has no intention at all of “winning” this trial (in the sense of an acquittal), and even if he were to give “the right answers,” he could not do this. It is the game of crime and punishment, right and retribution that his sacrificial act is meant to criticize and interrupt and that the humans who follow him will finally *abandon*. His “kingdom is not from here,”⁶ he said during his trial according to John. It is not the kingdom of injustice and vengeance for injustice, of breaking the rules and paying compensation afterward. From this perspective, his silence on this occasion can be seen as the radical criticism of the games of justice that humankind plays.

In view of considering the world as a world of individuals, both speechless desperation is imaginable and the insight that even as an individual, one does not really *have to* give linguistic expression to this world. Abandoning language would then manifest a radical criticism of the artificial generalities of the sign system. These universals express neither the world's particularities nor one's own specific character. But in order to be capable of this critique, one must recognize oneself as an individual. This recognition may arise from the very desperation about the inability of language to express the world's particularities.

Repetition

Aristotle had already seen a connection between thinking and remembering. Someone who thinks need not perceive that about which he reflects. But his thinking requires an object toward which it is directed. Because the objects of thinking cannot be created *ex nihilo*, only beings who remember perceptions or preceding thoughts can also think.⁷ At first sight, remembering seems to be a *repetition* of perception. But genuine repetitions are not impossible in the real world. This is a topic taken up as early as in Hume's famous doctrine of the impressions and ideas.⁸ Once a particular moment of perception is over, it cannot recur in exactly the way it had happened. Swimming in water is simply quite different the first time than the second time because now the memory of the swim is present. And remembering the first swim is not the repetition of the experience because its recollection can also take place on dry land. The momentary happiness and the sadness setting in with the awareness of its unrepeatability often have something to do with the realization that as a child, one experiences something for the first time but cannot experience it again the same way.⁹ Remembering may be the *attempt* to repeat something, but in view of the world's particularities, it turns out to be a failed attempt. Memory need not be linguistic; it can also assume pictorial, tactile, olfactory, or emotional forms: a view appears to emerge once more, a haptic impression, an aroma, or a mood. The most familiar manner of remembering, however, is tied to the linguistic manner of narrating.

"Narrating," writes Alexander Honold in his discussion of Benjamin, "means taking hold again of something vanished, a situation, a beloved person from the past, calling them up a second or repeated time and visualizing them."¹⁰ But the same thing is true of narrating as of every remembrance. It does not have the power of making events, or situations,

or persons come back to life. It creates a peculiar realm of shades (which, of course, offers its own possibilities for happiness).

It is mostly the happy and the terrible experiences that frequently provide the occasion for the stories of memory. Quite frequently, even the *involuntary* occasion: again and again one must remember the beautiful (or the terrible) thing that is in the past now, and tell about it.¹¹ But the factual return of the happy or terrible moment ends in failure. The specific happiness cannot be experienced a second time, and one cannot live through the terrible experience a second time with the intent of thereby “overcoming” it. They are both a thing of the past. The *compulsion* or the desire to remember and to tell about it, the expectation that memory and storytelling will bring about a repetition but having to accept that this repetition is not possible, produces contradictory situations. Those, in turn, become topics of stories.¹²

The fact that someone does not tell a story about herself but uses her own experiences in order to tell about another person, a fictional character, is a constellation in which the contradiction of storytelling—to repeat but being unable to repeat after all—becomes especially obvious. I, the narrator, had an experience of happiness or misery that I want to tell about. But as soon as I try, it becomes clear to me that it did not happen this way. This is why I tell about the happiness or misery of another, fictional person whose bliss or misery could have been like the one narrated. In this way, fictionalization proves both the narrative and also the assertive unrepeatability of the particulars. One tells of what can be remembered with the awareness that memory does not correspond to the facts. Because the assertion or the story that things were this or that way fails to capture what had happened, memory is being included in the fictional description. The problem of wanting to remember and tell about it, while being unable to put this remembering and telling on the foundation of an assertion, is an issue that I would like to investigate more precisely. A return to analyzing the novel *Elizabeth Costello* by Coetzee will benefit this purpose.

Narrating without Asserting

At the end of the book, Coetzee takes his heroine into the beyond (or into a kind of intermediate state between an existence in this world and the other). Before her transition into light, she stands in front of a Kafkaesque gate. A guard demands that she write down what she is convinced of, what she believes (not what she believes *in*). He says that only

after she has made such a statement could she pass through. And Elizabeth Costello has great difficulties in satisfying this demand.

It is due, Costello thinks at first, to her profession of being a writer that she has no real convictions. She sees herself at first as merely mimicking in Plato's and Aristotle's sense, as a receptive, imitating artist who has to be open to everything. Having "fixed beliefs would stand in [her] way." And "It is not my profession to believe, just to write. . . . I do imitations, as Aristotle would have said. . . . I can do an imitation of belief, if you like. Will that be enough for your purposes?"¹³ As a writer, she writes in her (frequently revised) statement, she is "a secretary of the invisible." She writes down voices she hears. In this role, she is in a position to judge if the voices that are given to her and that she writes down are sound; even as someone without convictions she does not exist beyond truth. She is not cynical, but in her books, she is exploring the complexities of human actions.

But the panel of judges that she faces after the guard had simply dropped her application to the floor when she asked to be let through without stating beliefs are of the opinion that it is part of being human to believe, to be convinced of something. In response, Elizabeth Costello states that she is convinced of all kinds of everyday things, of the river at the little town of her childhood that sometimes dried out and sometimes carried water, in whose muddy bottom during the dry season frogs would remain burrowed in a deathlike rigidity in order to come back to life, croaking during the rainy season. Of all this she is truly convinced.

But then, the court confronts her with her first statement—that for professional reasons she may not make any convictions her own but rather have to remain open to all beliefs in order to record them. What now is the truth, they ask—that she has no convictions or that she has any number of them? That is when Costello capitulates. At times, she is convinced of something and then not, or she is both convinced of something and then again, not. As a person, she says, she is a *river* of permanently passing convictions and nonconvictions. If she is truly asked to write down what she firmly believes, then the court stenographer would have to listen to an autobiography. He would then probably be washed away by a stream of free associations.

The autobiographical element can be used, as we have seen above, to fictionalize another voice. The frogs in the river of whose existence Costello is truly convinced can, for the tribunal, become a metaphor of the universal up and down of life. Whether the representation of this metaphor will be successful depends on whether she transports the experience she herself once had with the frogs in the river as authentically as

possible in the text that does not directly deal with this experience at all. Does her own experience cease in this process of transference to belong to her? Does her belief that at this or that time she heard the frogs cease to be her *own* belief as soon as, with the help of universal concepts, it is put into the mouth of a fictional person? Does her belief perhaps cease altogether to be a conviction because fictional characters cannot really have convictions? After all, no one can put questions to these invented people (aside from the author who can do this in her fiction).

To the concluding question, she asks of the guard whether he has met others who have the same problems as she with their own beliefs before death; he answers, "We see people like you all the time."¹⁴ This seems to indicate that even in this situation, Elizabeth Costello again is not speaking for herself. Rather, she seems to be active as a writer, this time as a secretary of "humanity." Her cognitive openness is nothing specific at all but can be found in many people, if the guard is not mistaken.

Here again, Coetzee takes us into a confusing hall of mirrors: the fictional figure of the writer Elizabeth Costello translates experiences of the actual writer J. M. Coetzee. But these experiences of an absence of beliefs are, as it turns out in the course of the fiction's development, not really specific to writers, neither to Costello nor to Coetzee. As a result of the fictional writer's self-reflexive activity, experiences come into the open that turn out to be anything but specific to a writer's existence. Instead, the experience of a lack of convictions is rather widespread. Exactly this, of course, is what makes this self-reflection interesting. But how is this making a record of the experiences of nonexistent convictions truly of interest when it is so widespread? Could it then not also be banal? This refers to the purpose of being a writer, of capturing arbitrary beliefs in a narrative fiction. Specifically, someone who is able to give an authentic voice to his own experience in a story can thereby express something general. One's own voice need not single out *deviating* experiences for attention. It is not the originality of an experience but the authenticity of the voice that holds the possibility for a story to be generally relevant.

Before I delve further into this perhaps seemingly paradox relationship of one's own voice and the general relevance of a story, the following question calls for an answer: What light does Elizabeth Costello's confession that she is only an imitator of convictions throw on her speeches about animal ethics?¹⁵ Do they now prove to be the attempt to be something other than a writer, to have beliefs after all? Costello is no postmodern ironist or cynic who believes that she participates in the progressive movement that has dismissed the subject. For if she were that, she would hardly say before the tribunal, "[B]eliefs are not the only ethical supports

we have. We can rely on our hearts as well."¹⁶ And it may be this heart that prompts Elizabeth Costello not to search primarily in her head but to strive in her activity as a writer for written evidence of the voices of others. She wants not only to be honest toward herself but lend her ability to be honest, her "heart," to others so that they also receive an authentic voice. "I am an other," she shouts in another's voice. And to the question, whether she is speaking for herself, she responds, "Yes. No, emphatically no. Yes, and no. Both."¹⁷ This contradiction dissolves as soon as one has understood that Elizabeth Costello *cannot really separate* herself from the others and from the world at large when she is writing. For even when she writes down the experiences of others, she does have to give them a voice with her own heart. She hears voices in the sense that as an individual, she is very concretely connected with other individuals in the world. It is this feeling of connectedness that, on the one hand, she interprets as a narrative commission but that, on the other, can lead to so concrete an event in the world that telling of it becomes more and more difficult. Anyone who lends his heart to others, so as to enable them to express themselves honestly, may tumble into a confusion in which he can no longer quite distinguish himself from the others. Now at the latest, nobody will be surprised that Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Chandos Letter" of 1902, which speaks about states of ecstasy that lead into muteness, plays an important role for Coetzee.

Ecstasies and Language Running Dry

The postscript in *Elizabeth Costello* is a letter in which a Lady Chandos writes to Francis Bacon. It is the only section in the book preceded by a motto. It is taken from a fictional letter of the sixteenth century, written by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in which a young writer named Lord Chandos tries to justify his falling silent to an old patron, Lord Bacon. The motto begins: "At such moments even a negligible creature, a dog, a rat, a beetle, a stunted apple tree, a cart track winding over a hill, a mossy stone, counts more for me than a night of bliss with the most beautiful, most devoted mistress."¹⁸ After the passage that Coetzee quotes, Hofmannsthal's text continues as follows:

These mute and, on occasion, inanimate creatures rise towards me with such an abundance, such a presence of love, that my enchanted eye can find nothing in sight void of life. Everything that exists, everything I can remember, everything touched upon by my confused thoughts, has a meaning. Even my own heaviness, the general torpor of

my brain, seems to acquire a meaning; I experience in and around me a blissful, never-ending interplay, and among the objects playing against one another there is not one into which I cannot flow.¹⁹

This is the depiction of ecstatic moments in which the particularities in the world and the particularities of himself suddenly appear to be accessible in their full concreteness and merge into each other. Perceiving this concreteness yields the experience of how connected and interdependent the individual beings are. The boundaries between a representing interior world and a represented external world vanish. A continuity of perception arises in which the stream of experience and the development of reality appear to be identical. It is barely possible any longer to form judgments. Because the stream of experience and that of reality have formed a *unity*, such states often are called mystical. Corresponding depictions can be found in Ernst Mach and, taking his cues from him, in Robert Musil.²⁰

The ability of stories to translate such ecstatic experiences is very limited. What is needed to accomplish this are certain points of contact in the reader, male or female. Someone who never had own experiences with violence or erotic attraction would hardly get much from a novel about war or a marriage. This is the reason that not every story can be a formative success for readers at any age. Reports about the states of ecstasy that are depicted in the “Lord Chandos Letter” may go back to antiquity. Even so, they always seem to *refer to* only a very small segment of humanity—and for most people, such states are nothing but “enthusiastic lunacy.” For narrative reflections about subjectivity, however, they are of great significance.

The subject’s activity of establishing connections, during which the subject can also refer to its own past, in these ecstatic states brings about a kind of *self-dissolution*. The subject that in these ecstatic states conjoins with other beings and with its own past states in the act of concretion, reflects itself, and in this process distances itself from its own, former observational standpoint by appearing to transition completely into the standpoint of another being. In this oscillation, it disappears as a definable something like the blades of a propeller which, when it turns fast enough, disappear from the way we see them. A certain standpoint turns into a vacant field in which only the activity of connecting takes place. If we were to hold a pointing or judging finger into the area in which, invisible to us, the rotor turns, we would very painfully feel firm individuals again: the separate rotor blades. At this place, the image does not agree with the circumstances that we have in mind in the case of subjectivity.

The particular rotor blades only *apparently* disappear in a gray field during the fast motion. But in reality, as the finger test shows, they are still there. Subjectivity, by contrast, seems to be a substantial something only when we perceive it as an activity that always becomes effective from a *definite* standpoint. But when we see this activity in a rapid *change* of standpoint, such as is possible in ecstatic states, then its substantial character *factually* vanishes. The flying change of standpoints, of the kind that is possible to poetically inspired perception, can submerge itself into everything, can combine itself with everything, takes its fixedness from subjectivity. Its formerly "own" standpoint apparently becomes visible from the outside, from that "locale" with which it has formed a connection. The difference between "own" and "other" or "inside" and "outside" disappears.

This state of ecstasy is not one of love in the proper sense, neither of erotic nor of divine or sympathetic love ("It was far more and far less than pity," Hofmannsthal writes).²¹ To be sure, the capacity for sympathy or pity manifests itself also in erotic and agapic love. But the concrete awareness of oneself as having the ability to connect is something other than sympathy or love. What is involved is more a change in the focus of attention, a new figure-background relationship in how the perception of self and of world are connected. A jumper can concentrate either on the obstacle that he clears, or, as he is jumping, perceive his ability to jump. When the subject becomes aware of itself as of the ability to connect and to react, such a change of focus takes place. In states of sympathy and love the focus is on that with which the respective subjectivity makes a connection. In the ecstatic self-dissolution, by contrast, the activity of connecting itself becomes the center of attention. The standpoints, angles, and assertions that "one" clings to, with which "one" identifies, then appear to be an illusion. As soon as one comprehends oneself as an activity that is not a something, yet can combine itself with everything that even just apparently is a something of such and another kind of constitution, but that can also react to it by establishing a distance from it, then the "reality" of one's own substantiality becomes relative. In the final analysis, though, it is senseless to distinguish here between appearance and reality. That is why the example of the rotating or motionless propeller remains misleading. More appropriate would be a comparison with the aggregate states of water. Ice, water, and steam do not relate to each other like appearance and reality. When ice melts, it does not turn out that "in reality" ice is liquid. And when water goes up in steam, it does not become obvious that its liquidity was only apparently so and that in reality we are dealing here with a gas. De-

pending on its temperature, water simply does in fact occur in one or the other aggregate state. It is the same with subjectivity. In the state of making an assertion from a standpoint long maintained, subjectivity is there as “a fixed something.” In the ecstatic state of inspiration in which it quickly unites with this or that particular thing and, in the process, looks back on one’s own standpoint in the past, it becomes fluid. The connection that is established here in perception and thought with the capacity for creating connections, has the consequence that certain perceptions and thoughts no longer appear as necessarily *mine*. One can identify them as a special awareness: “Consciousness shows us thinking as thinking. Hence, at every moment it liberates the one who thinks of every specific thought.”²²

This ability to relate oneself to oneself has again and again been considered a foundational problem in philosophy. The history of the theories of self-consciousness is, like any other history of a theory, a history of more or less plausible assertions. But with respect to theories of self-consciousness, these assertions are concerned with an area that cannot even be appropriately characterized as an “area of expertise.” Again and again, reference is made in these theories to a so-called absolute in order to explain what reflexivity does.²³ Something like Fichte’s absolute *Ich* should then be the “basis” for people’s ability to reflect as well as to make reference to objects (“*Nicht-Iche*”). The idea has even been considered in this history of a theory whether the ability to be self-referential represents the “foundation” for the ability of referring to some different objectiveness, that reflexivity, in other words, is to be considered as the foundation of intentionality.²⁴

In my view, this leaves it unclear, however, what the status of these “procedures for laying a foundation” really is. It was not their purpose, after all, to provide, in the manner of a natural science (that is, through the assumption of a law or through an evolutionary theory), an *explanation* of reflexivity analogous to how one can explain the ability to swim or to fly.²⁵ The reason for this is that reflexivity is not an empirically accessible fact in the same way that lightning or an avalanche is. Trying to explain the occurrence of natural events like these is a duplicable scientific project. By contrast, trying to explain reflexivity as something especially astonishing is appropriate only when it appears against the background of a scientific or materialistic ideology as something that should not “really” exist. When the material objects of physics or chemistry are taken in such an ideology (that physicists and chemists may not actually represent) for what provides the *standard of reality*, then there is “really” nothing that can refer to its own past. Human subjectivity turns

into a miracle. But why should one accept this standard, this ideology? For outside of it, the experience of reflexivity is something that humans most readily take for granted. Every morning we wake up and *remember* what our name is, which activity we are pursuing, what we have planned to do. From a certain age, we can recognize ourselves in our mirror image and use the terms *I*, *here*, and *now* correctly. If one morning we were to wake up and could no longer remember any of this, or no longer recognize ourselves in a mirror, or no longer understand what *I*, *here*, and *now* means, there would be reason for serious concern and the need for an explanation. We would consult a neurologist. The constellations in which consciousness and reflexivity become astonishing and require an explanation are as a rule of the kind that have postponed or put off what stands to reason in the regular world of everyday life. They are circumstances in which either the way that objects are understood in certain experimental natural sciences are being universalized, or a person has in a pathological state become a strange and disturbing object to himself.

Even though in the natural sciences that investigate nonreflexive objects, reflexivity must also be presumed—how could there be a science without conscious and reflexive subjects?—the investigating scientists are not normally part of the object area of their investigations. The question of what it would mean to introduce the investigators in disciplines of the natural sciences into the object area that they are investigating would then create a major enigma, which will not, however, be solved by a leap into the absolute or an absolute *Ich*. Postulates of this kind simply are not provided for in the problem-solving procedures of the natural sciences. Their explanations must either be given nomologically or historically. For this reason, I consider it more plausible either simply to state like Spinoza that humans are reflexive, without further explanation,²⁶ or to recognize reflexivity as a complex problem that begins with the recognition of one's own body parts and extends through the recognition of one's own voice and mirror image all the way to the competence of using indexical sign instruments. These competencies normally develop through the complex social life of people in the course of their life's history. If people were not confronted with games and with learning languages that provide indexical terms, this reflexivity presumably could not come about in this form. Philosophically, one can consider it, therefore, as a matter of fact in everyday life or hand its investigation over to the empirical sciences such as primate research or developmental and social psychology. A special philosophical project to investigate reflexivity as a theory of the absolute is not necessary here. The ability

of individuals to make reference to themselves and to other individuals as reflexive subjects does not, in my opinion, point to the absolute. It more likely indicates a continuing bonding (*religio*) with the community of sign users that put one in front of the mirror and taught one to say "I." Perhaps one may also assume in Dewey's sense that talk about the absolute are old ciphers for a reference of this kind to the community.

Using signs like "I" can be philosophically misleading, however. If one considers this particle to be a name that refers to an individual object, then there would have to exist an "I." G. E. M. Anscombe, following Wittgenstein, has shown that the assumption, the sentence "I think" is a reference, on the one hand, to thinking, and, on the other, to an I, is as implausible as surmising that the sentence "It rains" refers both to a weather event and to an ominous It.²⁷ Anyone who can utter "Yesterday, I was at the ETH Zurich" must no doubt possess competencies. They are different from those of a child named Peter who does not yet say, "I am hungry," but still says, "Peter is hungry." But at the moment in which sentences with "I" are formed, no "certainty" is being actualized that is "unfailing, instantaneous . . . , above any doubt."²⁸ I can be mistaken about my claim that yesterday I was at the ETH Zurich. I may even, in the event of a severe memory loss, be mistaken that I am Michael Hampe. Someone may suffer from amnesia after waking up from unconsciousness following a serious accident and say, "I do not know who I am." This sentence would make sense under these circumstances because the person does not then know what her name and her life's history are. Perhaps even her own mirror image astounds. "I do not know who I am" becomes an impossible sentence only when someone believes that a person saying "I" would by this mere fact identify an individual. But this is not the case.²⁹ "I" can also be understood as a demonstrative pronoun that sometimes "clicks into place" with a particular individual and sometimes does not, just as "this" sometimes refers to something specific and sometimes does not.³⁰ The person suffering from memory loss may stand in front of the mirror that she can continue using like the word *I* and, pointing at it, ask, "Who is this?" She knows at this moment that the image in the mirror shows her body, but she does not know what her name is. The sentence "I do not know who I am" expresses the same deficit: just as the person with memory lapse can still use the mirror, so can she use the reflexive demonstrative "I." But what makes her into a concrete person, the *history* of her perceptions, feelings, and actions, is no longer accessible to her. Believing that whenever "I" is used correctly, there is also something present to which reference is made as to

a concrete something, means allowing the subject-predicate structure of an I sentence to lead you down the ontological garden path and outfitting "I" as a name in analogy to other singular terms with a meaning.³¹

Leaving these problems out of consideration for a moment, something happens in ecstatic states during the rapid actualization of the reflexive ability to establish connections. One could call it the *doctrinal desubstantialization* of consciousness. Because using general concepts in what I say is always also an implicit assertion that certain repeatable general concepts are "appropriate" for certain unrepeatable particular things, becoming aware of this reflexivity may lead to the insight that "one" is not *necessarily* bound by certain concepts or a certain assertion as the starting point of *one's own* thinking (even if one may not have access to all possible connections). For example, that it is never only A that one can depict from the direction of B but that one can also connect with B in order to depict A. The ability to connect appears as *empty* in this reflection. It seems no longer centered on a standpoint, meaning that the ability no longer proceeds compellingly from the history that I am. The fact that something appears to me as something comes about because I as a historically defined individual in a certain way establish a connection with another individual. In the ecstatic state, there is not more behind the appearance of something as something than this contingent history.

Experiencing one's own subjectivity, then, is experiencing a mere ability to establish connections with the help of signs. But these may also be connections between *other* individualities than those that have actually been established by the life's history. Independent of the concrete connections one has entered into, this subjectivity is "empty." Independent of the historical facts that a person has moved to Princeton and then to Cambridge, thereafter to Berlin and then to Bloomington, from there to Chicago and then to Zurich, the ability to change one's place of residence is nothing determined. It also is nothing that would have to be justified or guaranteed by something absolute. Insofar as I am something, I am the history of the concrete connections that I have entered into. But this history is contingent. It could also have been different. Then I would also be different, of course. In this respect, this history as told from my inner perspective—as that which I have contingently become—appears *necessary* for my particular facticity. Independent of my concrete history, the ability to connect with other individuals with the help of signs is undetermined. No concrete individual can be experienced, and nothing can be said about it in the form of a judgment, unless I connect with this individual in a certain way through signs. But I experience it in my own

self when I refer only to myself and disregard all connections with others that I am not something but empty, respectively “pure ability to connect.” When I look into myself in order to find myself, I do not discover anything other than the ability to connect. Against the background of this self-experience, apodictic judgments of other individuals, in which they appear as necessarily defined this and that way, seem to me at best relatively appropriate. They are, after all, something that comes about only through my connection with them. And this connection, in turn, takes place from a certain contingent standpoint at which I have just arrived in the “history of my connections.”

