Remarks on Philosophical Anthropology

The conviction that each epoch in history expresses one facet of human nature or even that history as a whole reveals this nature stems from a point of view that is all too harmonious. It may be granted that individuals belonging to a particular historical period do indeed share certain psychological characteristics. One can justifiably speak of an Athenian citizen of the fifth century, or of a French *grand seigneur* of the ancien régime. However, such typologies designate only particular social groups. In Greece there existed not only citizens but also slaves; in France, not just *grands seigneurs* but also peasants, the bourgeoisie, and the urban proletariat. The members of one class provided the foundation for the social forms just as much as did the members of any other. Furthermore, although individual cultural monuments stem exclusively from certain social groups, their content is determined by the history of tensions and conflicts between the classes. To the symmetry and natural beauty of Greek statues belongs not only the freedom of a hero's life but also the other freedom, which consisted in his emancipation from oppressive labor and poverty. It is impossible to understand these cultural products without considering the dynamic of such conflicts.

However, it is not only the relationship between social classes that prevents us from maintaining that a constant and unchanging human nature functions as the foundation for an epoch. Research into periods in European history reveals that, when old economic forms persist even after new means of production are introduced, earlier modes of conceptualization and of psychological response remain in

existence as well. Contemporary research vacillates on the question of whether certain personalities and historical trends belong to the Middle Ages or to the bourgeois world. The reason for this lies in the fact that in the Renaissance, and even into the seventeenth century, very few groups, and in fact only a few traits of the groups' members, could be shown to have represented the birth of new social relationships. Huge masses of people persisted materially and, more importantly, intellectually, within the old forms while their wretched lives and dire psychological constitution played a decisive role in the new developments.

Of course, human beings have been similar to one another in every epoch as well as in the entire history of mankind. They not only have certain practical needs in common, but they coincide in their beliefs and perceptions. Moral and religious systems tend to benefit social groups in highly diverse ways, and they fulfill extremely varied functions in the psychological household of their members: the idea of God or of eternity can serve as a justification for guilt or can provide hope to desperate people. These same ideas are often applied in a superficial way. Nevertheless, these similarities among various groups are not the result of a consistency in human nature. The social life process in which they emerge involves both human and suprahuman factors. This process consists not simply in the representation or expression of human nature in general, but rather in a continuous struggle of individual human beings with nature. Furthermore, the character of every individual within a group originates not only in the dynamic that pertains to him in his capacity as a representative product of human nature, but in his individual fate within society as well. The relationships among social groups arise from the changing constellations between society and nature. These relationships are determining factors in the creation of the spiritual and psychological makeup of individuals, while this resulting character in turn affects the social structure. Human nature is thus continuously influenced and changed by a manifold of circumstances. One could even understand the existence of a human nature that is invariable in time as a result of processes that continuously renew themselves, processes in which human beings form an inextricable part. However, one cannot understand it as the expression of a person in and for itself. Moreover, new forms of behavior and characters emerge which by no means existed from

the beginning. The task that Max Scheler assigned to anthropology is unrealistic. For him, anthropology was to show precisely how "all the specific achievements and works of man—language, conscience, tools, weapons, ideas of right and wrong, the state, leadership, the representational function of art, myths, religion, science, history and social life—arise from the basic structure of human existence."[1] This task is impossible to fulfill. Regardless of how much the notions of change and progression are integrated into the idea of man, this way of stating the problem assumes a fixed, abstract hierarchy. It contradicts the dialectical character of historical events, in which the foundational structure of individual existence is always interwoven with that of the group, and can lead, at best, to paradigms not unlike those of the natural sciences.

There is no formula that defines the relationship among individuals, society, and nature for all time. Even if we are not justified in interpreting history as the unfolding of a consistent, unchanging human nature, the contrary and fatalistic formulation—that of a necessity that is independent of human beings and that governs the course of things—would be just as naive. The dependence is neither one-dimensional nor always structured in the same way. Rather, social development necessitates that particular groups and personalities be better prepared for changes and reformation in social processes than others, who in their thought and action function chiefly as products of the given circumstances. To be sure, conscious historical action is linked in its temporal circumstances and its content to certain preconditions. Yet this is different from the way in which reactive behavior and an existence that is completely dependent on present historical conditions are bound up with current social circumstances. The more these factors gain force, the more the psychology of unconscious mechanisms finds appropriate ways of explaining them. Direct understanding of the motives suffices the more historical action is undertaken independent of the authority of actual states of affairs and the more it is based on an accurate theory. Not the rational and emancipatory activity of theoretically educated human beings, but rather the intractability and helplessness of underdeveloped groups, constitutes the proper object for depth psychology.