The ability to connect with other individuals by way of signs can be considered a minimalistic transcendental condition.³² In contrast to Kant’s transcendental subjectivity, in this conception all those conditions that are necessary for justifications—the game of give and take of reasons, and so forth—are hidden in the sign system. The subject is a living being that, like all others of its kind, has the ability to establish connections to other beings and develops in a community of sign users. The signs in this community are represented by a concrete example. I will intentionally leave it open how a community of sign users can come about. It is unnecessary to make a philosophical assertion in this regard. It is the task of cultural history or of evolutionary biology to engage in relevant investigations. This much may be said, however: to the extent that even nonhuman beings can in a community of sign users develop and learn to use signs as instruments for the purpose of forming connections with other beings, they likewise develop subjectivity.

The use of signs during the creation of connections with other beings is only one way of using a tool among many. Also in this situation, the tool has a role in determining how its use takes shape. In this case, the use of a tool has a retroactive effect on the one who uses the signs. People who regularly attack walls with a heavy hammer, connect with walls differently than those who use a small brush. They develop different habits and muscles, either those of a construction worker or a painter. Botanists and zoologists who refer to plants and animals in Latin and ancient Greek connect with the respective beings in a different sign system than those who do this in German or English. Self-experience of subjectivity takes place in applying signs to the sign-using individual. When the socially anchored sign system is applied to the individual sign user, the contingent history of the connection that he has undergone until now becomes apparent, as does his general ability to connect with other beings through signs. This self-reference is made possible by the indexical terms *I*, *me*, and *self* as specific sign tools.³³ Both the socially established sign system in

which a subject develops and its ability to connect with other individuals are nothing that is specific to this individual. Rather, these aspects are something that is true for many individuals, without, for this reason, being something abstract. Even a railroad network connects many train cars and many towns without thereby turning into something abstract. Only through the history of the connection with other individuals, which is also a history of the reactions to these individuals and the sign system in which it has developed, does a subjective individual grow up to be a particular being. The realization that the particularity of one's own subjectivity is biographically contingent leads at that very moment to an insight about the contingency of one's own judgments of other individuals as soon as I recognize my own contingency as paradigmatic for the existence of individuals in general.³⁴ If I had developed in a different sign system and had had a different history of connections, I would be an altogether different subject who would also judge altogether differently about the individuals with whom I happen to be connected. But I am nothing other than the history of my life or connections. Therefore, I cannot have, or be, another history *than this history*. The "I" becomes empty as soon as it is separated from my rememberable history.

This is exactly the sense in which Hofmannsthal wrote, "The abstract terms of which the tongue must avail itself as a matter of course in order to voice a judgment—these terms crumbled in my mouth like moldy fungi."³⁵ His fictional letter writer from the sixteenth century has at last "lost completely the ability to think or speak of anything coherently."³⁶ This lapse into muteness does not happen out of despair about the insufficiency of language. Contrary to many interpretations, the search in "The Letter of Lord Chandos" is neither for a more efficient, "better" language, nor does it express a *general critique of language*. Rather, the target of criticism is judgmental and assertive speaking as such: "I found it impossible to express an *opinion* on the affairs of Court, the events in Parliament, or whatever you wish."³⁷ Furthermore, "Even in familiar and humdrum conversation *all the opinions* which are generally expressed with ease and sleepwalking assurance became so doubtful that I had to cease altogether taking part in such talk. It filled me with an inexplicable anger, which I could conceal only with effort to hear such things. . . ."³⁸ It is the anger of a person who has experienced the infinite multiplicity and connectedness of individuals. For him, abstractly judging speech becomes an act of violence against the histories of individuals. The emptiness of his own self, his ability in the ecstatic state to connect with everything, arouses in him an immediate counterassertion to oppose any judgmental statement. Lord Chandos's silence is not an act of despair.

Rather, against the background of his ecstatic states, judgmental speaking has become senseless for him. His insight that he is not something defined *in general terms*, as well as the realization that the other individuals cannot be “exhausted” by the repeatable general concepts in the various forms of connectedness in which they factually exist—these insights lead to his falling silent.

Multiple Identities

Telling a story solely about oneself from one’s own standpoint may be considered, as has already been seen in the case of *Elizabeth Costello*, a *limitation* that excludes other starting points for experiencing the world. Overcoming such restrictions seems to have been the aim of the “mind games” played by Fernando Pessoa,³⁹ who has imagined different poets who, moreover, influence one another. These poets have different biographies, and different life experiences cause them to express themselves in different manners of speaking. The differences of how they speak, therefore, do not result from different axiomatic starting points in their way of presenting arguments. Instead, the differences in their experiences are reflected as different *tones of writing poetry*, of which Pessoa in turn assumes that they influence one another. The neo-pagan poet Alberto Caeiro influences Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and António Mora—all of them poetic voices that Pessoa invented. At first glance, Pessoa’s stance seems similar to Hofmannsthal’s:

But I, in whose soul
 All the forces of the universe are reflected,
 Within whose emotive and jolted reflections
 Minute after minute, emotion upon emotion,
 Contrary and absurd things follow each other—
 I, the useless focal point of all realities,
 I, the mirage born of all sentiments,
 I, the abstract, I, projected on the *écran*,
 I, the legitimate and sad wife of it all,
 I suffer being myself through all this like someone thirsting but not for water.⁴⁰

In this poem, Pessoa’s Álvaro de Campos calls the idea that we have a personality that differs from that of others “a theological fiction.”⁴¹ In the language that I have chosen, this may be reformulated as follows: insofar as I consider myself as nothing more than the ability to connect with

others and neglect to consider those connections that I actually entered into, I am not at all different from the abilities of other beings to establish connections. As a matter of fact, it remains basically unclear how one may speak of many abilities of this sort, if one disregards the respective histories in which this ability was actually accomplished among concrete individuals. Individual identity is the contingent history that has come about through the unspecific ability to form connections between specific individuals. For themselves, these individuals are specific beings only insofar as they with their history of connections can connect themselves reflexively, for example, in a commemorative story.⁴² A “general standpoint” does not exist in this perspective. Instead, a general standpoint would arise only where it would be possible to oscillate between many standpoints from which connections toward other individuals can be established. This would mean normalizing the ecstatic state. And exactly this seems to be what Pessoa envisions when he speaks of philosophy:

From now on the philosopher becomes the interpreter of *overlapping subjectivities*, and the greatest philosopher will be the one who is able to bundle the *largest* number of spontaneous philosophies that are unknown to him. . . . The greatest philosopher will be the artist of thought or better of “abstract art” (the future term for philosophy), who has better coordinated, unconnected theories about “existence.”⁴³

“Abstract” is to be understood here as in “abstract painting.” A style of painting that makes color and the line themselves the issue instead of using color and line to portray an apple or a table seems abstract because it is not concerned with concrete particulars. On the other hand, the concreteness of this apple consists precisely in *its* color and *its* shape so that the very thematic concern with color and line makes it possible to disregard the abstractness of the concept of apple. This abstractness always results in my willingness to completely disregard the *concrete colors and lines* because I do not see the apple as in this or that color and shape, but even in the painting I see it as *one* apple, as a specimen of a genus, as the realization of a schema. Likewise, in perceiving and thinking one can pay attention to the ability of *how* one connects with what one has perceived and thought so as to recognize that connecting is not determined solely by the general signs that one uses in this process but also through one’s own history of connecting and the histories of connecting with those individuals with whom one establishes connections.

Despite agonizing over the possibility of internal multiplicity, of the openness for everything—as expressed in Pessoa’s poem quoted above—

de Campos, following Nietzsche, “proclaims” “the superhuman” and writes, “Übermensch will not be the freest, but the most harmonious one!,” meaning the one who can “balance” his internal complexity, hence does not lose his mind *because of it*.⁴⁴ But Pessoa is not concerned solely with not going crazy in the face of ecstatic insights into how complex the particulars of one’s own experiences and of the external world are. Rather, he also associates a *promise of happiness* with being liberated from the necessity of having to assert something particular and only this single something. Once again, Pessoa in De Campos’s voice in a conversation with Caieiro:

Upon my happening to refer, once, to the direct concept of things, which characterises Caieiro’s sensibility, I quoted to him, with friendly perversity, Wordsworth’s designation of an insensitive man:

A primrose by the river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Which I translated (omitting the precise rendering of *primrose*, since I do not know the names of either flowers or plants): “Uma flor á margem do rio para ele era uma flor amarela, e não era mais nada.”

My master Caieiro laughed: “That simple man was right: a yellow flower is indeed nothing more than a yellow flower.”

But suddenly he became thoughtful.

“There is a difference,” he added. “It depends upon whether one considers a yellow flower as one of several yellow flowers, or as exclusively that yellow flower.”

And then he said: “What that English poet of yours means is that for this man that yellow flower was an ordinary experience, or something familiar. And that is not correct. We ought to see everything for the first time, because it is indeed the first time that we see it. And in that case each yellow flower is a new yellow flower, even if it is the same one to which we refer as the same as yesterday’s. We are not the same, nor is the flower the same. The yellow itself is not the same. It is a pity we have no eyes to know that, for then we should all be happy.”⁴⁵

The Utopia of the Orchestra of Souls

The reference to the kind of happiness that occurs to the person who sees things for the first time, who does not have to consider them as cases for the use of repeatable concepts, as examples of his judgments—this

reference makes it obvious, definitively, that falling silent even here has nothing to do with resignation, much less with despair. The happiness of occurring as a concrete individual (as this history of connections) in a world of concrete individuals, is the opposite of resignation and despair. This is also not about “being overwhelmed” by the things, or about their supposedly own language in Rilke’s sense⁴⁶ or the experience of immediate presence, as has recently been proclaimed again to be the task of literature.⁴⁷ Experiencing individuals as if for the first time does not mean experiencing them immediately. But the smooth performance of habits and above all of habitual judgments about things interposes itself in the noncstatic states of ordinary perception to obscure the concrete experience of a particular present. We had seen above⁴⁸ that human language must be interpreted as an intentionally employed mediator for absent things. Moving inside it means referring above all to things absent and training one’s attention in such a way that everything can be taken as a stand-in for something else. In this way, reference to what is actually there at this moment can get lost.

The first experience with a strawberry certainly is not immediate, and the second one is mediated. The event of my tongue encountering the strawberry that my mother put into my mouth when I was a child, commenting, “Eat. It tastes good!,” was just as mediated as eating strawberries again, this time with whipped cream, at the ball of May 17 in Cambridge at the age of fifty-two. But in the most recent case, the pieces of fruit became a sign of this particular celebration. My attention is barely turned on this one strawberry that I am eating at this particular part of the graduation ceremony. My attention is also not directed toward my connection with the strawberry, that is to say, on my perceptive behavior. Instead, I make conversation while I, as every year at this time, eat spoonfuls of strawberries with whipped cream, as one should. To be sure, I am connected with the strawberries as perceiver. But they are part of the conventional setting and not the focus of my attention. Neither is the first perception of a strawberry the original one, even though it is the first one for me. For, already my mother’s comment, “Eat. It tastes good!,” originates in a tradition of speaking and eating that at this moment is being passed on to me.⁴⁹

A poem about the strawberry could, without creating immediacy, dissolve conceptual judging about the red and sweet May ball fruit, like a kind of conceptolysis. Then the imprecision of conventional judgments that use certain concepts as unquestionably suitable to the things could be thematized in view of a specific strawberry—and thereby, as in most

good poems and stories, move both our conventional speaking and judging about things as well as the things themselves into the focus of our attention.⁵⁰ Then both the things and our speaking about them will be experienced in a concreteness that can create happiness. By contrast, neither we as individuals nor our concrete connections with the other individuals of the world occur in the abstractness of our conventional speaking. Something seems to push itself between us and the world.⁵¹

The utopia that is thematized through the understanding of happiness based on an experience of concrete individuals should also be applied to an experience of the community of individual people. A utopian community is imaginable in which humans relate to one another by learning from one another the concrete histories that they are. Because these histories cannot be captured in concepts and judgments, this community would be one of those who predominantly are silent, primarily are listening, who barely make judgments any longer, or one of those who tell stories without coming to an end. (The image of the storytelling analyst and the silent analyst comes to mind.) It would be a community of those who infinitely tell stories if an infinite story permits correcting the abstractness that is a consequence of using general concepts even in the most precise description, by means of refining the description that knows no end. As a matter of fact, stories cannot be infinite. They rely on the listeners' or readers' imagination to fill in what the stories do *not* say. The story may approach the concrete connections between individuals in the varying uses of general concepts only asymptotically. In order that a concrete experience comes about, the readers and listeners must make a leap in their imaginations in which they perhaps connect their personal memories with the imagination of what has been told.

The Socratic community was not one of humans who told the story of their lives to one another. But it was one of continuing conversations, of talk and rejoinder, of attempts at assertions and objections. It was not a community of shared convictions in the sense of a church or school. Socrates did not simply lecture to his pupils about the things one can and cannot assert concerning the world or the good life.⁵² Nor was it a community that served the purpose of survival or procreation. How, then, was Socrates connected with his partners in conversation?

Kebes in *Phaedo* is surprised that Socrates in prison put Aesop's fables into verse, even though he had never before composed poems.⁵³ Thereupon Socrates tells his friends of a recurrent dream in which he was being called to do something in honor of the Muses. He had assumed

until now that in this dream, he was being cheered on in the interest of philosophy which he was pursuing anyway, as runners are cheered on during a race.⁵⁴ But now he is no longer sure whether the gods were not calling for an engagement with poetry instead. Earlier, as his fetters were removed, Socrates had contemplated how the pleasant relates to the unpleasant, and what kind of a poetic fable he would have written about the topic of how beautiful it is when pain eases.⁵⁵

The joy at the removal of the fetters, the liberation, and the burden, the unpleasantness of being in shackles—all this intimates the central topics of *Phaedo*: death as the soul's liberation, physical existence as a burden for the one philosophizing. And it may be asked whether mention of something of the Muses and of Aesop's fables at this juncture does not also foreshadow what Socrates has to say about the soul's immortality—an anticipation of the myths that he tells in this conversation about the many caverns and the subterranean rivers. Without being contradicted, Simmias, approximately in the middle of the conversation, says that like Socrates, he believes that one can say nothing certain about death and immortality, respectively mortality in this life, but that one has to investigate it even so. Whenever Socrates presents an argument or an image for the soul's immortality, Simmias or Kebes express doubts, and Socrates joyfully takes this as an incentive for new speeches. What he says about the eternal forms precedes the speculations about what the subterranean fields are like. It is nearly impossible here to decide what is fable and what is argument.⁵⁶

Socrates's speeches are above all a reaction to his disciples' sorrow, the fear that befalls them in view of his impending death. For this reason, what he says seems in good part to be of an *edifying* and consoling character. His friends were never able, of course, to speak with him in jail as comprehensively as on his last day. That is why this conversation is also a kind of philosophical celebration of leave-taking. Did the poetic version of Aesop's fables occur to Socrates earlier in prison because there he could no longer make "philosophical music" with his friends except on this last day? And is the conversation, in which an element of doubt or a mood triggers a story and the course of a thought, something like making music together with words? If the Platonic dialogues are at heart artistic to begin with, then it is in *Phaedo* that Plato presents the philosophical activity quite concretely as one inspired by the Muses. Socrates speaks of the beautiful song of the swans that these birds intone as they are dying because they were joyfully looking forward to what comes after death. Seen in this light, the Socratic activity of the serene conver-

sation in the condemned man's cell appears as a beautiful communal farewell song.

It is Socrates's opinion that the activity of philosophizing is a free one, and the body and everything that is part of it impedes this free activity. One needs to eat and is attacked by desires, vices, and illnesses. When all this ceases in death, it is only a good thing—a liberation or release (*lysis*). Also, the impulse for making music together, if it is to succeed, does not come from bodily wants or desires. Can the Socratic community not be described as one of people who react freely to one another? Are its members not absolved of everyday compulsions and desires? Their establishing themes, their asserting, doubting, and disputing can be seen in analogy to the way instruments in a jazz band react to one another—even though a band of this kind and the corresponding polyphonic interaction of the instrumental voices did not yet exist in Plato's time.

Again and again, Socrates speaks of the soul's liberation, in philosophizing and in death, after which (so he hopes) there will again follow a community of free people. In this community, making assertions is merely a means for the purpose of the free communal activity. It is not sought as the *aim* of the activity, just as the orchestra does not search for the keynote or the jazz band tries to find the definitive rendition of a theme. The purpose of assertions in the Socratic circles is primarily to provoke doubt and refutation, and not to be established in school and disseminated across the world. Socrates intended and practiced semantic autonomy with his conversational partners. The meaning of the general concepts was no longer to be dependent on authorities, the troubles attendant on self-preservation, or coincidental inspirations, but on the ensemble play of the partners in a discussion. The objective of this Socratic pragmatism is not self-preservation or ease but to establish a new form of the good life.

Modern colloquial language denotes a pragmatic theory as a functioning instrument. Applying it means a better way of subjugating nature and increasing "our" chances of self-preservation. The assertions in the theory of carcinoma that lead to a technology for successful cancer treatment interest us more than Aesop's fables or the Platonic dialogues, at least no later than our own diagnosis of cancer. By contrast, Socrates and his friends imagine an existence in which one is no longer interested in these things. Even for them, theorizing—not the theory, which is only a transitory stage of theorizing—is an instrument, but only inasmuch as it directly leads to a good life. Whoever has lost his interest in self-preservation, in this way of thinking attains the highest form of

autonomy. Even the threat of death can no longer intimidate him and direct him in his reactions to the world. (In the eyes of some people, regrettably, he is very close to death by that time.) For this reason, the philosopher in *Phaedo* wishes to follow the dying man, insofar, at any rate, as he can hope that after death, he will still be able to react to the world and other beings. The philosophical community of those engaged in free exchanges is, so to speak, one of disembodied souls.⁵⁷

The Socratic Split

As in *Timaeus* about the world's creation, so also in *Phaedo* about the soul's destiny in death, Socrates can only tell probable stories. They have the pragmatic function of carrying one through life as a raft carries one to the other shore. But they do not amount to a fixed doctrine. The poetic aspect of the Platonic dialogues, the parabolic speeches of Socrates, his bow to Aesop—all this does not contradict the critique of Homer and the arts in *The Republic*.⁵⁸ Socrates and Plato are artists in their own right and do not in principle object to art. They merely believe that the Homeric epics are unsuitable as the main source of worldly wisdom, as if Homer could provide a solution for every problem in life, and one were saved the need for having one's own thoughts.⁵⁹ Plato's critique of art is a stricture against its doctrinal use.

Even though the Platonic dialogues are as unsuitable for deriving doctrines as are Homer's epics, this has happened all the same, of course. Especially the proofs of immortality in *Phaedo* have been interpreted in this way. It was insinuated that Socrates and Plato had expressed a *doctrine of two worlds*: there is one world of the eternal forms and norms in which the soul participates⁶⁰ and a material, transitory world to which the body also belongs. It is very questionable whether Socrates has ever advocated such an assertion independent of its function in the dialogic game, especially if one thinks of the Socratist Antisthenes who polemicized against the doctrine of the forms ("I do see humans but no humanity; horses, yes, but no horsity").⁶¹ But there is absolutely no doubt that the consequential split between contemplating freedom, the norms of the good, and the care for one's own life on the one hand and exploring facts of nature on the other has to be attributed to Socrates.⁶²

This effect has proved to be fatal. For, the reference to the possibility of semantic autonomy among human beings, to the orientation of life according to concepts of value instead of needs was not imagined as the *knowledge* of facts but as a pragmatic familiarity with ways of acting and

with the working of words—if it was meant as the manifestation of a knowledge in the first place.⁶³ The reference to an *eternal transcendence* of the forms and the soul would then be the *metaphorical* expression of the fact that it is not possible to grasp with the senses a rule justifying an infinite number of actions and judgments. Rules are forms for how to deal with the facts, but they themselves are not facts. This way of reading the Socratic-Platonic philosophy⁶⁴ with the eyes of Wittgenstein (or Ryle) has become possible rather late, that is to say, not before Wittgenstein (and Ryle). By that time, two thousand years of “objectifying interpretation” had happened.

We had seen earlier, in the discussion of the necessity for mathematics in connection with Wittgenstein, that dealing with rules as well as the idea about the normative force of practical paradigms comes very close to the postulate of transcendent patterns. The infinite applicability of one example makes it outright tempting to remove the example itself into a suprasensory, transcendent infinity.⁶⁵ Dewey’s idea that a transcendent Platonism would *weaken the commitment* to improving the practical circumstances in the immanent world because this world of the senses would then cease to be a matter of concern⁶⁶ is perfectly justified in view of the historical consequences of this Platonism. But one may well presume that Dewey’s idea fails to do justice to the pragmatic intentions of Socrates himself. Without the utopia of the Socratic community, the idea that the domain of reasons is quite different from that of nature would not have arisen. The splits of “modernity” that, if one follows Bruno Latour,⁶⁷ never actually were plausible, are rooted in Socrates, respectively in those considerations of the Platonic dialogues that misunderstood them as doctrines.⁶⁸ No doubt, the Platonic concept of *psyche* has been instrumental in developing a doctrine about transcendent units around it. This kind of doctrine about the transcendent soul in Plato would then rest on an interpretation that blots out any ironic and edifying intent in a doctrinal exegesis.

The soul is the authority that guides life. In the forms, the soul perceives the normative orientations and, in the ideal case, directs life according to them. This normative force, that the soul is capable—against the background of rememberable experiences of what has been done before and what, on the basis of the idea of the good, is to be done in the future—to make decisions about life, seemingly removes it from the natural world of facts. But when here we see only the activities of remembering and evaluating, the actual implementation of which is indefinite, then the necessity of postulating an immortal being disappears. The activities of connecting, evaluating, judging, and steering are as infinite as

the activities of seeing, calculating, cooking, or swimming. They can be actualized only under certain conditions. Among these conditions is a living body of a certain complexity. This body in turn is part of a person that in turn is being educated in a community that passes on certain norms. If the community and the body vanish, the activities are also no longer actualized. The fact that many bodies can actualize these activities at altogether different times does not mean, however, that there must exist an eternal “actor” of these activities. The soul’s immortality is a false conclusion from the fact that activities can be instantiated in multiple ways.

Rather than conceiving of the soul—the self, the ego—as that “in” which the perceptions, emotions, remembrances, thoughts, wishes, plans of a life “cohere,” or seeing it as the clandestine executor of all normative-judgmental activities, it seems more plausible, following Ernst Mach, to consider the soul as that which is the “practical” summation of these multiplicities, the way we can make the saucer and the cups practically one thing. The instruments for such summations are provided by the languages by providing terms like *ich, mich, selbst, I, me, self, ego, me, sua*, and so forth. Practical units are, even if they are produced and cannot be found without human help, something real, like cup and saucer. Sometimes they even are something important like the unit of door key and front-door lock. But it is obvious that practical units are nothing transcendent. The fact that they can be used in differing contexts and at different times should not lead to postulating an abstract object. I see only the saucer and the cup, the key and the lock. I never see their connection as a third something. When the set of dishes is on the table, and the key is turning in the lock, the two concrete objects are not joined by a third, abstract one. Nothing more has been actualized than the fact that in practical terms they belong together. I can wash cup and saucer independent of each other and unfortunately lose the key, without this fact affecting the lock. Their connection is not something I can clean or lose. The reason for this is not that this connection is something abstract or transcendent. These practical acts that bring my things together do not require the intelligible idea of unity of cup and saucer, of key and lock. All that is needed is the rule that places cups on saucers and put keys into locks.

Perceptions, emotions, and memories emerge and disappear again. The process of their emergence and disappearance is interrupted by sleep and abruptly terminated by death. Already in early childhood, we practically learn to order these circumstances through the use of indexical terms like the ones mentioned above and to point at them with the demonstrative “I”: “I have seen that . . .,” “I am furious,” “I remember you,” and so on.

Like the practice of riding a bicycle, we will soon be able to instinctively refer back to “us” as to a particular complex of perceptions, emotions, actions, and so forth. But this practical ability does not make it necessary to assume that there is a hidden someone pulling strings and to postulate the idea of this order dwelling in a transcendent soul.⁶⁹

The literary construction of a utopia, be it that of free souls or that of an ideal state, can, however, independent of the Socratic separation, be a poetic critique of factually existing unfree circumstances. Insofar as human life is one of bodily needs, it will always remain unfree, constrained by the pressures of self-preservation and the finite life span that make an *unending* tale, an *unending* conversation, a *never-ending* testing of meanings impossible. Perceiving the Platonic utopias as realistically intended plans for the future that refer to facts to be realized among immortal soul-substances could be a misunderstanding of the same kind as the belief that the Revelation to John is an especially long-term weather forecast.⁷⁰ Wittgenstein would call it a superstition rather than a religious attitude toward life to assume that the Revelation to John represents a long-term prognosis of facts.⁷¹ The Socratic and Platonic orientation of life according to ethical and political myths can be interpreted in analogy to this conception of the religious as an alternative to orienting one’s life by the knowledge of facts. Not an orientation of life by stories and utopias is irrational, but mistaking the use of narrative instruments of orientation for propositional and doctrinal claims to knowledge is. The knowledge of facts is always limited because merely needy and mortal humans have it at their disposal. However far humans may expand the quantity and precision of such knowledge, it does not after all give them a reliable perspective on how to deal with their needs and their mortality, on what they should do with their lives.⁷² It is a kind of superstition to believe any form of factual knowledge, any kind of doctrine could be helpful here.

Trying to spend life in such far-reaching semantic autonomy and with attention to as many details as is possible—this normative conception is not justified by any doctrine. The game with the concepts of idea and soul is an occurrence among many in a poet- or muse-inspired life like this one. A life of semantic autonomy, spent among friends who constantly consider new significations so as to see the world in a different light, is no doubt a form of luxury and cannot be engaged in among enemies or in times when people find themselves in circumstances of acute need and catastrophe. Such a life has to rely on the protection of the city, the culture, and a materially secured leisure. The freedom and the

happiness of an existence like this can come about only when physical life is no longer threatened. Perhaps this was what Socrates did not want to accept when he, together with his friends, in the face of death contemplated the meaning of the concepts of *Thanatos* and *Psyche*, and thereby tried to preserve his semantic autonomy in a situation in which the fear of death takes it (away) from others.

Whoever believes that the ideas examined in this Muse-inspired protective zone of the Socratic way of life is a doctrine makes the same mistake as those religious fundamentalists who read the Creation story or the myth of Noah's Ark as the report of *historical* facts, and then try to find out for themselves whether one can build a large wooden ship into which all species would fit.⁷³ These stories were part of a life that was guided by religion and not by scientific assertions. Making these tales compete with scientific assertions is the same as making a symphony orchestra play competitively against a rugby team—according to which rules? The philosophical life of the Socratic community is grounded neither on scientific assertions and explanations, nor is it sustained by religious stories. It is conceived as a never-ending dialogue, as the presentation of one paradigmatic story and its contrary paradigm after the other. Declaring that one of the stories told in this life form is a religion, for example, the myth of rebirth,⁷⁴ or elevating one of the speeches to the rank of an assertive theory, for example, the discourse on the forms, would already be the first step away from the Socratic utopia and into a life that is meant as quite different and that would correspond to our contemporary way of life. A large part of contemporary humankind has its lives organized in accordance with scientific doctrines and their technological and economic applications. Another part follows religious stories. To some extent, people from these forms of life wage war against one another. The adherents of a Socratic life, however, have largely died out.

The Socratic utopia is about a relationship to the world in which the constant adjustment and readjustment of the connection of one's own thoughts and perceptions with their objects has become a communal end in itself. We have seen that this utopia takes place in a community of speakers but that it is not practiced by adherents of presumably definitive assertions. Socrates and his friends in *Phaedo* do not arrive at a final theory of death and of the soul, but they spend the last hours of Socrates's life in accordance with the ideal of existence. It goes without saying, of course, that the situational denial of the central person's death and that considering the immortality of the agent who is contemplating, justifying, and trying out meanings, is the theme of this final

conversation and that the actual death will end it. For death challenges the ideal of this autonomy.

Recognition of Death

The ideas of a *humankind* and of a *universal intelligible reason* are the collective equivalent of the myths and utopias of individual immortality. But the collective of sign users may no more be an *intelligibulum* than the human person. Both the individual and the collective semiotic autonomy are delimited by the finiteness of the human body and the human species. It was some time ages and ages ago that the community of human sign users had its beginning, and sometime in the distant or even nearer future this community will arrive at its limit with the end of the species *Homo sapiens*. Even if the procreative community does not signify the same thing as the community of sign users, this latter community would not be any more separable from the first than would the individual person who follows certain norms be separable from his or her material body with heart, brain, and kidneys in which he or she comes into being. When someone's heart and brains fail, that person can also no longer react to the world with signs. When the transmission of genes snaps, the traditions of using signs also come to an end.

The counterimage to the Socratic split, and to a death that releases into freedom, is the image of souls or subjects who are not bounded by birth and death. We find them in the stories about the encounters of the young Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama. He first meets a bent-over old man, then an ill man, and finally a dead one.⁷⁵ As the legend has it, these experiences convince him with especially impressive force that life ends in old age, illness, and death (if it is not prematurely cut short in an accident or by violence). What these meetings make him see are obviously the most important pieces of evidence one can be given about human life. Life in this story is not something that refers to a domain of ideas or to the better future of our species. Of course, human life does not *only* consist of old age, illness, and death any more than it consists only of competition for resources. Before that, there is growth, youth, and pleasure. But how does the rest of life look to someone who sees what happens at the end, with complete clarity, and not only as a report about a distant possibility? It seems to require the difficult-to-emulate spiritual strength of a person referred to in the language of religion as "divinely inspired" to apprehend future certain possibilities with the same intensity as something real in the present.

The paradigmatic intent of the story about the holy man means to suggest that anyone who is aware of the end of life with absolute clarity will not be able to approve of what comes before because that precedent will inevitably lead to this end. Just as a person dying of lung cancer will perhaps no longer approve of his earlier smoking even though during that time of his life he may still have maintained that the pleasure of smoking is worth a death like this. Also, the legends of Buddhism give us great stories that turn a particular aspect of life (in this case, its final phases) into a paradigm for the contemplation of life as a whole.⁷⁶ This changed perspective on one's own life from its end, to the extent that this view might be realizable as a firm attitude,⁷⁷ has consequences for the search to find one's own voice—an issue I want to deal with now at the end of our critique of asserting.

All speculation about what may happen after illness, old age, and death changes nothing about the fact that people often suffer sorrowful deaths, which is a fact that is neither based on a theory of the natural sciences nor is culturally specific. It is simply a fact *before* all theory, one of the "lifeworld." All freedom, including all semiotic autonomy of the Socratic utopia, is *limited in space and time*, if one grants to the Buddhist story a paradigmatic character for the life in question. A freedom of this nature even receives its meaning through this temporal limit. For even in a finite time of life, it is better for those striving after autonomy to react freely to the world than having experts and priests patronize them or postponing the perception of freedom by reasoning that in an unending life, it could still be realized at some later time.

But even though Socratic freedom under the paradigm of the Buddhist story ends in death, the autonomy is not absolute. Death is an *unacceptable* exaction for any person who values being able to react to the world on his or her own. Among humans who consider themselves free in principle, this may lead to the inclination to classify death as not a part of life.⁷⁸ This is not the reaction of the Indian prince, however, to the estimation of the inevitability of old age, illness, and death as paradigmatic of all of life. He sees the corpse not as a tunic that the authentic free being that lives on has left behind. Rather, his reaction is *exiting from the assertive and calculating life*—silence that gives up even utopian-mythic speech. What is given a different interpretation here is freedom. In the life of this tradition, liberation means no longer having to react to the world that by necessity leads one's own existence into death.

If, in the reflection about one's own life, the perception of the boundaries set by birth and death, contingent as they are in their temporality, is taken as something that supposedly determines one's whole life, then

this will have consequences for how the *other* individuals are perceived: *their* individuality likewise appears as one that is transcendently unprotected. *Everything* individual can then be perceived as having come about and moving toward its demise, no matter whether it is a stone, a plant, an animal, a work of art, or another human being. No individual exists solely for me and my purposes. For it is obvious that the world has not been arranged “for me.” Rather, all particular beings have an individual history *independent* of my interests.⁷⁹ When one considers personalistic terminology and its use of the concept of soul as the expression of a relationship to the world in which individuals are recognized as existing for themselves, rather than being seen as a resource under definitive universal concepts and as being prepared for consumption,⁸⁰ then recognizing the unrepeatable stories of all individuals will lead to a *panpsychistic* or *panpersonalistic attitude*. “Everything has a living soul” would then mean, I live among individuals, all of whom have a history that is independent of my interests.

It would require a *radical cultural critique* to make this attitude acceptable for imitation in our regions. Arguments against the hypothesis of an indestructible soul substance or in favor of a panpsychism in the philosophy of mind are truly ineffective in this situation. Cultural constructs like “our” distinction between persons and things, subjects and resources that are the foundation of the most elementary education cannot be abolished “by a surprise attack” or with the help of a “knockdown” argument.⁸¹ Every panpsychistic way of life must for this reason be opposed in our culture with determined resistance because it undermines the privileged position of the human being, which European culture has spent millennia of work to bring about. In this work, the Socratic split played an important role.

Socrates's consideration that an immortal soul may exist had been interpreted as a manifestation of semantic autonomy: this is how one can *also* think of *psyche*. This consideration, as we had seen, turned into a doctrine in the history of Platonism. This fact can be explained easily by the edifying function of this view. Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Freud have shown in great detail how consoling or compensatory thoughts that people use to balance their own weaknesses imaginatively and wishful thinking can turn into assertions about a (transcendent) reality. Once one has formed the idea of a substantial soul that is not simply the stream of experience and memory as it contingently begins at birth (perhaps a little earlier) and ends in death but represents something separable from the body and is the foundation of these experiences and memories, then the possible end of such a soul can even appear as something

much more menacing than the mere running-dry of the stream of experiences.⁸² What if this soul substance, separable as it is from the body, is destructible after all? Cannot a second and much worse annihilation be imagined, which means the person's real end? Even after the doctrinal idea of an immaterial soul surviving bodily death had been formed, there still had to be proof of immortality. The destruction of the soul after death, then, still remained thinkable (Descartes is a case in point). The consoling thought that there exists something by far more fundamental than all that has to do with my mortal body can then turn into something menacing: will I after my bodily death perhaps be taken before a tribunal that can give the order for the destruction of my substance as a person?⁸³

As we have seen,⁸⁴ Nietzsche pursued similar thoughts in connection with his genealogy of nihilism. The consoling and sense-creating power of the concept of the beyond weakens the ability to give meaning to life out of life itself. Confidence in the impending divine creation of meaning relieves human beings of the task of themselves being active in the creation of meaning. But this relief leads to a long-term weakening of existential creativity. If now, due to the Christian ideal of truthfulness, the belief in the sense-creating beyond splinters off, humans, weakened in their creative power, are left in helplessness: the shaken faith in transcendence transmutes itself into nihilism.

It is similarly difficult to get along without the belief in immortality and the concept of the soul as substance. Once a human collective has over millennia become accustomed to this belief, it cannot simply give it up now. That life is nothing more than the process between birth and death will then appear as "not enough by far." It cannot possibly be that that death truly terminates my autonomy and my capacity for development. For this reason, even Kant needed the additional idea of immortality as a postulate of his practical philosophy. It must be possible to think the process of moral perfection as potentially able to be continued without end.⁸⁵ I may be able to realize that the thought that I could be destroyed as a substantive soul (*Seelensubstanz*) is much more menacing than the idea that my stream of experiences simply dries out. But I will find it very difficult to give up the assumption of a substantive soul as a thought that, taken by itself, is consoling and flattering to my desires for autonomy. Separating oneself from otherworldly attributions of meaning and from substantial self-conceptions is similar to a withdrawal from drugs: to a drug addict who needs the drug for creating intensive experiences, a life without it seems shallow and banal. Without the appropriate chemical assistance he cannot make his life worth living for its own sake.

He has delegated a competence to the drug and thereby lost it. If the drug is no longer available, he must reacquire the competence of having intensive experiences. Collectives who get involved with the drug in order to find meaning in the beyond and in the substantial self cannot consider the life between birth and death as one that they can, on their own strength, create as something meaningful and free. They delegate meaning and freedom to the transcendent authorities. If they lose their faith in them, they will also have to learn anew the competences of wresting a sense from the finite lives and of shaping the limited freedom that this finite life offers through its possibilities for reacting.⁸⁶

In the final analysis, resistance to these conceptions can be accomplished only when it proceeds from a very far-reaching form of cultural criticism. Even when people have no direct experience of a self or a substantial soul, the denial of this thought first of all robs them of too many advantages. Most of them have to do with the special position of humans that presumably entitled them to use the entire rest of the world as a resource. It may be that most people would respond today in whatever kind of interview that they do not believe that they have an incorporeal soul that does not change during their entire life. Perhaps most people in Europe and in the United States will say today that they consider themselves to be a brain. But it seems evident to me that the people who say this have anything but a clear conception of what such a response implies for their individual and collective life. The fact that the conception of people as finite processes between birth and death is the *simpler* one does not mean that it is the *more acceptable* one. In the course of Europe's cultural development, educational programs as well as moral and legal concepts have evolved within the framework of which the person is assumed to be something that, in the final analysis, transcends concrete experience. These concepts have not changed until now, even though perhaps the majority of people no longer uphold incorporeal conceptions of their own person.

But if a long cultural-critical process should succeed in abandoning the conception of the self as a substantial soul, the idea of personal individuality would also become relative. It would in turn become a contingent story that I just happen to have become but that could also not have happened. If I were in a position of truly recognizing the contingency of my own status as an individual, how important can the need still be for me to give expression to this arbitrariness? Is it then still of central importance for me to reveal in my own voice *who* I have become as a result of my reactions to the world? It is imaginable that along with the insight into the contingency of all individuals and the recognition

of the death-imposed limitations on the ability to react autonomously to the world, also the need for one's own voice appears at least weakened, and silence seems more and more appropriate. For, looking at the story of one's own life from the perspective of the life stories of others, while creating a distance from the internal necessity of one's own history,⁸⁷ does also make the stories of the other individuals as interesting to me as my own, to the extent that I succeed in looking at them without having to evaluate them according to my own interests.

Neither the ecstatic state in which I fall silent because I can no longer speak about other things in judgments nor the Socratic community of the unending conversation can represent practical goals for life. But they are valid as utopias that can instigate the critique of a way of life from which autonomy and contemplation have largely disappeared and that exhausts itself in fearful self-preservation with the help of the rapid consumption of everything and everybody.

Epilogue to the History of Philosophy

The footnotes to Plato that the history of philosophy has produced can, in my opinion, be interpreted predominantly as doctrinal misunderstandings of Socratism, which leaves the question unresolved whether it was not Plato who already doctrinally turned away from Socrates.¹ Socrates suffered a fate similar to the Old Testament stories or the Buddha's speeches and the parables of Jesus. Religious fundamentalism has transformed them also into systems of assertions that have to be protected. The forms of life in which they were told and retold for generations and which served as orientation have vanished. Plato seems to be right: once something spoken has been written down, it takes on a life of its own beyond the form of life in which it once had been uttered. The media in which humans can give one another signs can change their forms of life such that the function of the signs changes fundamentally. If the forms of life, in which they once played a particular role, have vanished, they can be assigned new roles in the context of other practices. In this way, philosophical utopias will eventually become religious dogmas or political designs, and myths and parables turn into systems of assertions. Neuroscientists can then quarrel with Platonists about whether the soul is separable from the body, or Christian fundamentalists can argue with Darwinists about the origin of living beings. These are strange constellations.

The demise or the transformation of ways of living in which certain manners of speaking arose and their evolution

into assertive theories or theological dogmas is neither an ascent into science nor an error or a symptom of faulty developments like the ontological obliviousness that presumably at some time fell upon the West. What takes place during these processes is similar to the evolution of living beings: the transformations of the air bladder into a lung, or jawbones into a hearing apparatus, or of toes into hooves are likewise no errors or symptoms of pathologies. It is the normal course of things that some things disappear and that what remains is transformed. But whoever is familiar with what has been transformed and has vanished can be attacked by the melancholy of loss. The sight of a mounted mammoth, giant sloth, or dodo bird in a museum of natural science can make one as sad as can the realization that there is no longer a place in the modern academy for the Socratic dialogues and Epicurean gardens—that philosophy has become something completely different, that it barely offers a venue for contemplating modern life but mostly provides programs for academic careers.

But the history of philosophy can, as does paleobiology, follow the lead of such transformational movements. A history of philosophy in this sense will not see itself as a kind of “sports coverage” that most of all pays attention to which arguments and doctrines will “win in the end.” At which end anyway? In which way of life and against which background of experience should *all* human experiences of whatever kind and all arguments and stories be given their definitive interpretation? How to prevent new experiences from not also creating new premises for new arguments and stories and from leading to a revisionary analysis of the old ideas? What could it mean that the history of doctrines and stories is coming to an end, and that this end is different from the one that will also be the end of humankind as a species?

“That something remains an episode, does not mean it is wrong”²—this maxim, addressing naïve beliefs in progress out of a curiosity steeped in the history of philosophy for vanished ways of living and thinking, can spur memory. The history of the assertions and life experiences that are behind these beliefs can no more be traced as a way to the truth than can the history from the tree squirrel to *Homo sapiens sapiens* be celebrated as a success story. (Many species would be better off without *Homo sapiens sapiens*.) But historiography can defend past philosophy against the arrogance of a contemporary thinking that claims to be the sole owner of the right way. The writing of history can do this by showing the past reasons for speaking differently and asserting other things or nothing at all. When the history of philosophy no longer under-

stands itself as the history of “good” and “bad” doctrines, not merely as the history of a long conflict about the correct system of assertions but also as the imaginative re-creation of the change of variants characterizing human experiences of life and fundamental assumptions, then it could become more interesting. Another reason is that philosophical history would thereby sensitize people to ways in which contemporary dissident speech may be relevant in the future. Of course, this kind of philosophical historiography would also be more complicated. It would have to include in its purview the economic circumstances, politics and literature, the sciences and technologies, religions and arts before it can understand why certain concepts were prevalent at a certain time and a certain story was paradigmatic, or why *this* system of assertions held a great fascination for many people, and *that one* did not. Socratic philosophizing took place in a way of life that was exposed to major political and religious upheavals in which old conventions had lost their relevance.³ It is the time when the city states lose their politically dominant role and are gradually replaced by territorial states. Religious cults and the normative ideas connected to them are being questioned. The general interest in literature and philosophy increases with a growing public of readers in Athens and other cities. Alternatives to the present life become imaginable for more and more people. It is a time of general insecurity and disintegration. In the figure of Socrates these processes are concentrated as in a burning glass. Without these upheavals, neither the origin of nor the fascination caused by his philosophizing can be fully appreciated. The post-Socratic schools of philosophy, in turn, can hardly be explained without attention being paid to the fact that they competed with the claims of orientation and the monastic rules for living advanced by Christianity.⁴ And the way philosophy is practiced today would remain rather vague without the study of what the assertive systems of the natural sciences and their technological applications means for human life. For present-day people, life has increasingly become a sequence of problem-solving processes. The best authorities in problem solving are science and technology. The absurd and the tragic have largely vanished as models for interpreting human existence. Camus and Beckett like Aeschylus and Sophocles are history.

But just as one can turn to contemporaries and silently listen to them in order to understand who they are, so there is also still the possibility of turning to those from the past in order to form an adequate image of who they were. A history of this kind, connecting philosophy with its congruent forms of life and their variants, would, like the history of those

forms that we know from fossils and the flora and fauna surrounding us, show us something—it would tell us that no figure that developed and sustained itself in this world for a while was without the “right to exist.” But it also shows that it cannot exist definitively but as all other figures must someday disappear.

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Notes

CHAPTER ONE

1. See line 333, “Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse . . . ,” in Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926, rev. 1942).
2. [M.H. refers to books by Wilhelm Windelband (1904) and Heinrich Rickert (1899) that have not been translated into English. —M.W.]; cf. also Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, trans. R. H. Mackerel and John Scanlon (1910; reprint Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971).
3. Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott (New York: Norton, 1985), 521c, p. 215; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; or, On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001); Søren Kierkegaard, “Becoming Subjective,” in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 107–58, and *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), xxxix (updated version 2002). See also Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004).
4. But sometimes it does, as for example in the previously mentioned Platonic dialogue *Theaetetus*, or by Hegel (1806) in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. Of course, implicitly and also explicitly,

- education and its theory, pedagogy, play a very significant role in authors like Rousseau, Kant, and Cavell when one thinks of books like *Emile*, Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and his treatise on pedagogy, or Cavell's *Cities of Words*.
5. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxvii.
 6. "Assuredly we desire to know that we do not know. If we can finally attain unto this [knowledge of our ignorance], we will attain unto learned ignorance. The more [a man] knows that he is unknowing, the more learned he will be." *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning, 1981), 50–51.
 7. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxix.
 8. See the novel by Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones [Bienveillantes]*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Harper, 2009). The book is told from the inside perspective of the SS officer Max Aue.
 9. See Derek Pereboom, "Kant on Justification in Transcendental Philosophy," *Synthese* 85 (1990): 25–54, and "Kant's Transcendental Arguments" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-transcendental>, revised December 11, 2013. Robert Stern, ed., *Transcendental Arguments* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999); Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments," *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 241–56.
 10. Max Born, *Natural Philosophy of Cause and Chance* (New York: Clarendon, 1949), 224–25. Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
 11. Peter Mittelstaedt, *Quantum Logic* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1978).
 12. Hegel's book of 1806 contains features of a formalized historical novel of education (bildungsroman) whose dialectic represents developmental stages of culture that already structure Hölderlin's (1797–99) epistolary novel *Hyperion, or the Hermit in Greece*. On the connection between these two works, see Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), chaps. 3.5 and 4.
 13. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), introduction, xiii.
 14. Much as the present investigations are indebted to Richard Rorty's thinking, above all to the emphasis he puts on the contingency of historical processes that lead to certain languages and models of subjectivity, there is a decisive difference in the significance I here attribute to the processes of education and to promoting one's ability to stay at a distance. There does not exist an a priori competence for self-creation. This is a myth particular to a subjectivity that is reflexive and a priori capable of self-distancing. Rorty has taken this myth over from authors like Fichte. On this, cf. Michael Hampe, "Die Vervollkommnung des Einzelnen [The Perfection of the Individual]. Richard Rorty's 'Metaphysikkritik und seine romantische Konzeption des Individuums,'" in his *Erkenntnis und Praxis. Zur Philosophie des Pragmatismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 155–81.