Modern philosophical anthropology stems from precisely the same need that the idealistic philosophy of the bourgeois era tried to satisfy

from its inception: namely the need to lay down new, absolute principles that provide the rationale for action. These principles were especially needed after the collapse of the medieval order and its tradition of unconditional authority. The most important tasks of idealistic philosophy consisted in delineating abstract principles that provided the foundation for a meaningful existence and in bringing spiritual endeavors—the fate of the individual and of all of humanity—in harmony with an eternal purpose. This philosophical school arose above all from the contradictory circumstance that while the modern age proclaimed the spiritual and personal independence of man, the preconditions had not yet been realized for autonomy and rationally structured communal work within society. Under the prevailing conditions, the processes of the production and reproduction of social life—the "law of value"—emerge not as a result of human labor and of the way in which labor is executed. Instead, economic mechanisms make themselves felt blindly, and thus appear as sovereign powers of nature. The necessary character of the forms in which society develops and renews itself, and within which the entire existence of individuals unfolds, remains obscure. On the other hand, individuals have learned to demand justification for social life forms which they maintain by means of their daily activity and, when necessary, defend. That is, they demand justification for the distribution of functions in labor, for the form of produced goods, for property relationships, for forms of justice, for relations between nations, etc. They want to know why they should act in one way and not in another, and they insist on an overarching rationale. The role of philosophy is to give meaning and direction to this bewilderment. Instead of satisfying the individual's demand for meaning by uncovering social contradictions and by providing a means of overcoming them, philosophy confounds the needs of the present age by analyzing only the possibility of "real" life or even of "real" death, and by attempting to cloak existence with a deeper meaning.

Overcoming the conflict between an advanced form of rationality and blind reproduction of social processes presupposes that one recognize the incongruity between social needs and powers on the one side and their entire technical and cultural organization on the other. The particular predicament of the present age and the fight for its termination stem from this growing tension. The goal of the struggle

is to bring social life into conformity with the needs of all. This would result in a social form in which individuals organize their labor with a view to their own interests and goals and are thus always prepared to adjust to new forms. Only a transparent and adequate relationship between individual action and the life of the society can provide a foundation for individual existence. The rationality of this relationship gives meaning to labor. When this relationship is realized, and when a manifold of seemingly free activity among individuals is replaced by a society that unfolds and protects its life against threatening natural forces, then it is impossible to provide a deeper foundation for the activity of free human beings. The notion of social life as a willful product of collective individual labor does not originate from the free recognition of an eternal purpose or fulfill any purpose whatsoever. Human beings satisfy their changing needs and desires and defend themselves from death not because they believe that by doing so they are fulfilling an absolute imperative, but rather because they cannot escape from the longing for happiness and the fear of death. The notion of a protective power outside of humanity will disappear in the future. As the belief in this consolation declines, awareness of its unreliability will intervene in human relationships, and so these relationships will become more immediate. When the relationship of human beings toward their work is recognized and fashioned like their relationships to one another, moral commandments will be "sublated." The precondition of these commandments was the fragmentation of interests in earlier forms of society. It is not as if the anxiety regarding the finite nature of individuals and of humanity has lost its validity. However, since energy has been sapped from this anxiety, metaphysics, this abstract pretence of security, can no longer provide protection from it. Rather, the actual social battle for real security against suffering and death assumes responsibility for the elimination of this emotion. However, the sorrow that necessarily remains preserves its own form and cannot be eliminated by any system. The application of thought to the goal of creating absolute principles, a futile undertaking that has dominated European philosophy since Descartes, is a manifestation of the strange confusion prevalent in the bourgeois age.

The project of modern philosophical anthropology consists in finding a norm that will provide meaning to an individual's life in the