15. The first philosopher to recognize the constitutive function of language for the human mind was Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*. Philip Pettit has shown this impressively in his *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
16. Cf. below, pp. 181–82.
17. Representatives are, for example, Thomas Metzinger in Mainz and Albert Newen and Markus Werning in Bochum. See also Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols, *Experimental Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Florian Cova, Julien Dutant, Edouard Machery, Joshua Knobe, Shaun Nichols, and Eddie Nahmias, *La philosophie expérimentale* (Paris: Vulbert, 2012).
18. See Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (London: Routledge, 2012).
19. See below, pp. 134–39.
20. “And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place. . . . The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language. . . . A main source of our failure to understand is that we don’t have *an overview* of the use of our words.—Our grammar is deficient in surveyability.—A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in ‘serious connections.’ . . . The concept of surveyable representation is of fundamental significance for us.” Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen / Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 52, 54f. See also Krishna Jain, *Description in Philosophy: With a Particular Reference to Wittgenstein and Husserl* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1994).
21. “Performance and Passionate Utterance,” in his *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2005), 157.
22. *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Penguin Books, 2002). John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: Century, 1894).
23. See above all his novel *The Moviegoer* (New York: Knopf, 1961).
24. On the “congruence” of science and art, cf. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, “Relationship of Art to Science,” in *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 227ff. See also Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 60: “For in philosophy the way to science lies only through art. . . .”
25. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxv.
26. Cavell names these characteristics loc. cit.
27. See op. cit., xxxv–xxxvi.

28. Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959). Richard Rorty, "Heidegger wider die Pragmatisten" [Heidegger against the Pragmatists], in *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 23 (1984): 1–22.
29. In Hegel, however, the concreteness of particular sense-experience paradoxically dissolves into the universal: "every consciousness of itself cancels again, as soon as made, such a truth as e.g. the Here is a tree, or the Now is noon, and expresses the very opposite: the Here is *not* a tree but a house. And similarly it straightaway cancels again the assertion which here annuls the first, and which is also just such an assertion of a sensuous This. And in all sense-certainty what we find by experience is in truth merely, . . . that 'This' is a universal, the very opposite of what that assertion maintains to be universal experience." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 2nd ed., trans. James Black Baillie (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 58–59.
30. Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected ed. by David Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978 [1929]), 3: "everything of which we are conscious, as enjoyed, perceived, willed or thought, shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme. Thus the philosophical scheme should be . . . adequate." Speculation, then, is not merely an instrument of repulsion from the established manners of speaking in order to gain a critical distance from them.
31. Op. cit., preface.
32. Charles Sanders Peirce, "Pragmatism—the Logic of Abduction," in "Lectures on Pragmatism," *Collected Papers*, vol. 5, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1934), 121–27.
33. Alfred North Whitehead, "Science and Philosophy," in *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1967 [1933]), 144–46.
34. Ulrich Plenzdorf's novel of 1973: *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, English translation by Romy Fursland (London: Pushkin Press, 2015).
35. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
36. On Hobbes and game theory, see Robert Axelrod's by-now-classic study, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2006 [1984]). More recently, Daniel Eggers, "Hobbes and Game Theory Revisited: Zero-Sum Games in the State of Nature," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49 (2011): 193–236. Don Ross establishes a connection between Plato's dialogues *Laches* and *Phaedo* and game theory in "Game Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/game-theory>, revised May 5, 2013. Ariel Rubinstein writes [in German, M.W.]: "Game theory, as I see it, is an accumulation of fables and proverbs. The implementation of a model from game theory is as probable as the conversion of a fable. A good fable puts us into the position of observing a life situation from a different angle. . . . But it would be absurd to claim that *The*

- Emperor's New Clothes* predicted Berlusconi's behavior." See Ariel Rubinstein, "Can Game Theory Solve the Problems of the Eurozone and Stop the Iranian Nuclear Program?," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 27, 2013; also Ariel Rubinstein, *Economic Fables* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book, 2012).
37. The Introduction to Game Theory at Yale University can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM3rTU927io&index=1&list=PL6EF60E1027E1A10B>, published November 20, 2008.
 38. According to Rubinstein, "its formal character creates the illusion that the theory is scientific." See above, note 36.
 39. On this, see pp. 259–60.
 40. In his essay "Evolutionary Love," Peirce (1893) analyzed so-called greed philosophy with reference to a handbook of political economy in which "public spirit" is "rendered nugatory" for functioning ineffectively. He predicted "the economists" will be shaken "out of their complacency too late." When it becomes obvious that their analysis of human behavior was full of errors, social reality will already have developed according to their false picture. "The twentieth century, in its latter half, shall surely see the deluge-tempest burst upon the social order—to clear upon a world as deep in ruin as that greed-philosophy has long plunged it into guilt." In *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 6, *Scientific Metaphysics*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1934), 195. In his book *Von Neumann, Morgenstern and the Creation of Game Theory: From Chess to Social Science, 1900–1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), the economic historian Robert Leonard describes the history of game theory as a strategic theory of economic activities and their application in the Cold War in great detail. Frank Schirmacher, in his popular, though critical, nonfiction book, *Ego: The Game of Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015) has to good effect applied the thesis (though without referring to Hobbes or Peirce) that the social world develops precisely as is suggested by the dominant analytical patterns of human behavior in game theory. Consequently, we have now, due to the domination of these tales, arrived at a society of egotistical profit maximizers. See especially part 2.
 41. See Rubinstein, note 36 above.
 42. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, rev. ed., trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), book 2, 1.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Anaximander in *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, part 1, ed. and trans. Daniel W. Graham (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51.
2. Heraclitus, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, 155.
3. Jonathan Barnes, for example, writes, "My main thesis is that the Presocratics were the first masters of rational thought." *The Presocratic Philosophers*,

2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979; rev. ed. 1982), xi. Preceding Barnes in this estimation, Wilhelm Nestle had formulated an identical judgment as early as 1940, when he classified “Ionian philosophy until Heraclitus” as an *explanatory project*, writing: “For it is the characteristic feature of these thinkers that in their attempts to explain the world . . . they could completely dispense . . . with personal gods and were looking for absolutely nothing other than a natural connection of cause and effect.” See his *Vom Mythos zum Logos. Die Selbstentfaltung des griechischen Denkens* [From Myth to Logos: The Self-Unfolding of Greek Thought] (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1940), 81. Geoffrey Lloyd, seeing the dialectical relationship of the Presocratics to each other as a sign of their difference from mythic thinking, supports the generally prevailing view that Parmenides was the first thinker in the Greek context to produce a deductive argument. See his *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 69. According to Lloyd, the relationship of Zeno and Melissus to Parmenides produced something like a first rigorous continuity of argumentation. Wolfgang Schadewaldt presented a direct and indirect contradiction to these perspectives when he wrote “that this inquiring after principles and causes is retrospectively inserted into the earlier thinkers. There is no evidence . . . that Thales might have asked after principles and causes. Not even after matter. . . .” See his *Die Anfänge der Philosophie bei den Griechen. Die Vorsokratiker und ihre Voraussetzungen*, Tübinger Vorlesungen 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 19.

4. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. John McDowell (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 150cd, p. 15.
5. Loc. cit.
6. *Theaetetus*, 210ab.
7. In the sense of loc. cit., 150c.
8. So says Aristoxenus, according to the second part of *Aristoxeni Elementa Harmonica*, ed. Rosetta da Rios (Rome: Istituto Poliografico dello Stato, 1954), 39.
9. See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn” [1785], in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 173–251. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Crumbs*, in *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, trans. M. G. Piety (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 92–95 (“The Teacher”).
10. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Werke*, vol. 8 (Hannover, 1873. Reprint Hildesheim), 118. I thank Hans-Peter Schütt for this reference.
11. The most important dialogue in this context is Plato’s *Sophist*, an attempt to define the difference between the sophist and the philosopher. See *Plato’s Sophist*, trans. James Duerlinger (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). Rhetoric itself is the topic of Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1994]).

12. On this, see Lauren J. Apfel, *The Advent of Pluralism: Diversity and Conflict in the Age of Sophocles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
13. Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” [1938], in his *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57–85, 63, 73–75 (app. 2): “Specialization is not the consequence but rather the ground of the progress of all research. Research does not, through its methodology become dispersed into random investigations so as to lose itself in them. For the character of modern science is determined by a third fundamental occurrence: constant activity [*Betrieb*].”
14. The above-mentioned Aristoxenus laments that Plato in his lecture on the good did not, as Aristotle did in his lectures, review and comment on the thoughts of his predecessors before he developed his own position. Aristotle was perhaps the first lecturer who placed the “status of scholarship” or the “history” of previous thinking on a particular topic at the beginning of his own discourse.
15. On Wittgenstein and his relationship to psychological behaviorism, cf. C. Grant Luckhardt, “Wittgenstein and Behaviorism,” *Synthese* 56 (1983): 319–38. Without mentioning Wittgenstein by name, Wilfrid Sellars deals with the question whether learning languages means memorizing rules, and discusses many (nowadays so-called) “inferentialist” topics. See “Some Reflections on Language Games,” in his *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1963), 321–58. On Wittgenstein’s reception, cf. P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996), chaps. 6 and 7.
16. See his letter to Robert Hooke dated February 5, 1675. On the history and the problems attached to this apothegm, see Robert K. Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* (New York: Free Press, 1965).
17. Baruch de Spinoza, *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, trans. Abraham Wolf (London: A. and C. Black, 1910), chap. 25, “About the Devils.” Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
18. This issue is especially prominent in the modern era, but it has existed since antiquity, at the latest since Plato’s allegory of the cave. See his *Politeia* (*The Republic*), 514a–517a. Also, Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979). Donald Davidson, “Reality without Reference” [1977], in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* [1984], 2nd ed. (New York: Clarendon, 2001), 215–25.
19. On the Buddhist rules for how to live (for monks), see “*Samaññaphala Sutta*: The Fruits of the Contemplative Life,” trans. Thanissaro Bhikku (1997), <http://accessinsight.org./tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html>.
Besides the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), see the *regulae* for Christian monks, Carl Andresen, ed., *Frühes Mönchtum im Abendland*, vol. 1, *Lebensformen*, trans. Karl Suso Frank (Zurich: Artemis, 1975).

20. See note 13 above.
21. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
22. Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 188–243.
23. "The abolition of private ownership is indeed the most succinct and characteristic summary of the transformation of the entire social system necessarily following from the development of [large-scale] industry. . . ." Friedrich Engels, "Principles of Communism," in Karl Marx–Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 348.
24. The objection will be raised that Marx and Engels did not try to abolish private property through a change in our way of speaking but by means of a political revolution in which the owners of private property will be expropriated. One may ask oneself, however, what is a political revolution? It may cause the death of human beings. But perhaps people are killed in a revolution in order to implement a new way of speaking about the world and to bring about a corresponding way of living. At any rate, such upheavals are not simply about depriving rulers of their power and about the destruction or building of things.
25. See Ray Monk's brilliant analysis, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Cape, 1990), for a vivid impression of Wittgenstein's conservatism. Stanley Cavell disagrees with this estimation in his *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxix.
26. Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*, trans. Alex Skinner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), has shown this most recently with reference to human rights and personhood.
27. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 192, also 94.
28. "The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval to a modern one; rather, that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of modernity. . . . On the other hand, however, is the fact that the beingness of beings is defined, as Plato says, as *eidos* (appearance, view). This is the presupposition which . . . predestined the world's having to become picture (Appendix 8)," 68–69, 91. See note 13 above.
29. "That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress. In my liberal utopia, this replacement would receive a kind of recognition which it still lacks. That recognition would be part of a general turn against theory and toward narrative." Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xvi.
30. See Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 3–35, 19.

31. [Peter Kurzeck (1943–2013) is the author of radio plays and more than a dozen novels, notably the five-volume cycle *Das alte Jahrhundert* [The Old Century], 1997–2011. His books, like those of the Norwegian writer Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, chronicle his life in minute and intense detail. They have found a small group of devoted readers in Germany, but none of them has been translated into English. —M.W.]
32. Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 55.
33. See below, p. 178.
34. “Don’t look for the work—but for the powers behind it” (*Ne chercher pas l’oeuvre—mais les puissances*). Paul Valéry, *Cahiers/Notebooks*, vol. 1, trans. Paul Gifford, Siân Miles, Robert Pickering, and Brian Stimpson (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 266.
35. Again cf. Paul Valéry: “Do not look for ‘Truth’—but cultivate the powers and the modes of organization which serve to seek out or establish truth” (*Ne cherche pas la “vérité”—mais cultiver les forces et les organizations qui servent à chercher ou à faire la vérité*). Loc. cit.
36. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxv. The American philosopher Chauncey Wright (1830–75), who played an important role in the development of Pragmatism, espoused no philosophy and did not write a book but had a strong influence on everyone who encountered him in a conversation. He is described as the American Socrates. See Edward H. Madden, *Chauncey Wright* (New York: Washington Square Press/Twayne, 1964), chap. 1, “Socrates of Bow Street.”
37. See Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York: Viking, 1987).
38. See below, pp. 167–72.
39. On the concept of “semiotic autonomy,” cf. Michael Hampe, “Historische Einheit und semantische Autonomie. Anthropologische Implikationen der Metaphysik von Peirce,” in *Erkenntnis und Praxis. zur Philosophie des Pragmatismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006), 53–75.
40. On the significance of freedom for the emergence of ancient Greek philosophy, cf. also Christian Meier, *A Culture of Freedom: Ancient Greece and the Origins of Europe*, trans. Jefferson Chase (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9–15.
41. Helmut Kuhn, *Sokrates. Versuch über den Ursprung der Metaphysik* [Essay on the Origin of Metaphysics] (Munich: Kösel, 1959), 179–86.
42. See Peter Strawson, *Individuals*, chap. 4. Something similar could be said about Strawson’s relationship to Kant about whom he has written a commentary that, to be sure, is also “correct”; see his *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason”* (London: Methuen, 1966). Leibniz’s and Kant’s relationship to Strawson is more “easily surveyed” than that of Socrates to the considerations here undertaken because Leibniz and Kant wrote books, whereas Socrates did not. The main source for what is called “Socrates” here are, as anywhere else, the Platonic dialogues. Gregory

- Vlastos, in his book *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), thinks (see his chap. 2, “Socrates contra Socrates in Plato,” 45–80) that only Plato’s early dialogues *Ion*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Euthyphro* portray the historical Socrates.
43. Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, trans. Christopher Rowe (London: Penguin, 2010). *Apology* 30e speaks of “*myopos*” (spur); *Meno* 80a mentions “*plateia narke te thalattia*” (ray, as a saltwater fish).
 44. Plato, *Apology*, 23a.
 45. Kuhn, *Sokrates*, 170.
 46. Plato, *Apology*, 29d–e.
 47. *Ibid.*, 29a.
 48. *Ibid.*, 29a.
 49. Plato, *Phaedo*, 98c.
 50. Plato, *Apology*, 29a–b.
 51. *Ibid.*, 19d–e.
 52. *Op. cit.*, 22d.
 53. Kuhn, *Sokrates*, 169.
 54. Plato, *Apology*, 40a.
 55. Kuhn, *Sokrates*, 200.
 56. The danger of dependency on a theoretical system as guidance for one’s life is the central topic of my book *Das vollkommene Leben. Vier Meditationen über das Glück* (Munich: Hanser, 2009); translated by Jamie Bulloch as *Four Meditations on Happiness* (London: Atlantic Press, 2014).
 57. This aspect is central to Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Socrates. See his *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
 58. Translated from Ralf Konersmann’s editorial in the issue of *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie* (2012/1) dedicated to Paul Valéry, 5.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Not all the authors mentioned speak explicitly about subjectivity (only Russell does), but employ various terms that, however, in my opinion do refer to kindred human competencies. The above remark, then, is not meant in a strictly historical sense. Kant does not use the concept of “subjectivity,” which gains true philosophical dignity only with Hegel’s *The Science of Logic* (see the first section of part 2, “Subjectivity,” in *The Science of Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept*, trans. George Di Giovanni [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010]). Instead, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant speaks of the “transcendental subject” which “is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the slightest concept of it; therefore we revolve around it in a perpetual circle, since before we can form any judgment about it we must already use its representation . . .” (B 404). But it is true: “*I think* must be capable of

accompanying all other representations; for otherwise something would be represented within me that could not be thought at all, in other words, the representation would either be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me” (B 132–33). The transcendental subject, then, cannot be thematized directly, independent of certain contents of representation and thinking. But because every representation must be identifiable as *mine*, it [i.e., the transcendental subject] is *included as reflexivity* in all contents of representing and thinking. This reflexivity is a *general* competence. The contents of the representations and thoughts, however, vary for Kant from person to person and constitute the empirical subject that he investigates in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (§§1–4), trans. Robert B. Loudon, in Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 239–46. Franz Brentano, writing in the tradition of Aristotle, refers to “soul” as the “bearer of representations that . . . through inner experience are immediately perceptible.” According to Brentano, representations as *psychical phenomena* are distinguished by “reference to a content,” their “direction toward an object,” or, terminologically speaking, the “intentional inexistence” of an object within them “which no physical phenomenon shows.” Cf. Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. Antos C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and Linda L. McAlister (New York: Humanities Press, 1973). This is the point of contact from which Husserl’s “phenomenological interest” proceeds. Nothing exists for this approach but “webs of . . . intentional acts,” the investigation of which will then (without my going here into the developmental stages of Husserl’s thought) lead to the phenomenological philosophy of consciousness which starts from the subject’s being directed “in a specifically *intentional* way” (*vom “meinenden Gerichtetsein”*) toward specific contents. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1, *Investigations in the Phenomenology and Theory of Cognition* (§10), trans. J. N. Findlay, edited and revised by Dermot Moran (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 194; and his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, book 2, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Boston: Kluwer, 1989), 5. Bertrand Russell discusses subjectivity in lecture 7 on the analysis of mind in the context of perception. According to Russell, subjectivity is the characteristic of what he calls “perspectives and biographies” that give a “view of the world from a certain place.” Cf. Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1921 and 1989), 296.

2. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith and ed. Richard McKeon, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941; Modern Library, 2001), 533–603. Also in *Introduction to Aristotle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 155–245 (414b, 403b, 426b–427b).
3. My reference here is to a vocabulary about that form of life that indicates reflexivity. See §65 of *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer

and Eric Matthews (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000): “only then and on that account can such a product [of nature, i.e., a living being, M.H.], as an *organized* and *self-organizing* being, be called a *natural end*. . . . An organized being is thus not a mere *machine*, for that has only a *motive* power, while the organized being possesses in itself a *formative* power . . .” (245–46; B 292).

4. Living beings may not be the sole active beings. One may have to interpret even microphysical interactions as those of “activists” establishing connections, of fields and charged particles. This fact made authors like Whitehead expand the terminology of the organic to include beings that we don’t ordinarily consider alive, an issue I omit here for the sake of simplicity.
5. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, book 1, “Of the Understanding” (part 3, sec. 16), ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120: “Nay, habit is nothing but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin.” Peirce, “Reply to the Necessitarians,” in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 6, *Scientific Metaphysics*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1934), 390–435, and “Evolutionary Love,” in *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, vol. 8, 1890–1892 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 184–205.
6. This very roughly summarizes the interactional theory of language acquisition that has largely taken the place of Skinner’s behaviorism and Chomsky’s nativism and is represented by researchers like Jérôme Bruner, Catherine Snow, and Michael Tomasello. Cf. Bruner, *Child’s Talk: Learning to Use Language* (New York: Norton, 1983); Anat Ninio and Catherine E. Snow, *Pragmatic Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996); Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
7. See Donald Davidson, “Conditions for Thoughts,” in *Problems of Rationality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004); Michael Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
8. I’ll come back to this in the last chapter; see pp. 245–46.
9. The *locus classicus* here is Plato’s dialogue *Meno*, 80d–82b, where he writes, “in fact, ‘finding out about things’ and ‘learning’ are entirely a matter of remembering” (*anamnesis*) (81d). Cf. Plato, *Protagoras* and *Meno*, trans. Adam Beresford (London: Penguin Classics, 2005).
10. Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, 3rd ed. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973 [1955]); 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
11. Holm Tetens emphasizes regarding the priority of the paradigm for the argument: “Nobody learns how to argue convincingly when he is taught schematic rules of arguing, such as inference rules of logic, and when he then, with equal schematism, applies them to nothing else but arbitrary discussion topics; we all learn how to argue well and convincingly through examples and only through examples. The most exact equivalent

- of this teaching and learning situation is the fact that no one can define in general, much less in formal-logical terms, what a good argument is. The quality of an argument is never determined exclusively in formal terms but always also through its contents.” Holm Tetens, “Beweiskraft und Rhetorik—das Beispiel der Metaphern und Analogien” [Cogency and Rhetoric—The Example of Metaphors and Analogies], in *Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft*, Deutsches Jahrbuch Philosophie 2, ed. Carl Friedrich Gethmann, J. Carl Bottek, and Susanne Hickel (Hamburg: Meiner, 2011), 490–91.
12. Pace Wolfgang Wieland’s interpretation of Plato’s doctrine of forms in his *Platon und die Formen des Wissens* [Plato and the Forms of Knowing] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982 and 1999).
 13. Cf. Leon Horsten, “Philosophy of Mathematics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philosophy-mathematics>, revised May 2, 2012.
 14. Robert B. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
 15. See below, pp. 131–32.
 16. Revised edition trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), part 1, §22, 46.
 17. Mühlhölzer, *Braucht die Mathematik eine Grundlegung? Ein Kommentar des Teils III von Wittgensteins Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* [Does Mathematics Need a Foundation? A Commentary on Part III of Wittgenstein’s Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2010).
 18. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript TS 213: German-English Scholars’ Edition*, trans. C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 373.
 19. Letter to Eduard Study of September 1918, quoted here after Mühlhölzer, *Grundlegung*, 72–73.
 20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen / Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §25, 16: “Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.”
 21. Wittgenstein, *Remarks*, part 1, §153, 95.
 22. Op. cit., part 3, §46, 176.
 23. Op. cit., part 6, §19 and §20, 323ff., and §23, 325.
 24. Op. cit., part 3, §41, 173.
 25. Op. cit., part 3, §1, 143.
 26. Op. cit., part 3, §39, 170.
 27. Op. cit., part 6, §11, 313.
 28. Op. cit., part 6, §1, 303.
 29. William P. Thurston, “On Proof and Progress in Mathematics,” *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, n.s., 30 (1994): 161–77; 175–76.