world as it currently exists. Since religious revelation has lost its authority, and the deduction of moral axioms, typical of philosophy from the seventeenth century to the period of neo-Kantianism, has proven futile, metaphysics has sought to show that the true conception of man lay in the goal toward which his actions were directed. Certain doctrines press spiritual and intellectual energies, whether for purposes of mere show or of analysis, into the service of a higher justification and assurance that are nonetheless impossible and confusing. One such doctrine decrees that a particular form of human behavior, for example devotion to state and nation, constitutes the only true model of human existence. However, even the more liberal doctrines of human nature that fail to establish a particular teleology for human action, and that thus assimilate a notion of "risk" into their system, do the same. Anthropology differs from a utopia in the same way that a profound interpretation of a particular state of affairs differs from a univocal will to a happier future, insofar as this will is certain of the endpoint but not of the way to reach it. The meaning of human action can be interpreted on a quite general level in anthropology, for example by portraying the telos of history as itself consisting in the unfolding and development of mankind. This philosophy strives for "security, even such a one that makes risks possible and leads to risks."[2] "It is precisely absolute insecurity that cripples humans. . . . Their crippling itself is, however, a consequence of the fact that these humans can no longer conceive of themselves in such a way that a uniform, comprehensive meaning and an overall purpose by which one can and must take risks, will ensue." Landsberg thus touches upon the conscious impulse of the entire philosophical enterprise from which modern anthropology and existentialism emerged. The desire to provide a foundation for action by way of insights into human nature has motivated phenomenology since its beginnings.

In this respect, it contradicts the theory of society. According to this theory, the formulation of the closest and the representation of the most distant goals develop in a continuous relationship with cognition. However, this theory does not provide the grounds for meaning and an eternal purpose. Rather, human needs play a role in determining goals. Thus these goals do not include a vision of the future; they originate purely from need. They mockingly transform the order of things into distorted relationships. A theory free from illusions

can only conceive of human purpose negatively, and reveals the inherent contradiction between the conditions of existence and everything that the great philosophies have postulated as a purpose. The unfolding of human powers, which these days have atrophied, is thus a motif that goes back even further than the humanism of the Renaissance. However, this motif does not need to assume the mystical character of an absolute principle. The corresponding will to the realization of a better society finds an endless number of stimuli in contemporary conditions. Whether it is consistent with an ostensible human purpose or not, whether in an absolute sense it is better or worse than its opposite—these questions have meaning only when one presupposes that God exists. Toward the end of his life, Scheler, the founder of modern philosophical anthropology, began to deny this "presupposition of theism: a spiritual, personal God omnipotent in his spirituality."[3] He consequently had to declare that absolute Being as a means of "support for human beings"[4] was impossible. He thereby repudiated the strongest impulse to metaphysics. This step leads in the direction of a materialistic theory. It denies not objective Being, but rather an absolute meaning that, despite all the philosophies of life and other pantheistic trends of the present age, can in fact never be separated from that theistic precondition.

A theory derived from the classical and the French Enlightenments, which, in contrast to the idealistic conception, holds that the world contains no inherent meaning, has consequences for the concept of self-consciousness that follows from it. Whoever accepts this theory does not link its corresponding existential demands with an eternal, spiritual being. The hope that there is something beyond space and time appears futile to him. When things are going well, later generations will remember the martyrs who died for freedom. However, this will mean about as much for these martyrs and their convictions as it did for the three hundred men of Leonidas who died in battle long before this wanderer came to Sparta and proclaimed that he saw them lying dead, as the law required him to do. That is, it will mean absolutely nothing. However, this knowledge in no way provides action with a narrower horizon. The idea of helping other individuals become freer and happier can always boost the self-esteem of a particular human being. As long as the goals that determine his own life do not crumble along with him, but rather can be pursued in society

after his death, he may cherish the hope that his death will not mean the end of his will. The goal of self-realization is not, for him, contingent on his status as an individual, but rather is dependent on the development of humanity, and the end does not appear to him merely as destruction. The attainment of his goals does not depend exclusively on his personal existence. He can be independent and brave.

This self-concept is, for various reasons, superior to other forms of courage that involve living in harmony with a truth that is immediately attainable. Simple belief, however, can provide consolation that is just as profound. Those who believe in a particular religion have even stronger views regarding a beyond or an inexhaustible, divine realm of life. The student of the Enlightenment, however, is convinced that the future generations for which he is fighting are irrevocably transitory and that, in the end, nothingness is victorious over joy. Certainly he is inspired by the notion of a higher form of society and of a brighter existence for all human beings. However, the reason why he prefers personal engagement to conformity toward existing reality and a career lies not in a commandment or an inner voice pregnant with promises, but rather only in his wishes and desires, which will one day disappear. It may appear a noble goal for humans to live on this earth more happily and wisely than they did under the bloody and stultifying conditions that tend to designate the end of social life forms. However, the future generations will die out anyway, and the earth will continue its course as if nothing had happened. Skepticism and nihilism are speaking here. In reality, a sincere consciousness and honest action begin in the place where this simple truth gains ground and is resolutely retained.