30. Mühlhölzer, *Braucht die Mathematik eine Grundlegung?*, 89.
31. See specifically the section on “leading humanistic concepts” in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seabury Press, 1975 [1960]), 10–39.
32. Op. cit., 13.
33. Op. cit., 12–13.
34. Op. cit., 13.
35. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, in *Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), 44.
36. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 367.
37. Op. cit., 387 and 399.
38. Op. cit., 16.
39. A distinction made by the *Rasse-Seelenkundler* (race psychologist) Oskar Becker (1889–1964), who was also a noted mathematician. Cf. Gereon Wolters, *Vertuschung, Anklage, Rechtfertigung. Impromptus zum Rückblick der deutschen Philosophie aufs “Dritte Reich”* (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2004).
40. Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich / LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist’s Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone Press, 2000), 267.
41. Jens Kulenkampff has shown that for Kant these two abilities are identical. See his article, “Nicht belehrt, nur geübt?” in *Erfahrung und Urteilskraft*, ed. Rainer Enskat (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 175.
42. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. and ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), part 4, “The Jäsche Logic,” 592ff.
43. I suspect that from the perspective of cognitive psychology both Kant’s understanding of conceptual universality and my way of describing the analysis of habits of differentiation are hopelessly deficient in complexity. As Edouard Machery conjectures, most likely the *problem* of universals (as also *the problem of falling ill with cancer*) does not exist at all. Universals of perception, thinking, and acting probably enter the human world on very different paths as very different patterns. And it may be assumed that these different universals influence each other to boot. Philosophy should leave it to cognitive psychology to develop a doctrine of conceptual generalities. Cf. Edouard Machery, *Doing without Concepts* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).
44. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 29. This formulation follows Kant who writes, “Deficiency in the power of judgment is really what we call stupidity, and there is no remedy for that. An obtuse and narrow mind, deficient in nothing but a proper degree of understanding and its appropriate concepts, may be improved by study, even so far as to become learned.” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 172.

45. Wolfgang Wieland, *Urteil und Gefühl. Kants Theorie der Urteilskraft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 177.
46. Op. cit., 178 (my emphasis).
47. Op. cit., 177.
48. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 401. Wieland dissociates himself from the philosophy of language advocated in this context. Cf. Wieland, *Urteil und Gefühl*, 385.
49. On this, see Lyle Jenkins, ed., *Variation and Universals in Biolinguistics* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004).
50. A unified theory of how people with the help of generalities recognize things again, repeat actions, and deliberate may not exist. There is a good deal of support for the notion that the biological, social, and life-historical universals are of a completely different nature and are being established and “administered” differently. On this, see Machery, *Doing without Concepts*.
51. This rejection of the abstract agency of rationality and reason had basically taken place as early as in Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (cf. vol. 1, 10) when he turned a critique of reason into one of culture.
52. Kulenkampff, “Nicht belehrt, nur geübt?,” 176.
53. Michael Hampe, *Die Macht des Zufalls* [The Power of Coincidence] (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2006), 175–90.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Wilfrid Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” in *Science, Perception and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), chap. 12, 178–80.
2. Perhaps even other animals than man, like bees and dolphins, are capable of calling attention to something.
3. This is exactly what bees are able to do.
4. Ludwig Jäger, “Neuere Befunde zur Audiovisualität des menschlichen Sprachvermögens” [Recent Findings about the Audiovisuality of Human Language Ability], http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=12740, revised November 21, 2016.
5. See Michael D. Petraglia and Ravi Korisettar, eds., *Early Human Behaviour in Global Context: The Rise and Diversity of the Lower Paleolithic Record* (London: Routledge, 1998).
6. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §66, B 296: “An organized product of nature is that in which everything is an end and reciprocally a means as well. Nothing in it is in vain, purposeless, or to be ascribed to a blind mechanism of nature.”
7. Wilfrid Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man,” in *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 6: “The conclusion is difficult to avoid that the transition from pre-conceptual patterns of behaviour to conceptual thinking was a holistic one, a jump to a level

- of awareness which is irreducibly new, a jump which was the coming into being of man.”
8. Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994), chap. 1.
 9. In Vladimir Arseniev's report, the Golde Dersu Usela shoots a Siberian tiger to death and believes that at some time he will have to pay for this with misfortune because he killed the animal without reason and considers it a god. His Russian companions share some of his conceptions about the animal, but because they don't see it or its species as divine, they have no fear of the same consequences for this deed. See Vladimir Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*, trans. Malcolm Burr (Kingston, NY: McPherson, 1996 [1928]).
 10. Such a process of distancing oneself and of internal determination shows an individual as “*causa sui*.” A recent example of this is the story of Jenna Miscavige Hill. As the niece of the current leader of scientology, she grew up within this sect's innermost circles but, at the age of twenty-one, was able to distance herself from them by her own strength. See her report, *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape* (New York: Center Point, 2012).
 11. Of special interest in this context is Émile Durkheim's deterministic sociology of suicide because the act of voluntary death (*Freitod*) is occasionally interpreted as an act of freedom—for example, by Jean Améry in *On Suicide: A Discourse on Voluntary Death*, trans. John D. Barlow (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999 [1976]). See Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951 [1897]). On determinism from the perspective of empirical science, cf. B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (London: Macmillan, 1969); see also R. R. Sears, “A Theoretical Framework for Personality and Behavior,” *American Psychologist* 6 (1951): 476–83.
 12. I have tried to discuss this issue in chapter 7 of *Gesetz und Distanz. Studien über die Prinzipien der Gesetzmäßigkeit in der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie* [Law and Distance: Studies Concerning the Principles of Regularity in Theoretical and Practical Philosophy] (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996).
 13. Our ancestor would surely have used less metalinguistic expressions in his proposition than I do in this reconstruction.
 14. Gottfried Gabriel, in his dissertation *Definitionen und Interessen. Über die praktischen Grundlagen der Definitionslehre* [Definitions and Interests: On the Practical Foundations for the Doctrine of Definitions] (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1972), has analyzed this aspect most succinctly. He has again emphasized the significance of introducing and soliciting for differentiations rather than arguing in favor of assertions as a format for philosophical disputes in his presentation titled “Asserting, Differentiating, Narrating” at a workshop on the topic of “Asserting, Self-Asserting, Justifying” in Zurich on May 11, 2012. The reflections presented here are strongly indebted to Gabriel.

15. See Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
16. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
17. Abolishing the concept of witchcraft and introducing the idea of human rights should not be understood here as the sole cause of what Hans Joas has called making the person sacred. Joas clearly shows how complex this process was and that it would be too simple-minded and misleading to attribute this process only to the conceptual work of Enlightenment philosophy, above all if this is thought to have been nothing but an activity against religion. See Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*, trans. Alex Skinner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013).
18. This is the literal translation of a sentence from *Metaphysics Z*. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books Z and H*, trans. David Bostock (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1993), 3 (1029a): “By matter I mean, for instance, the bronze; by shape, the figure of its perceptible form; and by the compound of these, the statue as a whole.”
19. On this, cf. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Philosophie des Selbstbewußtseins. Hegels System als Formanalyse von Wissen und Autonomie* [Philosophy of Self-Awareness: Hegel’s System as the Form Analysis of Knowledge and Autonomy] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), chap. 5, “*Verstand und Vernunft*.”
20. *Spirit: Chapter Six of Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit,”* ed. Daniel E. Shannon, trans. the Hegel Translation Group, Trinity College, University of Toronto (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001), VI, B, I. The World of Self-Estranged Spirit, II. The Enlightenment, III. Absolute Freedom and Terror, 35–112.
21. With respect to the concept of nature, I have tried to do the same thing in *Tunguska, or the End of Nature: A Philosophical Dialogue*, trans. Michael Winkler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
22. “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.” Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 117: Proposition 7.
23. See Michael Hampe, “Rationality as the Theory of Self-Liberation in Spinoza’s Ethics,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy* 85, supp. 66 (2010): 35–49.
24. As Paul Feyerabend does in his book *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Being*, ed. Bert Terpstra (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
25. Cf. Ian Hacking, “The Looping Effects of Human Kinds,” in *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Debate*, ed. Dan Sperber, David Premack, and Ann J. Premack (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 351–94, and his book *Menschenarten* [*The Looping Effects of Human Kinds*], trans. Josef Zwi Guggenheim and Patricia Kunstenaar (Zurich: Sphères, 2012).

26. See Hampe, *Gesetz und Distanz*, chap. 7.
27. “Philosophy and the Arrogation of Voice,” in his book *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1–52.
28. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §92. In his preface, Wittgenstein also uses “landscape” and “sketches of landscape” in contrast to “a natural, smooth sequence” of thoughts in a system. This differentiation is of importance for what I am saying here even though Wittgenstein does not speak of “semantic landscapes” in the same expansive sense as I do.
29. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 17.
30. See loc. cit.: “the rationality of those who participate in this communicative practice is determined by whether, if necessary, they could, *under suitable circumstances*, provide reasons for their expressions.”

CHAPTER FIVE

1. David Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game,” *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8 (1979): 339–59; reprinted in his *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1983), 233–49.
2. Cf. Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 182.
3. Op. cit., 183.
4. Op. cit., 628.
5. “The semantic perimeter of individual concepts is determined less by logical deductions [or by the propositions that a language community accepts as true, M.H.] than by a kind of uncoordinated acclamation. This becomes immediately obvious when we observe longer periods of time. It is significant, for example, that hardly any of the key words that are indispensable for describing the circumstances of modern life—abstract terms like history (singular), culture (without an adjectival attribute), society, or development—have a linguistic history that extends beyond the eighteenth century. The reworking of language amounts to a collective and largely uncontrollable process of proliferation. . . .” Albrecht Koschorke, *Wahrheit und Erfindung. Grundzüge einer allgemeinen Erzähltheorie* [Truth and Invention: Outlines of a General Narrative Theory] (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2012), 170.
6. It is erroneous to assume that language is a system of rules for which it is highly important to pay close attention to applying the semantic rules correctly in order to make communication possible. Hans Julius Schneider, also following Wittgenstein but years before the publication of Brandom’s book, has shown this succinctly: “It is impossible to secure the application of every rule through a new rule supporting it. That is why any successful application of rules rests on the communicative-practical success of actions that cannot

have additional foundations. It is the ability of the hearer's imagination to keep pace with the attempted acts of the speaker to apply the rules—an ability made possible by practical life or, in Wittgenstein's phrase, the 'forms of life'—that legitimates speaking of a rule's existence in the first place. Hence we may say: Only the success of the imagination makes the rule possible." H. J. Schneider, *Phantasie und Kalkül. Über die Polarität von Handlung und Struktur in der Sprache* [Imagination and Calculation: On the Polarity of Action and Structure in Language] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), 31.

7. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 185.
8. Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object*, new ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 9–10.
9. Willard Van Orman Quine and J. S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York: Random House, 1978 [1970]).
10. On this, see the preface of Raymond Geuss to his book *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
11. This is the principal theme of some plays by Henrik Ibsen, for example, *The Wild Duck* (1884).
12. If in privileging theoretical languages one characterizes so-called terms of little explanatory relevance as "phantom concepts" (*Scheinbegriffe*), it is easy to arrive at the following diagnosis: "It is above all phantom concepts like 'God,' 'Vaterland,' or 'reason' (*Vernunft*) for which the most devastating and senseless wars in world history have been fought." Erik Thomann, *Die Entmündigung des Menschen durch die Sprache . . . und die Suche nach authentischer Subjektivität* [The Subjugation of Man through Language . . . and the Search for Authentic Subjectivity] (Vienna: Passagen, 2004), 31. [*Entmündigung*, now used primarily in the medical-legal sense of "certification of incompetency" (as for dementia or similar debilities), in its original Enlightenment and especially Kantian use as *Unmündigkeit* referred to an intellectual incapacity to speak for oneself, hence to dependence, even subservience. —M.W.] Wars were surely not fought about these concepts, but these concepts played an essential role in assertions proclaimed to legitimate wars and in speeches made as motivation for acts of combat.
13. In chap. 6, pp. 431–32.
14. See chap. 4, note 14.
15. On the "translation" of experiences through texts, see Michael Hampe, "Explanation through Description," in *Rethinking Epistemology*, vol. 1, ed. Günter Abel, James Conant (Berlin: De Gruyter 2011), 353–68.
16. On this, see Stephen Stich and Ian Ravenscroft, "What Is Folk Psychology?," in Stephen P. Stich, *Deconstructing the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
17. On these writers, cf. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).
18. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 [1967]), 46.

19. Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), chap. 1. 1.2: “Frege, Collingwood, and the Cult of Systematicity,” 52–85.
20. Donald Davidson, “Actions, Reasons, and Causes” [1963], in *Essays on Actions and Events*, 2nd ed. (New York: Clarendon, 2001), 3–19.
21. Toulmin, *Human Understanding*, 128, where he writes that natural science is not a tight and coherent logical system and that we have to treat it as a conceptual aggregate, or “population.”
22. This turn is usually attributed to Ian Hacking’s book *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
23. This is true even of such deductive sciences as mathematics and physics. See also Toulmin, *Human Understanding*, 128.
24. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit / On Certainty*, bilingual ed., trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1969), aphorism 94.
25. On this, see Karim Bschir, *Wissenschaft und Realität. Versuch eines pragmatischen Empirismus* [Science and Reality: An Essay in Pragmatic Empiricism] (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012).
26. Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 45 and 112.
27. See below, pp. 246–47.
28. In his book *Conceptions of Truth* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), Wolfgang Kühne argues in an influential way in favor of a uniform concept of truth that is to be interpreted as the characteristic of propositions that need to be understood both as realistic and as alethic. (Pages 3–21 present a description with commentaries of currently popular theories of truth.) A survey that reaches further back into tradition and includes nonanalytical positions is provided by the collection titled *Truth: Engagements across Philosophical Traditions*, ed. José Medina and David Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).
29. Bertrand Russell, “William James’s Conception of Truth,” in *Philosophical Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, 1910), 127–49.
30. The “representatives” of the conviction cartels, like their mirror images in the business world, often have a keen sense of competition. They want their brand to win. When such philosophers get involved in a discussion with representatives of different disciplines, this competitive attitude sometimes reveals itself in two rhetorical strategies: they don’t ask a question that would clarify a difficult point or critique the presentation in the speaker’s own language not in the interest of a deeper insight into a problem but in order to “grill” the speaker in his or her own terminology and about the more recent literature by confronting him or her explicitly or implicitly with texts and concepts that are considered relevant in their own conviction cartel but did not occur in the paper being discussed.

31. Crispin Wright, "A Plurality of Pluralisms," in *Truth and Pluralism: Current Debates*, ed. J. J. L. Pedersen and Cory D. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). And Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
32. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967 [1925]), 50–51. Whitehead proceeds here from Henri Bergson's critique of the assumption that material configurations exist in a space-time point. All material configurations exist, according to Bergson and Whitehead, in processes and extended events. For Whitehead, points in time and space are abstract constructions to which nothing in real nature corresponds. They are used as borderline values for nested intervals. But nothing in the material world exists instantaneously: "This simple location of instantaneous material configurations is what Bergson has protested against, so far as it concerns time [that means the localization at a point in time, M.H.] and so far as it is taken to be the fundamental fact of concrete nature. He calls it a distortion of nature due to the intellectual 'spatialisation' of things. I agree with Bergson in his protest: but I do not agree that such distortion is a vice necessary to the intellectual apprehension of nature. I shall . . . endeavour to show that this spatialisation is the expression of more concrete facts under the cover of very abstract logical constructions. There is an error; but it is merely the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete. It is an example of what I will call the 'Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.'"
 33. On the relationship of participant and observer perspective in this context, cf. Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: NLB-Verso, 1978), 27ff.
 34. William James, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," in *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978 [1907]), 95–113.
 35. Alfred Tarski, "Truth and Proof," *Scientific American* 220, no. 6 (1969): 63–77.
 36. On this, cf. Hans-Johann Glock, *Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

CHAPTER SIX

1. In phenomenology, this has led to a kind of lifeworld fundamentalism, however, that turns the analysis of the lifeworld into a foundational successor of transcendental philosophy. For a critique of these tendencies, cf. Michael Hampe, "Science, Philosophy, and the History of Knowledge: Husserl's Conception of a Life-World and Sellars's Manifest and Scientific Images," in *Science and the Life-World: Essays on Husserl's "Crisis of European Sciences"*, ed. David Hyder and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 150–63.
2. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978 [1929]), 18.

3. See, for example, Thomas Bernhard, *Extinction: A Novel*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Knopf, 1995).
4. In Uwe Meixner and Albert Neven, eds., *History of Philosophy and Logical Analysis*, vol. 7, *Focus: History of the Philosophy of Nature* (Paderborn, Germany: Mentis, 2004), 177–96.
5. Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1935]), 50. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1962]), 44–45. Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), chaps. 3 and 12. Also Wilfrid Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), chap. 1. W. V. O. Quine, “Speaking of Objects,” in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 1–25; 23–24. Hilary Putnam, *Representation and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), chap. 7, “A Sketch of an Alternative Picture,” 107–20. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), lecture 1, “Concepts and Intuitions,” 3–23.
6. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 622.
7. Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 31.
8. Jacquette, “Theory and Observation,” 185.
9. Op. cit., 188.
10. Op. cit., 190.
11. Arno Ros, “Unterscheidungsfähigkeiten und Begriffe” [Distinctive Abilities and Concepts], in *Materie und Geist. Eine philosophische Untersuchung* [Matter and Mind: A Philosophical Investigation] (Paderborn, Germany: Mentis, 2005), 42–52. Michael Hampe, *Eine kleine Geschichte des Naturgesetzbegriffs* [A Short History of the Concept of Natural Law] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 14–15.
12. In chap. 3, p. 77.
13. Cf. Peter Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
14. See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, part 2, chap. 4, “Organisms and Environment”; John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1929), chap. 6, “Nature, Mind, and the Subject,” 171–202; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010 [1927]), §§12 and 13. Instead of misunderstanding humans as explainers, Heidegger one-sidedly reconstructed them as ones who understand, thus making the hermeneutically proceeding professor into the paradigm of being-human as such. For Dewey and Whitehead, by contrast, the living being that emerges from its environment is the paradigm.
15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (London: Routledge, 2001 [1921]), §1.
16. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 50.

17. Such a personalizing model of the world is also suggested in Paul Feyerabend's philosophy of nature. Cf. his *Naturphilosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009), 192–94. See also Hampe, *Tunguska, or the End of Nature: A Philosophical Dialogue*, trans. Michael Winkler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 126–33.
18. Charles W. Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946).
19. On the problem of generalizations in philosophical speaking, cf. Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8.
20. Arne Naess, "The Empirical Semantics of Key Terms, Phrases, and Sentences," in *Common Sense, Knowledge, and Truth: Open Inquiry in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Harold Glasser and Alan Drengson in collaboration with the author (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2005), 59–78; 60.
21. See Arne Naess, "A Necessary Component of Logic: Empirical Argumentation Analysis," in op. cit., 79–88; 79.
22. Naess, "Empirical Semantics," 61.
23. Arne Naess, "Common Sense and Truth," "Logical Equivalence, Intentional Isomorphism, and Synonymity as Studied by Questionnaires," and "Study of Or," in op. cit., 1–43.
24. Arne Naess, "Empirical Semantics," 62.
25. Op. cit., 65.
26. Op. cit., 72.
27. Florian Coulmas, *Gewählte Worte. Über Sprache als Wille und Bekenntnis* [Chosen Words: On Language as Will and Avowal] (New York: Campus, 1996).
28. Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 314–32; 315–16.
29. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), especially chap. 9, "History and Dialectic," 245–69; 249.
30. "Now the female is distinguished by nature from the slave. . . . The barbarians, though, have the same arrangement for female and slave. The reason for this is that they have no naturally ruling element. . . . This is why the poets say 'it is fitting for Greeks to rule barbarians'—the assumption being that barbarian and slave are by nature the same thing." Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013 [1984]), 1252b1.
31. Richard M. Hare, "Are Discoveries about the Uses of Words Empirical?," *Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 23 (1957): 741–50; 742.
32. Op. cit., 744.
33. Op. cit., 748.
34. Op. cit., 742.

35. Op. cit., 748.
36. “Must We Mean What We Say?” in *Ordinary Language: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Vere C. Chappell (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 75–112; 111ff.
37. “We want to understand and be understood, and we learn our native tongue from our elders. Even without pressure of legislation and dictionaries, our vocabularies tend toward uniformity.” Gilbert Ryle, “Ordinary Language,” in *Ordinary Language*, 33.
38. Cf. Maxwell R. Bennett and Peter M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003). It is one of the premises of both authors that even neuroscientists use phrases like “the brain thinks” or “area xy perceives,” and so forth, only in a metaphorical and not in a revisionary sense and that, without saying so, they continue to accept the semantic rules of ordinary language. They would, therefore, have to be enticed to speak in exact details again and to indicate where they use words in their *authentic* meaning or where they use them in a merely *metaphorical* sense. See their p. 75. Bennett and Hacker seem to be ignorant of the fact that a *continuity* exists here, in which a new conceptual term can emerge from what was originally a merely metaphorical usage (as Nietzsche has pointed out in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” [1873]; see *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006], 114–23; 118), in other words, that concepts are *especially old metaphors*. The metaphorical use of personalistic expressions would be the beginning of a new conceptual language in which competences are attributed to the brain that formerly the “whole” person possessed. It is impossible to issue philosophical decrees about how language has to develop; one must, rather, leave this up to the linguistic usage of future generations, of course not without a fight.
39. “Violence is a very horrible thing. That’s what you’re learning now. Your body is learning it.” Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: Norton, 1987 [1962]), 108.
40. “You are being made sane, you are being made healthy.” Loc. cit.
41. “What a change is here, gentlemen, from the wretched hoodlum the State committed to unprofitable punishment some two years ago, unchanged after two years. . . . Prison taught him the false smile, the rubbed hands of hypocrisy. . . .” Brodsky’s conditioning, however, makes it impossible for Alex to defend himself against violent attacks. He has *in fact* changed him because he has no longer looked at him as a free person who must change himself. Op. cit., 123.
42. Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 9.
43. This is the aim of the French philosopher Alain Badiou who deserves recognition for paying special attention to the concept of event in the theory of truth and for his critique of theoretical and practical totalitarianism. On his privileging of set theory and ontology, cf. Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*:

- Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2009).
 On event and truth in Badiou, cf. his *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
44. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1929), chap. 2, 29–50.
 45. “How, then, are scientists brought to make this transposition? Part of the answer is that they are very often not. Copernicanism made few converts for almost a century after Copernicus’ death. Newton’s work was not generally accepted, particularly on the Continent, for more than half a century after the *Principia* appeared. . . . Lifelong resistance, particularly from those whose productive career has committed them to an older tradition of normal science, is not a violation of scientific standards but an index to the nature of scientific research itself. The source of resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems. . . . Though a generation is sometimes required to effect the change, scientific communities have again and again been converted to new paradigms. . . . Though some scientists, particularly the older and more experienced ones, may resist indefinitely, most of them can be reached in one way or another. Conversions will occur a few at a time until, after the last holdouts have died, the whole profession will again be practicing under a single, but now a different, paradigm.” Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 150–52. Max Planck, *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, trans. Frank Gaynor (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949) (whom Kuhn quotes on p. 151), wrote (33–34): “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”
 46. Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, 18.
 47. See Lutz Wingert, “Die eigenen Sinne und die fremde Stimme” [One’s Own Senses and the Other Voice], in *Wissen zwischen Entdeckung und Konstruktion* [Knowledge between Discovery and Construction], ed. Matthias Vogel and Lutz Wingert (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), 218–49.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Raymond Geuss, *Glück und Politik. Potsdamer Vorlesungen*, ed. Andrea Kern and Christoph Menke (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2004), 49.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Michael Hampe, “Shared Aspects of Naturalness. An Essay in Natural Philosophy,” in *Tunguska, or the End of Nature: A Philosophical Dialogue*, trans. Michael Winkler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 147–95.
4. Of course, it is not only philosophers who have recognized this relevance but also sociologists like Oskar Negt or clergymen like Ivan Illich. Cf. Ivan

Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Also, Oskar Negt, *Kindheit und Schule in einer Welt der Umbrüche* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1997 and 2002). I thank Lorna Finlayson in Cambridge, UK, for the reference to Illich and Lutz Wingert in Zurich for the reference to Negt in this connection.