The difference between anthropological philosophy and materialism has nothing to do with the principle of recognition of values and goals. This difference, however, encompasses the structure of every theory, especially when that theory is supposed to be free from certain interests and values. The unconditional duty of science toward truth and its alleged freedom from values, which of course play an immense role in the positivism of the present age, are irreconcilable. Reflection thus constitutes an important element in how a doctrine is understood. It allows the life situation, that is, individual interests, to find expression and to determine the direction of thoughts. This process can occur only in the acts of generalization that lead to the

doctrine's fundamental concepts, and in the gradual steps that lead to the comprehension of concrete developmental processes. The theory may otherwise bring valuable results to light and fulfill an immediate goal, but it dispenses with philosophical truth. This truth requires that consciousness think in social terms, since its thought processes are comprehensible only in terms of the reality in which they have meaning. Consciousness requires clarity concerning the historical context in which it evolves and the praxis within which it emerges, takes effect, and is changed. No seemingly practical, disinterested, unfocused analysis will fulfill the demand of this dialectic, since there is no such thing as merely intellectual cognition. The value of concrete thinking and of self-criticism is contingent on their relationship to praxis. Correct ideas in themselves can be absolutely trivial even if they are concerned with "society." There are innumerable possible assessments and analyses. When the interests of humanity and the historical conditions that give rise to them do not emerge from these analyses, then either a private conformity or the flight from reality is hiding beneath them. Anthropology shares with dialectical thinking a rejection of the notion that one can be absolutely free from values. Scheler's doctrine that cognition has moral preconditions seems like a conclusion derived from the current state of affairs. Even consciousness of one's own historicity forms a principal theme in modern anthropology: "The historical context of every philosophical anthropology, even ours, . . . cannot, in principle, be sublated and is in no way to be negatively valorized."[5] The principle that follows from this, that the particular, constantly changing association between theory and practice is to be made conscious in each individual, comes close to including anthropology in a dialectical theory of history. However, this demand is not likely to be fulfilled.

The actual difference lies not in an affirmation of values generally but in their function in thinking. The metaphysician derives an ideal "ought" from these values. This need not happen deductively. According to Scheler, the order of rank of values must "be comprehended only through the acts of preferring and placing after. There exists here an *intuitive 'evidence of preference.'* "[6] When a conviction is free from illusions, action that is associated with this conviction cannot be brought into a transparent connection with clear and essential conditions. Rather, this action emerges from the longing for happiness

and freedom, which does not need to be further legitimated but only historically explained. When an image of the man of the future is contained in this vision it is not represented as a prototype, but is instead perceived by its representatives as having been determined by current conditions and goals that are as ephemeral as they themselves are. On the other hand, anthropology finds itself in danger of striving for too much or too little. It asks for and seeks a definition of human nature that extends from prehistory to the end of humanity, and it avoids the anthropological question par excellence, namely: how can we overcome an inhumane reality (since all human capacities that we love suffocate and decay within it)? Insofar as the first question can be posed meaningfully, its answer depends not only practically but also theoretically on every advance made in the second.

Skepticism and nihilism, as well as the selfish and anarchistic attitudes that spring from them, belong to that philosophical mode of thought that demands absolute justification, poses final questions, and is completely radical. The skeptics want to bring their deeds into harmony with a metaphysical authority just as other dogmatic philosophers do. According to them, values ought to be realized only when they can be proved to be binding and univocal. Skeptics derive the core of their existence from the conviction that this is an impossibility, and their principles result from their confusion. They thus give themselves over to the narrow, individualistic impulses that come naturally to them, and they consider every other motive a rationalization or a lie. However, some human beings hold fast to their goals without considering them unconditionally binding or suprahistorical. A particular bond seems to exist between egoistical structures of desire and metaphysical interpretations of action. While solidarity with struggling, suffering human beings obviously tends to make one apathetic toward metaphysical assurances, a particular notion appears to reside in the passionate effort not merely to seek meaning in the world, but to contend that such a thing exists. According to this notion, all human beings who do not believe in such a meaning become purely egoistical, know nothing other than what is to their own advantage, and become simply base. A coarsely materialistic conception of man thus lurks in metaphysical systems, in contrast to materialism. This is the same anthropological pessimism that is expressed not so much by Machiavelli as by the theories of state of all restoration periods:

"l'homme en général, s'il est réduit à lui-même, est trop méchant pour être libre."[7]

If history has as its foundation a concept of human nature that is neither uniform nor undeviating (a notion, moreover, that is rejected by modern anthropology), this concept can hardly serve as a way of lending meaning to history. Anthropological studies therefore do not need to dispose of the concept of value; they can extend and refine the understanding of historical tendencies. They would then be concerned with historically determined human beings and groups of human beings instead of with man as such, and would seek to understand their existence and development not as isolated individuals but rather as integral parts of the life of society. This notion is here structured in a manner different from that in modern philosophy. If the concept of man developed by modern philosophy is supposed to serve as a foundation for the humanistic disciplines, then, looked at systematically and realistically, secondary nuances would come into play. Here we are not emphasizing the traits that separate man from plants and animals on the one hand and from God on the other—passionate interest in such all-encompassing concepts must ultimately be explained by recourse to the need for metaphysical orientation in the present. Rather, we want to stress the existence and transformation of characteristics that may well determine the actual course of history. The concept of man here appears not as uniform, but as consisting in characteristics that designate certain groups. These characteristics arise together with the social life process, are transmitted from one class to another, and under certain circumstances are either absorbed by the entire society and given new meaning or else disappear. Every feature of the present age should be understood as a factor in a historical dynamic and not as a manifestation of an eternal being. The motivation for such studies lies not so much in the questionable belief of anthropology itself that "at no time in his history has man been so much of a problem to himself as he is now"[8]—a condition that, even if true, would not appear to us as especially worrisome. Rather, their impetus must arise from the realization that real sufferings must be eliminated. It may indeed be true that the images of eternal life are losing their force and that the forms of the temporal are dispensing completely with the notion of harmony. However, this in no way implies that the time has arrived for new acts of theological fantasy.

As a consequence of metaphysical radicalism and of the breadth of its questioning, a questioning that is not undertaken by any theory that deals with historical tendencies, it is difficult to comment upon particular views in philosophical anthropology and to criticize them productively. Individual anthropological concepts tend to be both correct and incorrect, since they set the contents that are abstracted from history into an idea and elevate them to the level of "true" conditions of existence. This holds not just for modern but also for the most recent anthropology. In the question of the individual, which is a primary theme of anthropology in the bourgeois age, a contradictory relationship to truth is especially pronounced. Here, Hobbes's notion of civil justice is predominant and, with its irrational denial of mechanistic foundations, is more viable today than it may appear to be. Hobbes considers humans to be selfish and fearful. The egoistical drives appear to him to be just as ultimate and unchangeable as the mechanistic powers of matter. The individual is by nature completely isolated and concerned only with his own advantage. Society is founded so that each individual tacitly enters into and acknowledges a contract by virtue of the fact of his existence in the state. By means of this contract each person gives himself over once and for all to any individual power and to its arbitrariness. Despite his selfishness the individual is supposed to be capable of keeping promises. This contradiction, which Hobbes himself did not see as such, is not without its foundations in reality. Neither is it written in stone, however. It emerged in history, and will disappear in it as well. There is no simple yes or no to this anthropological conception, according to which the isolated individual steps out of his loneliness through promises and contracts. In the present moment of transition its manifest simplicity appears together with its relative, theoretical and practical justification. We shall attempt to show this briefly.

The ability to make promises has become second nature to human beings in the course of history. They have learned to believe that a declaration made in the present will be fulfilled in the future. The validity of these categories was a condition of production. It contributed to making life calculable, and belongs to the development of civilization in the past two thousands years. It forms a constitutive element of the civil bourgeois world.

Although promises were not only given but also kept with regularity, egoistical drives gave rise to a new condition: the highly developed legislative apparatus with the entire power of the dominating class as its basis. It became more advantageous to keep one's promise than to break it. From the beginning, both business life and the entire community were in fact based on a promise of each and every individual in the truest sense of the word, as long as unbridled slavery did not come into question. As a member of this community I abide by its provisions; I shall neither steal nor murder, nor think badly of those in power. In commerce between peoples, the conditionality of promises was even more important than among states. Contracts concerning the rights of peoples appear consistently to have formulated only power relationships. As soon as the latter changed in any significant way, the contracts and promises lost their substance. "For to trust too much in words and promises, no matter how good they sound, is impossible in the storms of world history. The great powers push ahead on their own until they find resistance."[9] Frederick II of Prussia himself confirmed that, in the contracts among princes, "in truth, only deception and infidelity constitute the oath," and in the end one sees oneself compelled "to choose between the horrendous necessity of betraying one's work or one's subjects."[10]