5. Insofar as educational institutions follow principles that aim at fundamental transformations of society, they will very probably not be supported with public funds. Also, as a rule, parents do not see their children as guinea pigs for an envisioned society about whose future reality they are quite uncertain. Institutions of higher education, which train the personnel of schools, can for this reason not be the venues where the ideals of a completely different society are taught. Insofar as schools are supported by public funds, they will have to adapt to the educational requirements and ideologies of existing society. Pedagogical principles that are not recognized by society will then remain mere ideals. Once ideals are given social recognition, they will also be judged and modified in accordance with the socially necessary qualifications and eligibilities. They are not authorized to question fundamentally what a society considers its “educational needs.” Even pedagogical textbooks that are committed to the Enlightenment ideal of autonomy and freely acknowledge that people are capable of reacting to the world on their own through learning, consider a school education as something that remains obligated to the preestablished social conditions that society upholds. A widely read introduction to pedagogy states, “Under the conditions of modern, rapidly changing industrial society that type of learning that occurs by way of adaptive participation must, however, be supplemented with—and thereby in part undone by—systematic teaching, instruction.” Hermann Giesecke, *Einführung in die Pädagogik* [Introduction to Pedagogy] (Weinheim, Germany: Juventa, 1990), 60. [OCLC lists nine editions of this book between 1969 and 2004. —M.W.] Instruction, to be sure, is meant to make a “critical distance” possible. But it is not considered necessary because processes of adjusting to negative developments in society have brought about dispositions that cause unhappiness or that for different reasons are to be rejected. Rather, teaching should communicate what is needed for success in a modern industrial society. This calls for its members to adapt at a speed that cannot be attained in autonomous learning. Only systematic training can do this because it does not have to be calibrated to accommodate the periods of time normally required for human habit-forming.
6. Kant writes, “Discipline or training changes animal nature into human nature. . . . Savagery [*Wildheit*] is independence from laws. Through discipline the human being is submitted to the laws of humanity and is first made to feel their constraint. . . . It is of the greatest importance that children learn to work. The human being is the only animal which must work.” Immanuel Kant, “Lectures on Pedagogy,” in *Anthropology, History, and*

- Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 437ff. and 460. George Herbert Mead, on the other hand, considers the notion that education can advance developmental processes through work as erroneous, because unnatural: “It is evident that nature, then, never uses the principle of work as that upon which to forward development.” To the contrary, it is play that takes over this function. See Mead, “Play and the School,” in *Play, School, and Society*, ed. Mary Jo Deegan (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 39.
7. Kant, “Lectures on Pedagogy,” 439ff. See also Mead: “But it is just the characteristics of our society that it is not perfect and that it is the child *par excellence*, that forces upon us the recognition of this lack of perfection, and makes us, with reference to him, try to provide a miniature society which shall be as near perfection as possible.” Op. cit., 40.
 8. Op. cit., 440.
 9. Loc. cit.
 10. Op. cit., 441. Cf. also Paul Feyerabend, *Interview in Rom (1993)*: “These constructions [by philosophers, M.H.]: that is *the* human being—they’ve never seen an Afa, these migratory tribes in the Ethiopian desert! But we don’t know what *the* human being is.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nr-Q6pfXSPo>, minute 27, published May 30, 2012.
 11. Kant, op. cit., 442.
 12. John Dewey, *The School and Society and The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990 [1900]), 23.
 13. Op. cit., 54.
 14. Op. cit., 56.
 15. Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*, trans. Alex Skinner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013). Joas speaks of a “*Sakralisierung der Person*” (sacralization of the person), 37–68.
 16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books Γ, Δ, and E*, trans. Christopher Kirwan (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1993), 1 (1003a).
 17. On this, also cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973 [1966]), 97–131. Following Quine, who sees ontology merely as an enumeration of what is there and not as the discipline studying the being of what there is, one would, of course, have to call this system not a negative but merely a *particularistic* ontology.
 18. “They [the transcendental ideas, M.H.] have, however, a most admirable and indispensably necessary regulative use, in directing the understanding to a certain aim, towards which the directional lines of all its rules converge in one point.” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 672.
 19. Benjamin writes in his “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” to *Origin of German Tragic Drama* about the “micrological” method of cognition that it tries to grasp even the general truth-content “through immersion in the most minute details of subject matter” (29). This method makes universals present as precisely investigated individualities. Its foundation is the assumption

that general ideas are “the objective, virtual arrangement” of the individual phenomena, are “their objective interpretation” (34): “Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars” . . . “Ideas are timeless constellations, phenomena are subdivided and at the same time redeemed” (34). Walter Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977). Adorno adopted Benjamin’s concept of constellation in his *Negative Dialectics*, where he writes, “Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers.” Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 163.

20. Aristotle argues in the famous Book Z of his *Metaphysics* against separable ideas or generalities, using primarily the comparison of mathematical and biological manners of perception. Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books Z and H*, trans. David Bostock (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1994), 24 (1039a).
21. Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, trans. William Curtis Swabey and Marie Collins Swabey (Chicago: Open Court, 1923) and Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929) are “foundational” books of this tradition. On their relationship, see Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957 [1942]). A contemporary example of this position, applied to physics and its laws, is Robert B. Laughlin, *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the Bottom Down* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
22. See Kant’s concept of an “organized product of nature” in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, B 296, §66.
23. The connection between this type of functionalistic particularism and a view of reality that obtains its orientation from sense experience is already present in Aristotle. Deleuze’s empiricism obviously also represents an individualism or particularism of this kind if one accepts Rölli’s interpretation that, referring to Deleuze, speaks of “separate perceptions” that “organize themselves in transcendental syntheses,” that is, unify into multiplicities that enable something particular to become conscious. See Marc Rölli, *Gilles Deleuze. Philosophie des transzendentalen Empirismus* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2012), 21.
24. “We have a few decades’ time / to see the splendor of things.” Michael Krüger, “Für Claudio Magris,” in *Ins Reine. Gedichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 104.
25. See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 163–64.
26. Kurt Lewin, “Der Übergang von der aristotelischen zur galileischen Denkweise in Biologie und Psychologie” [The Transition from the Aristotelean to the Galilean Mode of Thinking in Biology and Psychology], in *Wissenschaftstheorie*, ed. Alexandre Métraux (Berne: Huber; Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 233–78. Michael Hampe, *Gesetz und Distanz* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996), 56–61.

27. See Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II* [The Science of Logic]. Hegel defines the living individual as “negative identity with itself” that turns itself into a “totality” through its empirical relation to an external world (475 and 480). The insights of concrete individuals (“finite cognition”) at first disregard the universal in order to “recapture” it in the “absolute method” (566). Individual beings are particular for Hegel, to be sure, but as such, they at first are always a negation of the universal. The assumption that through their perceptive, acting, and cognitive reaction to the world individual beings may enhance this world by something that did not exist before and for whose apprehension no universals are available appears to have been alien to Hegel.
28. Ian Hacking, *Menschenarten* [*The Looping Effects of Human Kinds*] (Zurich: Sphères, 2012), *passim*.
29. *Op. cit.*, 42ff.
30. I have in mind here the debates about “being” (*das Sein*) and its relation to empirical particulars that, after Parmenides, were made prominent by Plato and Plotinus. Cf. the famous gigantomachia [battle of the giants] in Plato’s *Sophistes*, 246b–251a, and his passage about the visible things and light itself in *The Republic*, 507b–511e. Plotinus, in *Ennead* 6.2, focuses primarily on the different forms of that which is [*das Seiende*], with being, rest, and motion as the most general forms of being in which everything particular participates. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.1–5 (vol. 6 of *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, with an English translation by A. H. Armstrong [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988], 134–35). In this tradition, the thinkable and unchangeable in contrast to the perceivable and changeable are authentic Being (resp. Being itself) or the real. The particular things are real only insofar as they relate to this unchangeable Being.
31. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 3rd ed., rev. Robert Frager et al. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987 [1954]).
32. See below, pp. 255–56.
33. On the history of human capital, see Brigitta Bernet and David Gugerli, “Sputniks Resonanzen. Der Aufstieg der Humankapitaltheorie im Kalten Krieg. Eine Argumentationsskizze” [The Rise of the Human Capital Theory during the Cold War: An Outline of Arguments], in *Historical Anthropologie* 3 (2011): 433–46. Bernet and Gugerli show that the Sputnik shock of October 4, 1957, has created a new economic anthropology in which education and other social relationships also became economic factors.
34. This locution follows Adorno who speaks of “the state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other.” See “Subject and Object,” in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O’Connor (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 137–51; 140.
35. Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 241.
36. Michael Krüger, “2009,” in *Ins Reine. Gedichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 47.
37. On this, cf. Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

38. In talking about subjects who encounter one another, I follow thoughts developed in the second chapter of Peter Bieri's book *Eine Art zu leben. Über die Vielfalt menschlicher Würde* [A Way of Living: On the Manifoldness of Human Dignity] (Munich: Hanser, 2013), 95–98. The concept of resonance is important in the social criticism of Hartmut Rosa, who uses it to go beyond the concept of recognition that Axel Honneth, following Ludwig Siep here, has made popular. Cf. Rosa, *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung. Umriss einer neuen Gesellschaftskritik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 9, and *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (Malmö, Sweden: NSU Press, 2010). Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung* [Struggle for Recognition] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992). Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie. Untersuchungen zu Hegel's Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes* (Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1979).
39. On the depersonalization of sexual relationships, see Michel Houellebecq, *Whatever: A Novel* [*Extension du domaine de la lutte*, 1997], trans. Paul Hammond (London: Serpent's Tail, 2011). *Platform*, trans. Frank Wynne (London: Heinemann, 2002). *Submission* [*Soumission*, 2015], trans. Lorin Stein (London: Heinemann, 2015).
40. Human relationships in which persons participate in one another's life stories can be called, following Hartmut Rosa, "responsive," those in which one is dealing with a "mute" and "indifferent" resource may be considered "alienated." See Rosa, *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung. Umriss einer neuen Gesellschaftskritik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 8 and 10. On reification and alienation, cf. Axel Honneth, *Verdinglichung. eine anerkennungstheoretische Studie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005) and idem, with comments by Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, and Jonathan Lear and a response by Axel Honneth (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015). Cf. also Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. Frederick Neuhauser and Alan E. Smith, ed. Frederick Neuhauser (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). In his novel *Brave New World* (1932), Aldous Huxley describes a world in which humans see one another as nothing but a resource for the satisfaction of sexual desire and the handling of higher and lower tasks.
41. "It would be most desirable for the school to be a place in which the child should really live, and get a life-experience in which he should delight and find meaning for its own sake." Dewey, *The School and Society*, 59.
42. John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow* (New York: Dutton, 1915), 164.
43. Op. cit., 165.
44. Op. cit., 163. Clearly, in Dewey's normative orientation of education toward the democratic community, the difference between natural man and citizen—so central for Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conception of education—is irrelevant. Even though Dewey may rightfully be called a naturalist for his rejection of transcendent ideals, he does not share Rousseau's idea that such a being as "natural man" exists, who by himself represents a totality

and who would have to be contrasted with “bourgeois man,” a “broken” creature. Cf. Rousseau, *Emile*, chap. 1. Dewey’s naturalist immanentism is not aligned with a normative-religious concept of nature according to which everything is *good* by nature. It is humans in a democratic community who must create the norms for their lives. There is neither a natural nor a transcendent authority that grants these norms in advance. If humans do receive them as an advance endowment, then only from other powerful men who veil their normative arrogance with references to “Nature” or “God.”

45. Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow*, 143.
46. Wilhelm von Humboldt: “sein Denken ist immer nur der Versuch seines Geistes, vor sich selbst verständlich zu werden, sein Handel ein Versuch seines Willens, in sich frei und unabhängig zu werden. . . .” [His thinking is always only the attempt of his mind to become understandable to himself, his actions are an attempt of his will to become free and independent within himself.] “Theorie der Bildung des Menschen,” in *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte*, Werke in fünf Bänden, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: WBG, 1960), 235.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, in *The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 2, 1925–1927, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981 [1927]), 325.
2. Op. cit., 327.
3. Op. cit., 327–28. Dewey mentions that he extends here ideas from Thomas Vernor Smith, *The Democratic Way of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926).
4. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* [1934], in *The Later Works*, vol. 9, 1933–1934, 1–58.
5. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (London: University of London Press, 1921).
6. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 327. “Democracy becomes Dewey’s secular religion,” writes Hans Joas in his *The Genesis of Values*, trans. Gregory Moore (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), 119.
7. Dewey, *The Public*, 328.
8. Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 31.
9. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 328.
10. What it means that the Platonic republic is to be understood only as a construction in the sky (*ouranos*) represents a central problem of Stanley Cavell’s moral perfectionism: How close to reality must moral ideals be so that they can be taken seriously and be effective? How far removed from reality must they be in order to have in fact a transformative power? The title of his last great work, *Cities of Words*, directly alludes to this problem. See

- Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2004).
11. "To healthy common sense, an 'ideal' has meaning when it is taken as something to guide effort in production of future concrete changes in the existing state of affairs. In the two-world scheme of German philosophy, the ideal was the future brought into the present in the form of a remote but overarching heavenly sky. . . . With Hitler the ideal became creation of a completely unified 'community' by means of force. . . . Hitler's success within Germany and the threat to the peoples of the whole world that success has produced is a tragic warning of the danger that attends belief in abstract absolute 'ideals.'" These quotes are from Dewey's introduction ("The One-World of Hitler's National Socialism") to the second edition of his book *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: Putnam, 1942 [1st ed., New York: Holt, 1915]). See Dewey's *Middle Works, 1899–1924*, vol. 8, 1915, 432.
 12. "The previous human—an embryo, so to speak, of the future human—all creative forces that aim toward *this one* are within him. . . . Not 'human-kind,' but *overhuman* is the goal!" In this context, Nietzsche also jots down the title "Proposals for a New Nobility." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlaß 1884–1885. Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 11, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 210 (26/231 and 232) and 234 (26/320).
 13. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," [1887] in *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116–21 (5/71). The description of the use of Soma, "the ideal pleasure drug," in Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* (1932) presents a vivid evocation of a nihilistic society.
 14. This is Peter Bieri's formulation in his book *Wie wollen wir leben?* [How Do We Want to Live?] (St. Pölten/Salzburg: Residenz, 2011), 79–80.
 15. "[T]hat in fact the values prized in those religions that have ideal elements are idealizations of things characteristic of natural association, which have then been projected into a supernatural realm for safe-keeping and sanction. Note the role of such terms as Father, Son, Bride, Fellowship, and Communion in the vocabulary of Christianity. . . ." Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 48ff.
 16. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 329.
 17. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1954), 143, 145, 146. It is a well-known fact that the members of this community of free men depended on slaves and the suppression of women.
 18. On this, see Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), chaps. 7–9.
 19. Obviously, in this example, the division of labor is not considered a possible reason for alienation because the individual is not reduced to functioning as an exchangeable performer of a mechanistic activity that is needed to put a complex product together. Rather, individuals work here,

- on the basis of their personal abilities, as specific contributors to a complete product that everyone involved can understand. Dewey's paradigm, more specifically, is the particular musician in a symphony orchestra who hears and is constantly involved in the whole composition that is being performed and not the person tightening bolts in Chaplin's factory of *Modern Times*, who never gets to see the final product.
20. On this, see Michael Hampe, *Four Meditations on Happiness*, trans. Jamie Bulloch (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 227. I speak there of a "world loyalty," which I consider to be analogous to what Hartmut Rosa calls *Resonanzsystem*. Cf. Rosa, *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung* [Relationships with the World in the Age of Acceleration] (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 8.
 21. On this, see the interpretations of Aristotle and Herder in Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Paul Keast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 80–85.
 22. See above, p. 19.
 23. By Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 67ff. See also Joas's reaction in his *The Creativity of Action*, 103.
 24. As Hans Joas proposes in *The Creativity of Action*.
 25. In his analysis of "production" as a metaphor of creativity, Hans Joas succinctly describes how this model of self-affirmation [*Selbstverwirklichung*] was developed from Hegel to Marx. See his *The Creativity of Action*, 85–105.
 26. Forty percent of German high school graduates, female and male, indicated "artist" as their professional preference. See interview with Dieter Kempf in *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, June 18, 2011, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/digital/interview-bitkom-praesident-dieter-kempf-angst-vor-asien-1.1109922-2>.
 27. "The child learns how to use the ordinary tools of life, the scissors, knife, needle, plane, and saw, and gets an appreciation of the artists' tools, paint and clays, which lasts the rest of his life. . . . Boys and girls alike do cooking and carpentry work, for the object of the work is not to train them for any trade or profession, but to train them to be capable, happy members of society." Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow*, 34.
 28. Dewey, *The School and Society*, chap. 2, 30–62.
 29. Cf. Michael Theunissen, *Selbstverwirklichung und Allgemeinheit. Zur Kritik des gegenwärtigen Bewußtseins* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982), 6.
 30. Ronald Dworkin has recently described in great detail the connection between justice, freedom, and the good life as one of values. See his *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2011), esp. the (fourth) section titled "Truth and Value" of chap. 1, 7–11. But he does proceed from the suggestion that the subjects have a "metaphysical independence of values" that is in sharp contrast to Dewey's immanentism favored here. For Dworkin, it seems, there is only the choice between a metaphysics or a nihilism of values, unless I misunderstand him. Nietzsche's and Dewey's creativity of values in which humans create the meaning of "freedom," "justice,"

- “happiness” does not appear to be an imaginable option for him. There exists no semiotic autonomy for him, or it is limited to the interpretation of the moral concepts. Cf. the first two sections of chap. 8, “Conceptual Interpretation,” 158–70.
31. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 46f. Hans Joas sees such a generalization of the concept of creativity in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson and, critically, relates it to the Philosophy of Life (*Lebensphilosophie*), in his *The Creativity of Action*, chap. 2, “Metaphors of Creativity,” sec. 2.4, “Life,” 116ff.
 32. My reference here is to Whitehead’s “theory of feeling,” in which he distinguishes between a primary “physical feeling” and one that reacts to it and is called “conceptual feeling.” See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 361–72.
 33. Op. cit., 36.
 34. Dewey, *The School and Society*, 43.
 35. See above, pp. 105–6.
 36. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1967 [1929]), chaps. 2 and 3.
 37. Op. cit., 48.
 38. Op. cit., v.
 39. Op. cit., 49.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 49. Also Bernhard Waldenfels has ranked the ability to react to the world as no less fundamental than intentionality. In this context, Waldenfels speaks of “responsivity” or “answerability” that in his concept assumes the “same dimensions as the more familiar concepts of intentionality and communicativity,” but at the same time has “a logic of its own that is different than the logic of intentional acts and communicative actions.” Cf. his *Antwortregister* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994), 320. I thank Hans-Helmuth Gander for pointing out to me the relevance of Waldenfels for this context. The category of answer also plays a central role in Hartmut Rosa’s work, notably as “a modus of *being-placed-into-the-world*, where this world . . . appears to the subject as an answering, carrying, breathing ‘resonance system’” and not as a mute and indifferent material connection. Cf. his *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 8.
2. In “Beobachten und Ordnen” [Observing and Ordering], Goethe writes that “the observer must love establishing order more than connecting and creating ties.” Cf. his *Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft* [Writing on Natural Science], sec. 2, vol. 3, *Beiträge zur Optik und Anfänge der Farbenlehre* [Contributions on Optics and Beginnings of the Theory of Colors], ed. Rupprecht Matthaei (Weimar: Böhlau, 1951), 296. By this he means that the natural

scientist should form phenomenological series (putting the phenomena in order) and not himself qua imagination create connections to other areas than those the phenomena present to his eyes. This radical empiricism did not prevail in geometric optics after Goethe. His reflections in this context resemble Whitehead's thoughts on the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." I do not know, however, whether Whitehead did somewhere refer to Goethe's critique of geometric optics. Goethe writes, "After the effects of light, for the convenience of demonstration, have been derived from ideal lines, have been imagined to be lines, and as such assumed lines of light have been named *rays*, this has given rise in the science of light and the colors to a great confusion that one assumed these abstract products of the mind to be actually existent physical beings." Op. cit., 298.

3. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, 50.
4. Op. cit., 46.
5. Op. cit., 50.
6. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 472–74.
7. In the Third Conflict of the transcendental ideas concerning the thesis that "causality according to the laws of nature is not the only causality from which all the appearances of the world can be derived" (B 472), Kant formulates the following observation on the thesis: "If . . . at this moment I rise from my chair with perfect freedom . . . a new series has its absolute beginning in this event, with all its natural consequences *ad infinitum* . . ." (B 477). John R. Searle believes in the reality of this thesis with respect to the causal gaps that the quantum events presumably open in the brain. See John Searle, *Mind: A Brief Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004). With its elementary conception of will and the notion that the will provides a causal contribution to the world, Roderick M. Chisholm's theory of freedom offers a more differentiated approach than Searle. See his "Human Freedom and the Self," in *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, ed. Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau (Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1974 [3rd ed. 2008]), 438–44, and "Freedom and Action," in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Keith Lehrer (New York: Random House, 1966), 11–44.
8. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971): 5–20; Peter Bieri, *Das Handwerk der Freiheit. Über die Entdeckung des eigenen Willens* [The Craft of Freedom: Discovering One's Own Will] (Munich: Hanser, 2001).
9. On the history of "reaction," cf. Jean Starobinski, *Action and Reaction: The Life and Adventures of a Couple*, trans. Sophie Hawkes with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2003). On the implications for the philosophy of nature and of physics, cf. chaps. 1 and 2.
10. Quoted here from op. cit., 27. I thank Ulrich Koch for pointing out to me the relevance of this book for this context.
11. *Leviathan*, part 1, "Of Man," chap. 1, "Of Sense."

12. Starobinski, 322.
13. Op. cit., 323.
14. "Attempts to sanctify *revenge* under the name of *justice* . . . and to rehabilitate not only revenge but all *reactive* affects in general." *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 510.
15. Michael Hampe, *Die Macht des Zufalls. Vom Umgang mit dem Risiko* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2006), 62–71.
16. Jean Piaget, *Nachahmung, Spiel und Traum. Die Entwicklung der Symbolfunktion beim Kinde [La formation du symbole chez l'enfant. Imitation, jeu et rêve, image et représentation, 1945]* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1969).
17. Michael Hampe, *Gesetz und Distanz. Studien über die Prinzipien der Gesetzmäßigkeit in der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie [Law and Distance: Studies on the Principles of Regularity in Theoretical and Practical Philosophy]* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996), 86, and Peter Bieri, *Wie wollen wir leben?* (Salzburg: Residenz, 2011), 16.
18. Franz Kafka, "Letter to His Father," in *The Sons* (New York: Schocken, 1989), 113–67; 124.
19. Imre Kertész, *Dossier K.*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2013), 184.
20. When the philosophers take over power in the new state, they begin, according to Plato, by "sending out all those over ten years of age into the country. They will take over the children, taking care that they are far removed from the dispositions and habits of their parents. They will be raised according to the philosophers' own laws and customs. . . ." Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott (New York: Norton, 1985), 234 (541a).
21. Presumably since Anscombe and Davidson. See G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1959), and Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes (1963)." Cf. his *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3–19.
22. Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 108.
23. Cf. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961).
24. Cf. Ralph J. Migliozi, *Collateral Damage: Life as a Mortgage Broker* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2011).
25. Head of US equity derivate business at Goldman Sachs in 2012.
26. This train of thought shows the strong imprint of a discussion I had with Daniel Strassberg and Gideon Freudenthal in Zurich on October 5, 2012, about the *Confessions* by Augustine.
27. In Paul Ricoeur's sense, according to which "*storytelling is the guardian of time*, insofar as there can be no thought about time without narrated time." Cf. his *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3 (part 4), *Narrated Time*, trans. Kath-

- leen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 241.
28. By Alois Hahn, *Konstruktionen des Selbst, der Welt und der Geschichte* [Constructions of the Self, the World, and History] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000), 100. I thank Daniel Strassberg for calling my attention to this book.
 29. Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994).
 30. The “experientially unitary periods of experience,” that Galen Strawson suggests, and that refer to very short periods of time, are typical of philosophy’s formal approach in this context. Cf. Galen Strawson, *Selves: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 395. Which events are seen and reconstructed as overlapping and as continual probably depends quite essentially on biography generators that propose units. Units like “childhood,” “school years,” “career,” “marriage,” “motherhood,” “temptation,” “crime,” and so forth, that are being suggested in medical, ecclesiastical, and juridical processes of remembering to those who remember, in certain narrations bundle events into phases of time that have not been established by the remembering person itself.
 31. Daniel Dennett, “The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity,” in *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*, ed. Frank S. Kessel, Pamela M. Cole, and Dale L. Johnson (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992), 103–15.
 32. Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), vol. 1, *Texts*, book 2, *Of the Passions*, and book 3, *Of Morals*: “’Tis evident, that pride and humility, tho’ directly contrary, have yet the same OBJECT. This object is self . . .” (182). And, “To this emotion [of pride, M.W.] she [nature, M.H.] has assign’d a certain idea, viz. that of *self*, which it never fails to produce” (188).
 33. The locution of “being enmeshed in stories” originated with Wilhelm Schapp, *In Geschichten verstrickt. Zum Sein von Mensch und Ding* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1953). The beginning of chapter 6 reads: “The story stands for the man. By this I mean that our last possible access to a human being is by way of stories of him [or her]” (103).
 34. In the third part of his book *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1984), Derek Parfit argues succinctly against the idea that a mental or spiritual identity is the basis of our experiences and actions.
 35. René Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind” [*Regulae ad directionem ingenii*] in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 15.
 36. Loc. cit.
 37. Loc. cit.
 38. See above, pp. 66–69, 72, 78, but also 18–19.
 39. *Oedipus the King*, in *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1982); Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking Penguin, 1996); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,

The Sorrows of Young Werther, trans. David Constantine (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Gottfried Keller, *Martin Salander*, trans. Kenneth Halwas (London: Calder, 1963); W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2001); Michael Köhlmeier, *Die Abenteuer des Joel Spazierer* (Munich: Hanser, 2013). Clearly, these literary works of art depict not only ways of reacting that one can read as paradigmatic but also describe the worlds in which they arose and that nowadays in part no longer exist.

40. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialistic and Idealistic Outlook,” from *The German Ideology*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 165.

CHAPTER TEN

1. Peter Singer in J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, ed. Amy Gutmann, with contributions by Marjorie Garber, Peter Singer, Wendy Doniger, and Barbara Smuts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999; reprint 2016), 85–91; 91.
2. J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2003), 12.
3. Exceptions may be Brecht’s epic theater and the realistic novels of Zola, who considers his type of fiction to be a “general investigation of nature and man” that proceeds from “hypotheses” that do not yet exist in the sciences. Cf. his *Le Roman expérimental* of 1893.
4. Cf. Michael Hampe, “Explanation through Description,” in *Rethinking Epistemology*, vol. 1, ed. Günter Abel and James Conant (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 353–67.
5. Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 160: “that in my view also, all aesthetic experience, including primary levels such as admiration or pity, demand an act of distancing. . . . For neither mere absorption in an emotion nor the wholly detached reflection about it, but only the to-and-fro movement, the ever renewed disengagement of the self from a fictional experience, the testing of oneself against the portrayed fate of another, makes up the distinctive pleasure in the state of suspension of aesthetic identification.”
6. *The Man Outside*, trans. David Porter (London: Marion Boyars, 1996).
7. It may legitimately be asked if he ever did. Even the Homeric perspective on the fighting before Troy is a largely fictional one of the gods.
8. Cf. the *Nachwort* to Alexander Honold’s edition of Walter Benjamin, *Erzählen. Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und zur literarischen Prosa* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 322.
9. *Elizabeth Costello* is subtitled *Eight Lessons*. The topics just mentioned are the subject of “lessons” one through five.
10. To be more precise, Coetzee’s contribution in *The Lives of Animals* is a 1999 republication of lessons four and five from the novel.

11. *Elizabeth Costello*, 94.
12. Op. cit., 79ff.
13. Op. cit., 12.
14. “Voluntatem, sive arbitrii libertatem . . . nam sine nullis illam limitibus circumscribi experior” (The will or the freedom to decide, for I do indeed experience them as not circumscribed/delimited by any boundaries), in Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia. Meditatio quarta* [*Meditations on First Philosophy: Fourth Meditation; Concerning Truth and Falsity*], trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
15. Sloth, the unwillingness to imagine the lives of others, the heart’s indolence, *acedia* in Latin, was considered a cardinal sin in Catholic philosophy. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIa, quest. 35, art. 4 ad2.
16. *Elizabeth Costello*, 80.
17. Op. cit., 94.
18. Op. cit., 83.
19. Op. cit., 132.
20. Op. cit., 120–23.
21. Op. cit., 124.
22. J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1999).
23. *Elizabeth Costello*, 150.
24. Cf. note 3 above.
25. I do not mean to assert here in the sense of a value realism that abstract objects called “honor” and “happiness” do exist and that one could perceive their essence and ranking. It remains undecided here what values are and how they are experienced.
26. The unpublished essay “On the Notion of Compliance. With Some Help from William James” by Richard Raatzsch stimulated this idea. I thank W.R. for letting me read this text.
27. This is the variant in moral philosophy of the problem that we have gone through in theoretical philosophy by way of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of mathematics. Cf. chap. 3, p. 75.
28. On replacing argumentation in terms of transcendental philosophy with narration, cf. above, pp. 8–11, 297n10.
29. Cf. Richard Gaskin, *Language, Truth, and Literature: A Defence of Literary Humanism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014). I became aware of this book only after the completion of this text. Hence, I was unable to consider it systematically. Gaskin deals with the actually definable meaning of literary works and with their relationship to the world, and he argues against deconstructionism and reception aesthetics. The extent to which literature can have relevance in pedagogy depends on its definable reference to the world. The fact that it lost its pedagogical and philosophical relevance has to do with the currently prevalent relativism in literary theory, which also undermines the potentially critical relevance of socially engaged literature. In this respect, the issues Gaskin pursues are indirectly related to the thoughts examined here.

30. *Elizabeth Costello*, 171.
31. Op. cit., 175.
32. Op. cit., 38–39.
33. “Indefinite concepts are for semiotic order what informal rules are in the world of social acting: the elastic medium into which strict formalizations inscribe themselves and dissolve again.” Cf. Albrecht Koschorke, *Wahrheit und Erfindung. Grundzüge einer allgemeinen Erzähltheorie* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2012), 147.
34. Op. cit., 161.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Cf. above, pp. 132–33.
2. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 401.
3. Whitehead’s event ontology, Deleuze’s empiricism, Badiou’s emphasis on the meaning of the event—all these philosophical reflections move in a direction similar to the one sketched here. For this reason, my thoughts do not claim originality. Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929 and 1957), Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (New York: Continuum, 2005).
4. “The most important point in this is that individuality involves infinity, and only someone who is capable of grasping the infinite could know the principle of individuation of a given thing. This arises from the influence . . . that all things in the universe have on one another.” Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), book 4, chap. 3, §6, 290. The question whether this experiencing is structured propositionally is an issue in analytical philosophy of perception. I will not pursue it here because I do not accept the postulate of propositions and propositional structures. In my view, this postulate is of importance only in pseudoexplanations of perceptions and processes of translation that are not being discussed here. But cf. above, p. 75. From the very extensive literature on the question of the conceptual, respectively, propositional structure of perception, cf. the exemplary essay by Tim Crane, “Is Perception a Propositional Attitude?,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 59 (2009): 452–69. About the important Kant-Sellars perspective on this problem, cf. Johannes Haag, *Erfahrung und Gegenstand* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2007).
5. Above all, at the beginning of life, birth happens, and at its end is death, events that all cultures deal with differently, to be sure, and most of the time in a strongly ritualized way. But even the harshest constructivist cannot consider them to be the result of conceptual developments, unless he confuses the cultural *meaning* of these events with the events themselves. On the complicated issues raised by habit in philosophy, cf. Felix

- Ravaisson, *Of Habit [De l'habitude]*, trans. Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair (New York: Continuum, 2008). Gerhard Funke, *Gewohnheit* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1958). Michael Hampe and Jan-Ivar Linden, eds., *Im Netz der Gewohnheit. ein philosophisches Lesebuch [In the Web of Habit: A Philosophical Reader]* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993). Jan-Ivar Linden, *Philosophie der Gewohnheit. Über die störbare Welt der Muster* (Freiburg: Alber, 1997).
6. This differentiation shows certain analogies to the distinction Whitehead makes between real individuals (*actual entities*), conceptions (*prehensions*), and patterns of experiences (*nexus*). But the issue here is not the development of a speculative ontology or theory of perception. Rather, it is the relatively banal differentiation between the arbitrarily complex identity of an event, the differing way of experiencing aspects of this event, and the community in a present time of experiencing individuals.
 7. “Triangulation” is meant here not in the psychoanalytical but in Donald Davidson’s sense. Cf. his “What Thought Requires,” in *Problems of Rationality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 135–49; 143–44.
 8. I am applying here again Wingert’s connection of reality and “undisposability” (*Unverfügbarkeit*). Cf. Lutz Wingert, “Was ist und was heißt ‘unverfügbar’? Philosophische Überlegungen zu einer nicht nur ethischen Frage” [What Is and What Is Meant by “Undisposable”? Philosophical Reflections on a Not Only Ethical Question], in *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik*, ed. Rainer Forst, Martin Hartmann, Rahel Jaeggi, and Martin Saar (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009), 384–408.
 9. One of numberless examples from literature that accomplishes this purpose is W. G. Sebald’s fictional diary of the painter Ferber’s mother named Luisa Lanzberg. It describes the sorrows of a girl, respectively woman from a Jewish family during the German Empire until their deportation in November 1941. The inside perspective of one Jewish life lived in the *haute bourgeoisie* of this time is minutely reconstructed here, in part through the use of historical sources, in part through the literary representation and transfer of Sebald’s own experiences of being an outsider. Cf. W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: Harvill, 1996), 193–218.
 10. “The task, after all, is to persuade the reader somehow that life is something horrifying— . . . the way we organize it. And in order to find the right standard for this, you need stories with the value of authenticity, stories which let us see that we are not somehow making the private problems of the writer public—something I consider patently laughable.” W. G. Sebald, “Ein riesiges Netzwerk des Schmerzes. Gespräch mit Doris Stoisser” [A Gigantic Network of Pain: Conversation with Doris Stoisser], in the collection of interviews and conversations titled *Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis. Gespräche 1971–2001 [On Frightfully Thin Ice: Conversation 1971–2001]* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2011), 234.
 11. “The work of art alone reflects to me what is otherwise not reflected by anything. . . .” Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System of Transcendental*

- Idealism* [1800], trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 30 [translation slightly changed, M.W.].
12. Theodor W. Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 40. Cf. also the translation by Bruce Mayo in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 211–29; 215.
 13. Op. cit., 39; respectively, 214.
 14. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, newly translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32. Cf. also the translation by C. Lenhardt (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 48: "Like theory, art cannot concretize Utopia, not even negatively. The new as a cryptogram is the image of demise. It is able to utter the unutterable, which is Utopia, through the medium of the absolute negativity of the world, whose image is a composite of all that is stigmatized as ugly and repulsive in modern art."

The extent to which Sebald, who as a young academic corresponded with Adorno, felt indebted to this estimation cannot be discussed here. It is evident, however, that he made scenarios of collapse the starting point of his melancholy-engaged prose. Cf. "W. G. Sebald—Theodor W. Adorno. Briefwechsel (1967/1968)" and Marcel Atze and Sven Meyer, " 'Unsere Korrespondenz.' Zum Briefwechsel zwischen W. G. Sebald und Theodor W. Adorno," both in *Sebald. Lektüren*, ed. Marcel Atze and Franz Loquai (Eggingen, Germany: Edition Isele, 2003), 12–16 and 17–38.
 15. Cf. above, p. 197.
 16. As a helpful survey, cf. Günter Abel, ed., *Kreativität* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2006), and Simone Mahrenholz, *Kreativität. Eine philosophische Analyse* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2011). On the social relevance of the category of creativity, cf. Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Erfindung der Kreativität. Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).
 17. This differentiation exists also in the history of science since Gaston Bachelard. It has become prominent in intellectual history especially in Michel Foucault's conception of contingent ruptures that lead to a new "episteme." On the history of these conceptions of discontinuity, cf. Monika Wulz, "Vom Nutzen des Augenblicks für die Projekte der Wissenschaft" [The Advantage of the Moment for the Projects of Science], *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 35 (2012): 131–46. I thank Sabine Baier for pointing this essay out to me. For a critique of the distinction between continuity and discontinuity, cf. Michael Hampe, "Michel Foucault, Ian Hacking und einige Motive des deutschen Idealismus," in *Gestalten des Bewußtseins. Genealogisches Denken im Kontext Hegels*, Hegel-Studien, supp. 52, ed. Birgit Sandkaulen et al. (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009), 78–94.
 18. "And the hero of the adventures turns out to be the prototype of the bourgeois individual, whose concept originates in the unwavering self-assertion of which the protagonist driven to wander the earth is the primeval model." Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

- ment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 35.
19. “And the venerable cosmos of the Homeric world, a world charged with meaning, reveals itself as an achievement of classifying reason, which destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order which is used to reflect it.” Op. cit., 35–36.
 20. According to an oral communication by Habermas on September 17, 2008, at the Kongreß der Allgemeinen Gesellschaft für Philosophie in Essen. Hans Albert, in a private conversation on the occasion of a lecture at Heidelberg in fall 1993, gave the same reason for focusing his philosophical work on the theory of reason.
 21. Cf. Alan D. Beyerchen, *Scientists under Hitler: Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).
 22. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 587. Cf. on this Raymond Geuss, *Glück und Politik. Potsdamer Vorlesungen*, ed. Andrea Kern and Christoph Menke (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2004).
 23. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* [1935], trans. Karl Popper, with the assistance of Julius Freed and Lan Freed (New York: Routledge, 1992). Cf. chap. 4, “Falsifiability,” 57–73.
 24. This is the direction Paul Feyerabend has taken since *Wider den Methodenzwang* [Against Method, 1975]. He claims that the various cognitive strategies of the sciences differ from each other the same way the styles of art do. They are not held together by any uniform reason. But the arts are also dedicated to the objective cognition of reality. These ideas then lead Feyerabend to consider science an art: “Both artists and scientists, in crafting a style, often assume in the back of their minds that this is about a representation of Truth or of Reality.” This becomes apparent in the multivalence of the word *truth* (*Wahrheit*) or *reality* (*Wirklichkeit*). But if one investigates what a certain style of thinking (*Denkstil*) means by these things, one does not encounter something beyond this style of thinking but its very own fundamental suppositions: “Truth is what the style of thinking says is truth. . . . Hence, one decides for or against the sciences exactly the way one decides for or against punk rock, but with the difference that the current social embedding of the sciences surrounds a decision in favor of the first case with much more chatter and in general with much stronger noise.” Paul Feyerabend, *Wissenschaft als Kunst* [Science as Art] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 6–78.
 25. “I assert, however, that in any special doctrine of nature there can be only as much *proper* science as there is *mathematics* therein. . . . So long, therefore, as there is still for chemical actions . . . no concept to be discovered that can be constructed [mathematically] . . . chemistry can be nothing more than . . . experimental doctrine, but never a proper science. . . . Yet

the empirical doctrine of the soul must remain even further from the rank of a properly so-called natural science than even chemistry.” Kant, “Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science” [1786], in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. Henry Allison and Peter Heath, trans. Michael Friedman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 185ff. (IV: 470).

And, “it would be absurd for humans . . . to hope that there may yet arise a Newton who could make comprehensible even the generation of a blade of grass according to natural laws. . . .” Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Paul Guyer and Erich Matthews (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 271 (V: 400).

26. Cf. paradigmatically, Gideon Freudenthal, *Atom and Individual in the Age of Newton: On the Genesis of the Mechanistic World View*, trans. Peter McLaughlin (Hingham, MA: Kluwer, 1986). Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
27. It still remains the task of a rhetoric of the sciences to show how heterogeneous the cognitive practices of the individual sciences are and how abstract any talk about reason is in the face of this heterogeneity. Cf. Philip Kitcher, “The Cognitive Functions of Scientific Rhetoric,” in *Science, Reason, and Rhetoric*, ed. Henry Krips, J. E. McGuire, and Trevor Melis (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 47–66.
28. Even logical propaedeutics and introductions to the logic of statements and predicates, which are favored in philosophical education, are unable to concretize this abstraction. The reason is that they have only very little to do with the concrete procedures of cognition and deduction in the individual sciences. Even more demanding concepts of reason with a more exacting purpose such as Kant’s project are, in contrast to the elementary structures of formal logic, irrelevant to science not because of their abstractness but because the interpretations of the respective concepts are so difficult and controversial as to be applied only very rarely in the reconstruction of an individual science’s cognitional strategies.
29. Cf. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “The German Ideology,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 19–93. On this problem, cf. the excellent study by Robin Celikates, *Kritik als soziale Praxis. Gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung und kritische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009), 24ff.
30. Cf. James Bohmann and William Rehg, eds., *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).
31. On this problem with respect to biographical stories, cf. Peter Braun and Bernd Stiegler, “Die Lebensgeschichte als kulturelles Muster,” *Literatur als Lebensgeschichte. Biographisches Erzählen von der Moderne bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Peter Braun and Bernd Stiegler (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 9–20.
32. Ian Hacking, *Menschenarten*, 39.

33. Of course, this is not how Marx saw this. At the time that the proletariat enters into a sharp class antagonism with the bourgeoisie, “science, which is a product of the historical movement, has associated itself consciously with it, has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary.” Cf. Karl Marx, from the “Seventh and Last Observation,” in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, as excerpted in David McLellan, ed., *Selected Writings* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 230. To put it differently, as soon as objective truth (in the Marxian sense) about social reality is discovered by those who, through this truth, recognize the causes of their poor social circumstances, they will, on account of this truth, change their situation in such a way that the social reality described in the theory (of class antagonisms provoked by private property) will cease to exist. It is the insight into the theory gained by the “right” group of those described in the theory that, according to this conception, will therefore lead to the abolition of the reality with which it deals. The reaction to the truth of the theory is the transformation of the reality that has made this theory true.
34. “Thus impoverishment of the relation to others sets in: the capacity for seeing them as such and not as functions of one’s own will withers. . . . These are replaced by an appraising knowledge of people. . . . This way of reacting, however, the pattern of all administration and ‘personnel policy,’ tends of its own accord, and in advance of any education of the political will . . . toward fascism.” From “Passing Muster” [*Musterung*], in Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 62. Personnel directors are likely to take exception to Adorno’s attribution that they tend toward fascism. But in this respect, they are in an easier position than those who submitted an application to them and were sent away because they appeared to be “insufficiently creative” or “pensive.”
35. Hacking, *Menschenarten*, 29.
36. I have tried to show this in detail in *Four Meditations on Happiness*, trans. Jamie Bulloch (London: Atlantic Press, 2014) [*Das vollkommene Leben. Vier Meditationen über das Glück* (Munich: Hanser, 2009)].
37. The artist Ingrid Wildi Merino recommended the decolonization of pedagogy in Zurich’s Cabaret Voltaire during the discussion of her presentation on the topic of “Das Wissen der Städte” [What the Cities Know], on September 26, 2012.
38. “Whatever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man . . . , and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” This is how Thomas Hobbes sees the natural condition of mankind in chapter 13 of his *Leviathan* [1651]. Revised student edition by Richard Tuck (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 89.

39. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* [*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*], trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), and trans. Gregory C. Richter (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2015).