Nevertheless, humanity has learned in the past millennia to attribute meaning to promises independently of power. "Furthermore, he that is tied by contract is trusted; for faith only is the bond of contracts."[11] Regardless of whether the one to whom it is given has effective social interests, he must hold to his word, and it actually happens that the promise is fulfilled without the threat of disadvantages. Whoever pledges to carry out a promise voluntarily puts his self-consciousness at risk. This is possible only because the fulfillment of promises has already come to be understood as a moral imperative. The social necessity of fidelity in commerce and business has come to be regarded as a moral value. It is based not merely on circumstances that bear directly on the future. Everything that in the modern age is termed "conviction" [*Gesinnung*], the affirmation of certain goals, includes a form of resolution that is identical to a promise. If the predictability of modern life is in part contingent upon the consistency of individual drive structures, that is, upon what we commonly call

"character" (with hunger and penitentiaries in the background, of course), then it belongs to our concept of man, as it has been historically formed, that he too—independent of established character traits and of the fear of punishment, indeed against the entire world and thus against selfishness—stands by his own word and confession.

This moral resolve has nothing to do with the incapacity for spiritual development. It implies the incessant unfolding of all powers in order to protect the unity of purpose in the continuous differentiation of perception, in the changes involved in social life, and the varying demands of the situation. The capacity for this is closely linked with all values for which the bourgeoisie has sharpened its senses. Freedom means enforcing a value even against natural and social powers, standing by it, and retaining it in consciousness, such that it regulates both theoretical and practical ways of behavior and can be perceived as a nuance in even the most irrelevant thoughts and deeds. Justice requires that we not change our standards under all circumstances and situations, or organize reality in such a way that people must suffer without a significant reason. For it is not happiness but rather misery that requires justification in a world of reason.

During the last few centuries, promises were kept without continuous application of force, and this has helped to maintain commerce. With the continuous accumulation of capital, however, the possibility for this has become slighter. The ruling class no longer consists of countless subjects who sign contracts, but rather of large power groups controlled by a few people who compete with each other on the world market. They have transformed huge areas of Europe into immense work camps by the use of iron discipline. The more competition on the world market turns into a sheer power struggle, the more tightly organized and strictly structured these power groups become internally and externally. The economic foundation for meaning and promises thus becomes narrower every day. For it is no longer the contract but rather the power to command and to demand obedience that now increasingly characterizes domestic commerce.

The social relationships involved in economic processes affect the entire spiritual and intellectual world and thus the constitution of human nature. In earlier periods of history, power was considered immoral when it came into conflict with contracts. Today, a contract

violates morality when it runs counter to power relationships. Everyone who has anything to do with such matters knows this, and for that reason contracts must occasionally be drawn up rather hastily, and they must be settled more quickly now than ever. Their importance remains indisputable: they are binding *praemissis praemittendis,* they travel cursorily around the atlas of interests in a particular historical moment. However, if power is now to become established as the true legislative authority whereas, before the advent of Christianity, it ruled only de facto and did not have a differentiated moral consciousness as its advocate, may Nietzsche not triumph! The power of which we are here speaking runs counter to human traits that are directed toward the future. Even by its own standards it is "decadent." Nietzsche wanted to give to the history "of the entire past a goal,"[12] and stressed the possibility of higher forms of life. He thought that contemporary expressions of power arose from the laziness and anxiety of the masses and had nothing else to claim for itself. Even the dialectical principle of the masses did not escape him: "To help the common masses to rule is of course the only means of making their kind noble: however, one must hope for this first as one who himself rules, not in a battle for the rule."[13] The notion that those who are against power and for the masses are not identical to these masses is revealed in Nietzsche's view that one must force the masses to use their own faculty of reason and realize their own advantage. This maxim holds not only for those who rule but for their opponents as well. However, because Nietzsche kept the masses firmly separate from the superman without developing that dialectical principle, he remained vulnerable to the misuse that he despised, and was considered a herald for those who were ruling at the time. He understood everything that concerned the present except its inner nexus. Had he recognized and applied dialectic not just in his capacity as a classical philologist but rather in its contemporary form, he would have better understood those who considered the masses an atavism and who were striving to overcome the condition of their existence, the constant resurgence of poverty. It is unscientific to think of the superman merely as a biological type. This concept designates the higher stages of a future society that originates from the struggles in the present. The superman is either a social-theoretical concept or the utopian dream of a philosopher. The masses

can only be contemned as long as the actual power that rules over them veils itself in a fictitious image of power. This is, of course, the distinguishing mark of rule over the masses in all previous periods of history. As soon as the masses transform themselves through their correct use of power, then power itself loses its "decadence" and becomes an effect of the uniform and thus "superhuman" force of society. The bridge to the future is not erected by lonely individuals, as Nietzsche had held, but rather by organized efforts, in which his opinions regarding eugenics play only an insignificant role and the will to a freer humanity is fused with an explicit and highly developed theory of society.

One facet of the independence of the human being who has this goal in mind consists in revealing and employing the qualities that have been promulgated by classical idealism, namely human autonomy and resolution, against its own epigones. This is particularly true in a period in which the petit bourgeois masses unconditionally learn to affirm the state power as an expression of "honor." The ideas under which the society of Fichte and Kant became universal have long ago turned into charades. If they were now to be discarded it would not mean a great deal historically. Despite its deplorable nature, this condition at least has the advantage that the truth becomes clearly manifest. Whoever has no power in this world has few rights and seldom a foundation on which to build anything. Any law that is supposed to be to his advantage loses force. Justice stops when he makes a claim on it, and this surprises no one. The human type that corresponds to contemporary conditions acknowledges everything that serves power. The great aspects of what occurs and is in force constitute for him the norm of the world. As a smaller version of Aristotle, every average man of today sees more perfection in a matter the more real it is. As a smaller version of Schiller, he considers world history to be the world court. Above us stand those who are in a position to strike; everything that is below is not yet low enough. "What is falling, we should still push!"[14]

The conduct of the struggling individual is not the simple contrast to this type of human being; the former is not opposed to power in general. However, his nature consists in remaining resolute irrespective of his conditions, for he lives an idea that has yet to be realized. The average member of groups left behind by historical processes

represents a function of the ruling power; he has no opinions of his own. Those who want to subdue him have one goal to fulfill: they must protect the status of their word and their self-respect. Instead of violating them for reasons of selfishness, they fulfill them in order to sublate their selfishness. The human trait of fidelity to oneself and to one's given word has achieved the status of a moral imperative in a long, historical process. In the age of self-interest that is now reaching its end, it constitutes an element in the compulsion that has been internalized as a conscience. In the present period, in which these relationships are becoming transparent, resolution that is founded on cognition turns into a forward-looking praxis as the will to a more humane future. This resolution is no longer clothed in mythic illusions concerning its origins, nor is it connected to the pomp of self-satisfied integrity or with the pathos of duty.

Hobbes's anthropology was ahead of its time. It stands as an important advance in the founding of the political science of the bourgeoisie.[15] This interest is today having no productive effect. The difficulty of knowing which stance to take toward this anthropology, which became obvious in the fragmentary reflection upon one of its isolated characteristics, exists to no less a degree in other theories. The conception of man that is derived from the real, historical situation of the present does not apply to the problems inherent in anthropology. In this respect, anthropology does not guarantee continuity. Thus what there is often irrelevant appears here as meaningful, and what there is of utmost importance is here worthless. The theoretical outlines are accentuated in many different ways. Another difference consists in the fact that philosophical anthropology considers every facet of its system a lasting possession, insofar as this facet is arrived at according to its principles and shows no signs of being in error. According to Husserl, philosophy is, like science, "a title standing for absolute, timeless values. Every such value, once discovered, belongs thereafter to the treasure trove of all succeeding humanity and obviously determines likewise the material content of the idea of culture, wisdom, *Weltanschauung*."[16] Dialectical thinking, on the other hand, considers the interests and goals that consciously and unconsciously enter into the preformation and the processing of material as conditioned and transient, and tends to understand its own effects more in the sense of a social driving force than as an eternal possession. This does no

harm to the consciousness of the actual truth, for the relationship among duration, certainty, and truth is not as stable and uniform as it may appear to dogmatism on the one hand and to skepticism on the other.