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays; Updated Edition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xxxv–xxxvi.
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §11. The comparison of a word with a tool appears as early as in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*: "So just as a shuttle is a tool for dividing warp and woof, a name is a tool for giving instruction [organon], that is to say, for dividing being." Translation by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), 10 (388b). In the translation by Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1 (1892; reprint Bristol, UK: Thoemmes, 1997), 328ff.: "Then a name is an instrument of teaching and of distinguishing natures, as the shuttle is of distinguishing the threads of the web."
3. See above, pp. 62–64.
4. Quoted from Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 25.
5. Matthew 27:12–13.
6. John 18:36. I thank my brother Klaus-Dieter Hampe for the exchange of ideas on this topic.
7. Aristotle, *De Anima: Books II and III (with passages from Book I)*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1993), book 3, chap. 7, 431b, p. 64. Also, *Aristotle on Memory and Recollection*, trans. David Bloch (London: Brill, 2007), 27–33. The perceived forms are present as mental images in the imagination (*phantasia*), where they can be moved as thoughts. On perception, remembrance, and experience, cf. also the beginning of Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2016), book 1, "Alpha," 980b 21, p. 2.
8. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Biggs (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1958), book 1, "Of the Understanding," part 1, §§1–3.
9. Cf. Honold's *Nachwort* [epilogue]: "Noch einmal. Erzählen als Wiederholung—Benjamins Wiederholung des Erzählens" [Once Again: Narrating as Bringing Back], in Walter Benjamin, *Erzählen. Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und zur literarischen Prosa*, ed. Alexander Honold (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 342.
10. Op. cit., 305.
11. Peter Kurzeck (cf. p. 279n31) reports about a book bus that for a little over a year regularly stopped in the Hessian village of Staufenberg where he spent his childhood. Then the librarians had to announce that this was the last time they were able to come because there were not enough buses for all the villages, and they had to go somewhere else. Kurzeck says, "The mere

fact that something can be the last time is sad enough and almost unbearable. And that one knows all the books have to be returned in three weeks and then one will never see this bus again. But will always have to think about this all the more clearly.” This remark strikes me as a paradigm of Kurzeck’s narrative style, for in the end everything is unique, and Kurzeck tries to keep it as memory. Peter Kurzeck at the end of “Der Bücherbus,” on CD 4 of the audiobook *Ein Sommer der bleibt. Peter Kurzeck erzählt das Dorf seiner Kindheit* [A Summer That Remains: P.K. Narrates His Childhood Village] (Berlin, 2007), track 5.

12. Prominently in W. G. Sebald. On this, cf. Alfred Nordmann, “W. G. Sebalds *Austerlitz*,” in *Philosophie im Spiegel der Literatur* (= *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Sonderheft 9), ed. Gerhard Gamm, Alfred Nordmann, Eva Schürmann (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007), 180.
13. *Elizabeth Costello*, 195 and 194.
14. Op. cit., 225.
15. Op. cit., 194.
16. Op. cit., 203.
17. Op. cit., 221.
18. Op. cit., 226.
19. “The Letter of Lord Chandos,” in *Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. J. D. McClatchy, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 69–79; 76–77.
20. “On a bright summer day in the open air, the world [together] with my ego suddenly appeared to me as *one* coherent mass of sensations. . . . Although the actual working out of this thought did not occur until a later period, yet this moment was decisive for my whole view.” Ernst Mach (1838–1916), *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical*, translated from the first German edition by C. M. Williams (Chicago: Open Court, 1914), 30. What Mach refers to here is his view of a neutral monism, according to which the world and the humans experiencing it are made up of the same elements, the sensations, which merely arrange themselves to form different constellations. Cf. note 69 below. Robert Musil describes an ecstatic condition as follows: “The impression was as much part of the concise sphere of perception and attention as it was of the imprecise sphere of emotion; and this is just what caused this impression to hover between the internal and the external, the way a held breath hovers between inhalation and exhalation . . . , then it suddenly seemed to him quite impossible to understand the bright green of a young leaf, and the mysteriously outlined fullness of the form of a tiny flower cup became a circle of infinite diversion that nothing could interrupt. . . . he preferred instead to continue abandoning himself to the dizziness of finding the words to characterize a color distinct enough to reach out and take hold of, or to describe one of the shapes. . . . For in such a condition the word does not cut and the fruit remains on the branch, although one thinks it already in one’s mouth: that

is probably the first mystery of day-bright mysticism.” Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, vol. 2, trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike (New York: Vintage, 1996), 1183ff. Robert Musil obtained his doctoral degree in Berlin in 1908 with a dissertation titled *Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Machs* [Contribution toward the Evaluation of Mach’s Teachings] (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980). In his novel, Musil reflects the ambivalence inherent in the dissolution of a firm ego in “day-bright mysticism” as the “other condition” of a loving couple and as the plunge of a collective into the irrationality of war. To the “enhanced [mental] accountability” attained in the mystical fusion of the siblings Ulrich and Agathe corresponds the “diminished sense of accountability” (1385) of the collectives drifting toward war in the Parallel Campaign (*Parallelaktion*). For Adorno, this contrast corresponds with the difference between the “realization of peace” (*im verwirklichten Frieden*) among individuals who retain an awareness of themselves and of their counterparts [or of “their Other,” M.W.], and a chaotic dissolution and indistinctness (*Entdifferenzierung*) of the selves in war. “Peace is the state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other.” Cf. Theodor W. Adorno’s essay “Subject and Object,” in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O’Connor (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 137–51; 140. I thank Ulrich Seeberg for an exchange of ideas about Musil that we had in Potsdam.

21. “Chandos Letter,” 76.
22. Paul Valéry, “Cahier ‘Dicté à Jeannie’ 1900”: “La conscience nous montre la pensée en tant que pensée. Donc, elle degage à chaque instant celui qui pense de chaque pensée particulière.” *Cahiers 1894–1914, III*, ed. Nicole Caleyrette-Pietri and Judith Robinson-Valéry (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 41.
23. This was the project of Dieter Henrich. Cf. his *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht* [Fichte’s Original Insight] (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1967). Also cf. his “Selbstbewußtsein. Kritische Einleitung in eine Theorie,” in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik I*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner et al. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970), 257–84, and his “Identität. Begriffe, Probleme, Grenzen,” in *Poetik und Hermeneutik VIII*, ed. Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle (Munich: Fink, 1979), 133–86. The latter work also contains a very helpful survey of recent theories of self-consciousness. Cf. the critique of this program in Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, trans. Paul Stern (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), lecture 3: “The Traditional Theory of Self-Consciousness at an Impasse,” 39–55, and lecture 4: “Descending from the I to ‘I,’” 56–76. A resumption of Henrich’s project can be found in Gunnar Hindrichs, *Das Absolute und das Subjekt. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Metaphysik und Nachmetaphysik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2008).
24. This is what Roderick Chisholm does in his book *The First Person: An Essay on Reference and Intentionality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 92, when he writes, “if all belief, ultimately, is a matter of self-attribution, how is it possible for a person to have knowledge about anything *other* than himself?”

25. Schelling's derivation, even of self-consciousness, in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, however, often reads like such an evolutionary explanation, even though this is not its intention. Cf. Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism, Third Epoch*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 150. Schelling is dealing here with the *separation* of intelligence from the objects, whereby intelligence "reflects upon itself," and with the *origin* of the categories of modality.
26. "Man thinks." Spinoza, "Ethics," part 2, axiom 2, in his *Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 244.
27. The essential argument [about the reality of the "I," M.H.] cannot be an argument back from syntax to reference, for such an argument would depend only on the form of sentence and would be absurd (e.g., no one thinks that "It is raining" contains a referring expression, "it"). And so it seems that our logician cannot disclaim concern with the sense of "I," or at any rate with what the "I" user [referentially, M.H.] must mean. G. E. M. Anscombe, "The First Person," in *Mind and Language*, Wolfson College Lectures 1974, ed. Samuel Guttenplan (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1975), 56. For a critical response to Anscombe, cf. Brian Garret, "Anscombe and the First Person," *Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofia* 26, no. 78 (1994): 97–113.
28. Henrich, "Selbstbewußtsein. Kritische Einleitung in eine Theorie," 267.
29. On this, cf. Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 70.
30. Anscombe, "The First Person," 54: "Thus I may ask 'What's that figure standing in front of the rock, a man or a post?' and there may be no such object at all; but there is an appearance, a stain perhaps, or other marking of the rock face, which my 'that' latches on to. . . . But they do not have to coincide. . . ."
31. Anscombe speaks in Wittgenstein's sense of the grammatical illusion of the subject. Cf. *op. cit.*, 66.
32. This ability can also be interpreted in terms of natural philosophy because even forces and fields establish connections between individual beings, respectively because physical individual beings may be interpreted as fields. Of course, in physics and in most areas of biology, there is no interest in abilities to establish connections between individual beings *with the help of signs*.
33. This thought corresponds with what Anscombe writes at the end of her article "The First Person."
34. This is a central theme of Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3–93.
35. "Chandos Letter," 73.
36. *Loc. cit.*
37. Otto Lorenz characterized this manner of speaking, also with reference to the "Chandos Letter," as "mimetic speech" and differentiated it from deictic speaking and silence. Cf. his *Schweigen in der Dichtung. Hölderlin—Rilke—Celan. Studien zur Poetik deiktisch-elliptischer Schreibweisen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 46.

38. “Chandos Letter,” 73.
39. Georg Rudolf Lind called him a *Denkspieler* in his essay “Fernando Pessoa—der vervielfachte Dichter,” in Fernando Pessoa, *Algebra der Geheimnisse. ein Lesebuch* [Algebra of Secrets] (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1990), 9.
40. Fernando Pessoa, *Álvaro de Campos. Poesia / Poesie*, trans. Inés Koebel (Zurich: Ammann, 2007), 363. [My translation follows Fernando Pessoa, *Poesia Completa de Álvaro de Campos* (Nostrum Editora, Kindle Edition), Kindle locations 1341–48. —M.W.]
41. Koebel, 723.
42. On the reflection of this problematic within the frame of the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, cf. Hans-Helmuth Gander, *Selbstverständnis und Lebenswelt. Grundzüge einer phänomenologischen Hermeneutik im Ausgang von Husserl und Heidegger* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2001), 97–110.
43. Pessoa, *Álvaro de Campos. Poesia / Poesie*, 724–25 (my emphases).
44. Op. cit., 728.
45. *A Centenary Pessoa*, ed. Eugénio Lisboa with L. C. Taylor (Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 1995), 224.
46. Cf. Rainer Maria Rilke: “I’m so afraid of people’s words. / They pronounce everything so distinctly: / And this is called ‘dog’ and that’s called ‘house,’ / . . . I always try to warn and ward off: ‘Stay far away!’ / I so like to hear all things singing. / You people touch them, and they are stiff and mute. / You people kill all the things for me.” *Selected Poems / Ausgewählte Gedichte: A Dual-Language Book*, ed. and trans. Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2010), 6–7.
47. Cf. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Präsenz* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2012).
48. Chap. 4, pp. 87–88.
49. This distancing corresponds to that of Richard Rorty from Heidegger, respectively Caputo, in Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 122ff.
50. The idea that poetry can in this form achieve a critique of conventional speaking is an essential issue that Stanley Cavell develops above all with reference to Emerson. Cf. his *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism; The Carus Lectures 1988* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 38.
51. Resignation about the inadequacies of assertive speaking could rather more likely be assumed to be hiding in one of the most famous statements of twentieth-century philosophy, in the final sentence of Wittgenstein’s *Logical-Philosophical Treatise* that is *not* part of the tradition of Hofmannsthal’s “Chandos Letter” or Pessoa’s poetry: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 2007), 89. Wittgenstein seems to see here a *failure* of language. One tends to assume that language can assertively thematize something like the purpose of life, happiness, and misery. However, it is not able to do this.

52. “Unanimity of opinion may be fitting for a rigid church, or the frightened or greedy victims of some (ancient, or modern) myth, or for the weak and willing followers of some tyrant. Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a humanitarian outlook. . . . A scientist who is interested in maximal empirical content, and who wants to understand as many aspects of his theory as possible, will adopt a pluralistic methodology. . . .” Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 1993 [1975]), 31 and 33.
53. *Phaedo*, 60d.
54. Loc. cit., 61a. Cf. also Dietmar Koch et al., eds., *Platon und die Mousiké* (Tübingen: Attempto, 2012).
55. *Phaedo*, 60c.
56. Of course, at the end of *The Republic*, the conversation also includes the topics of immortality and, as is claimed in summaries (e.g., that in Karl Vretska’s translation of Platon, *Der Staat* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000]), “proofs” of immortality are presented. The passage about the soul’s afterlife following the death of the body is introduced, however, as follows: “Well, I said, I will tell you a tale: not one of the tales which Odysseus tells to the hero Alcinous, yet this too is a tale of a hero, ER the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth.” But also this tale is “nothing more” than a story, a fable. Cf. the translation of *The Republic* by B. Jowett (New York: Vintage Classics, 1991), 388.
57. For more detailed interpretations of the proofs of immortality and the views on the philosophical life in *Phaedo*, cf. David Bostock, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1986); Ilham Dilman, *Philosophy and the Philosophic Life: A Study in Plato’s Phaedo* (London: Macmillan Academic and Professional, 1992); Dorothea Frede, *Platons Phaidon. Der Traum von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999).
58. Book 10, 595a–608b.
59. On Plato’s critique of poets and their resonance, cf. Ekkehard Martens, *Die Sache des Sokrates. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1992), 57: “Plato’s critique primarily aims at the claim of rhapsodes influenced by Sophists that Homer’s epics can provide them with all the necessary information and instructions about how to behave.” Cf. also Günter Figal, “Die Wahrheit und die schöne Täuschung. Zum Verhältnis von Dichtung und Philosophie im Platonischen Denken” [Truth and Beautiful Deception], *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 107 (2000): 301–15.
60. *Phaedo*, 103c–107a.
61. Martens, *Sokrates*, 15.
62. Cf. Michael Hampe, “Shared Aspects of Naturalness: An Essay in Natural Philosophy,” in *Tunguska, or the End of Nature: A Philosophical Dialogue*, trans. Michael Winkler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 147–52.

63. It is the fundamental thesis of Wolfgang Wieland in his book *Platon und die Formen des Wissens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) that knowledge of the forms in Plato is to be reconstructed in principle as a *knowing how*. Ekkehard Martens argues somewhat more cautiously but with the same orientation in his essay, “Platonischer Pragmatismus und aristotelischer Essentialismus,” in *Pragmatik. Handbuch pragmatischen Denkens*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Stachowiak (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986), 108–25.
64. With which we have partially agreed, cf. above, pp. 78–79.
65. Cf. above, p. 79.
66. Cf. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (London: University of London Press, 1921), chap. 5, “Changed Conceptions of the Ideal and the Real,” 103–31.
67. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
68. Hampe, “Shared Aspects of Naturalness.”
69. Ernst Mach made this way of seeing things very clear with the help of references to Lichtenberg (he could also have quoted David Hume): “The delimitation of the ego, therefore, is instinctively effected, is rendered familiar. . . . Owing to their high practical importance . . . the composites ‘ego’ and ‘body’ instinctively make good their claims. . . . The primary fact is not the ego, but the elements (sensations). . . . The ego [in relation to the reality of the sensations, M.H.] must be given up.” Anyone who has understood this, “shall then be willing to renounce *individual* immortality, and not place more value upon the subsidiary elements than upon the principal ones. In this way we shall arrive at a freer . . . view of life, which will include the disregard of other egos and the overestimation of our own. . . . If we regard the ego as a *real* unity, we become involved in the following dilemma: either we must set over against the ego a world of unknowable entities (which would be quite idle and purposeless), or we must regard the whole world, the ego of other people included, as comprised in our own ego. . . . But if we take the ego as a *practical* unity . . . , as a group of elements [of the sensations, M.H.], questions like those above discussed will not arise. . . . In his philosophical notes Lichtenberg says: ‘We become conscious of certain presentations that are dependent on us; of others that we at least think are dependent upon us. Where is the border-line? We know only the existence of our sensations, presentations, and thoughts. We should say, *It thinks*, just as we say, *It lightens*. It is going too far to say *cogito*, if we translate *cogito* by *I think*. The assumption, or postulation, of the ego is a more practical necessity.’ Though the method by which Lichtenberg arrived at this result is somewhat different from ours, we must nevertheless give our full assent to his conclusion.” Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations*, 23–28 and 29. This position is compatible with the postulate of a “thin subject” as the synergy of particular experiences. Cf. Galen Strawson, *Selves: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* (Oxford, UK:

- Clarendon, 2009), 324. On the belief in the continuity and immortality of the stream of experience or a soul and on Lichtenberg's position, cf. also Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1987), 223–26.
70. Wittgenstein says in his discussion about belief, "We don't talk about hypotheses, or about high probability. In a religious discourse we use such expressions as: 'I believe that so and so will happen,' and use them differently to the way in which we use them in science. . . . Why shouldn't one form of life culminate in an utterance of belief in a Last Judgment? But I couldn't either say 'Yes' or 'No' to the statement that there will be such a thing. Nor 'Perhaps,' nor 'I'm not sure.'" Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 57–58.
 71. Op. cit., 59.
 72. Wittgenstein gave it this formulation: "We feel even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched." *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, sentence 6.52.
 73. The Dutch building contractor and carpenter Johan Huibers reconstructed Noah's Ark between 1992 and 2011. He and his collaborators "strictly adhered to the account given in the Book of Genesis." Report in *Die Welt* of December 8, 2011. A life-size "replica" of Noah's Ark, built at a cost of \$100 million, can be seen in a religious theme park in Williamstown, Kentucky, that opened on July 7, 2011.
 74. *The Republic*, 614c–621d.
 75. Cf. George N. Marshall, *Buddha: His Quest for Serenity; A Biography* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1990), chap. 4, "The Four Sights," 24–33; Robert Allen Mitchell, *The Buddha: His Life Retold* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 19 and 24–25ff.; Hans H. Penner, *Rediscovering the Buddha: Legends of the Buddha and Their Interpretation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 3, 24–25.
 76. On the paradigmatic character of stories about aspects of human life, cf. above "Game Theory Instead of Postmodernism," pp. 16–24.
 77. People with normal mental capacities need special meditative practices in order to truly acquire this attitude. It is not possible to make it one's own like a theoretical conviction.
 78. For Jean-Paul Sartre, "death does not appear on the foundation of our freedom" and for this reason "can only *remove all meaning from life*," inasmuch as life is freedom and consciousness. For the free subject, death is "unrealizable." Of course, for Sartre this is not the starting point for a proof of immortality. It is true, however, that the semiotic autonomy that Socrates tried to realize can be considered to be the beginning of that philosophical development that ends in an understanding of man as the purely and simply nonfactual, for whom death as a fact is a mere exteriority. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, translation by Hazel E. Barnes of *L'être et le néant* (1943), English edition

- first published with a translator's introduction (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 539, 545, 547ff.; reprinted with a new introduction by Mary Warnock (London: Routledge, 2003), 559, 565, 567–68.
79. Martin Seel, in his interpretation of Adorno's ethics as a contemplative one, consequently writes, "For Adorno, the pivotal issue in cognizing recognition is not only concern with care for the *objects*, but in equal measure with care for the *subjects* of this recognition. For it is only through a partially dysfunctional cognition that they gain the freedom to see in the world's figures more than merely means but rather to perceive themselves as purposes of their own existence. The division of labor between a ruthless manipulation of nature and a considerate cultivation of society does not come out even. . . . Hence, in analogy to the so-called 'formulation of purposes' we can paraphrase Kant's categorical imperative as follows: 'Act in such a way that you treat the natural and the social world always at the same time as a counterpart and never merely as a means to an end.'" Martin Seel, "Anerkennende Erkenntnis. Eine normative Theorie des Gebrauchs von Begriffen" [Recognizing Cognition: A Normative Theory about the Use of Concepts], in *Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 60.
80. Cf. chap. 7, "Resources and Personal Encounters," pp. 159–62.
81. In this context, postmodern talk—following Foucault and after Nietzsche—about the death or disappearance of the subject or of man, is characterized by a great naïveté. This simplicity corresponds to Heidegger's naïve belief about metaphysics that, after Nietzsche's overcoming of it, will now still have "to be gotten over." It also accords with Habermas's simple-mindedness about "post-metaphysical thinking." I refer here to the naïve confidence that philosophical texts could simply expunge the constructive results of millennia-old cultural practices. They can do this only if they themselves attain cultural relevance and have the effect of actually changing the imaginative, ritual, juridical, and daily praxis of people. As a rule, this is not the case, however. As much as philosophers like Heidegger or Foucault as well as their successors have distanced themselves from the philosophical history of progress—in the final analysis, they continued to be its adherents because they thought that philosophical publications could catapult humankind into the post-metaphysical age in which there is no further talk of god, soul, and immortality. Social reality shows that such conceptions confuse the discourse preferences of philosophical conferences with social reality as it is. Cf. Peter Bürger, *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts. Eine Geschichte des Subjekts von Montaigne bis Barthes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998); also together with Christa Bürger, *Das Denken des Lebens* as "Fragmente einer Geschichte der Subjektivität." Suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1512 (2001). Martin Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Metaphysics*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), sec. 5, 84–110; 88ff. Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*:

- Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 29. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [*Les Mots et les choses*, 1966] (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971, and Vintage Books, 1994), 379–81.
82. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 281.
83. On the idea of immortality and judgment in ancient Egypt, cf. Jan Assmann, “Reinheit und Unsterblichkeit: Die Idee des Totengerichts,” in *Ma’at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (Munich: Beck, 1990), 123–59; Albert Champdor and Faubion Bowers, *The Book of the Dead* (New York: Garrett, 1966).
84. Cf. above, p. 171.
85. In the third part of “The Conflict of the Faculties,” Kant refers to “immortality” as the “most humiliating sentence that can be passed on a rational being” and that one must “elude” as long as possible. Cf. Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties / Der Streit der Fakultäten*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979; paperback Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 178ff. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, immortality is a postulate of pure practical reason that results from constant effort, which for a finite being is the only way to attain moral perfection. But for Kant, the possibility of moral perfection is part of our understanding of morality. For we strive for happiness, the “supreme condition of the highest good” that for Kant can be attained only in the “complete conformity” of the will “with the moral law,” that is, with “holiness” of the will. This holiness can be striven for only in an endless process of perfection, but it cannot be attained by a finite being. That is why it is necessary for humans as moral rational beings to *postulate* immortality in order to be able to think this endless process of striving for themselves. Cf. “Critique of Practical Reason,” in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 238. I thank Daniel Strassberg for pointing out to me the relevance of the passage in *The Conflict of the Faculties*.
86. Raymond Geuss developed this parallel between Nietzsche’s analysis and the situation of the drug addict in a way that was especially impressive to me in a meeting at Essex University in May 2012.
87. On this, cf. Michael Hampe, *Die Macht des Zufalls* (Berlin: Siedler, 2006), 69–71.

EPILOGUE

1. “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them.” Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York:

- Free Press, 1978 [1929]), 39. Unfortunately, most of the time, only the first sentence of this remark is quoted. The second sentence, in contrast, implicitly raises the question whether Plato truly was a doctrinal philosopher, or whether it was not his disciples who turned him into one. On Whitehead's far-reaching remark, cf. Christoph Kann's study, *Fußnoten zu Platon. Philosophiegeschichte bei A. N. Whitehead* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001).
2. According to Hans Blumenberg in the description "Über dieses Buch" [About This Book] of his *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* [The Legibility of the World] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).
 3. Cf. Albrecht Dihle, "Socrates and Socratic Thought," in *A History of Greek Literature: From Homer to the Hellenistic Period*, trans. Clare Krojzl (London: Routledge, 1994), 173–79.
 4. Cf. Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* [*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, 1995], trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2002), part 3, "Interruption and Continuity," 237–81.

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