Whatever holds for such special traits as faithfulness to a contract and resoluteness holds as well for the characteristics of the image of man. These characteristics are the focus of traditional anthropological interests: instead of seeking simple approval or immediate correction of philosophical doctrines, enlightened thinking attempts to bring the definition of "man" into association with groups and phases of the social life process and to overcome metaphysics by means of theory. In Greece there existed a famous distinction in anthropology. The view that human capabilities were determined at birth was opposed by the notion that inequality was a product of social relationships and individual fate. According to Aristotle, it was a commonplace notion that humans were born with the qualifications either of mastery or of slavery.[17] In Democritus on the other hand we read: "More men become good through practice than by nature."[18] He holds that nature and education are similar to one another, for education transforms human nature and by this means creates a second nature.[19] In the modern age, these anthropological concepts have been used for the justification of political systems. Aristotle's view is an integral component of conservative doctrines that incline toward feudalism and the Middle Ages; Democritus's notion belongs to the ideology of the aspiring bourgeoisie. The belief in human equality and in nobility by birth stood irreconcilably side by side. In the present age, there exists no conclusive settlement for either of these convictions. Each of them reflects a period of social reality, but naturally in a false, distorted form, and both represent a self-concept of man on two different levels. Just so, the modified position of current progressive groups toward both images of man reflects a future reality. The criticism of the distortions that each of these images contains, as well as the recognition of their relative truth, play a role in the historical praxis that looks ahead to the future. The new form of existence, which is superior to any that is reflected in past anthropological principles, is already embodied by its pioneers. Only an opinion regarding the distinction drawn by the ancient Greek thinkers, in which actual historical

tendencies find expression, can really lead beyond them. Both sides are correct in a limited way.

In the Middle Ages, power and status were determined by birth. Poverty was accordingly a misfortune, but was not a source of guilt. The modern age has obliterated these notions. Hegel "may therefore say, 'Never has innocence suffered; every suffering is guilt.' "[20] Power has become negotiable because it is incarnated in money. Money is easily moved, and as a rule it is subject to an accountant's manipulations. Anyone can attain money if only he performs. Earlier bourgeois thinkers, Machiavelli, Spinoza, the Enlightenment philosophers, all denounced power that was derived solely from birth and held that only those positions earned from work were a criterion of status.

As we know, with this notion the responsibility of humans toward one another ceased to exist. Each individual was supposed to be concerned only with himself. Each person was supposed to work. Everyone considered himself a competitor for prizes that could be won by achievement. People had to prove their capabilities, and when they were capable of nothing or had bad luck, they went to the dogs. This is the context in which each person observes others. A benefactor of humanity can become a nothing overnight simply because of vacillations in the stock exchange. The hopelessly indigent ceases to be a subject. In the best case scenario, he becomes an object of social policy. He becomes a burden.

The totalitarian state has, in a certain way, introduced once again the status of power as derived from birth or, more precisely, from innate qualities of leadership. In earlier periods, the Christian neighbor had a right to be helped; now it is the "comrade of the people" who has. This, however, is merely the impossible repetition of the past. The entire epoch that followed the Renaissance was not in vain. The principle of achievement is basically correct. In these difficult centuries humanity learned the difficult lesson that pleasure is not contingent on the gods, but rather on one's own labor. However, in the end the acuity of human understanding led people to attack the concept of the individual and to discover that this concept, in both its form and its content, is determined by the dynamic of the entire society. Everything that this individual achieves, whether through his innate ability or from the content of his labor, is an effect not only of

his youth and education but also of the entire economic system, the legal relationships and conditions of dependence within his society, and his own past and potential failures and chances. In each individual act, subjective and objective elements are inextricably interwoven. It cannot be said of any human characteristic that it existed in embryo exactly as it exists now, and that it simply attained full growth directly from this embryo.

The achievement of the individual does not depend on him alone but on society as well. Society itself, the people or the nation, is of course not an entity in relation to which all individuals are nothing. Individuals belong to the dynamic of the society in the same way in which they developed in history. In every moment, they have a fully particular existence. The genesis of capabilities and of the labor of each human being is to be sought not in this individual human being but rather in the fate of the entire society. This society regulates personal development by means of both long-lasting relationships and intermittent and small events or catastrophes. It is true that everything depends on whether or not each person applies and cultivates his individual powers. However, this word "his" does not designate a relationship between fixed entities. "His" actions refer to effects, in whose prehistory the character of the individual need only constitute a relatively inconsequential moment.

We are here concerned not with mythological elements of the origin, but with labor that is derived from reason, and with pleasure as its benefit. This consciousness of the present will enter into considerations of a future society. However, its meaning will have changed. The category of the individual will be stripped of its metaphysical isolation, if not completely rejected. The extent to which each individual is alone and unique depends on the condition of society and the degree to which it can govern and control nature, and on the individual's inner character. Achievement will be recognized as a function of the whole in which each individual participates. However, birth will once again confer a certain kind of power, namely, that of being a member of a truly human society. In the Middle Ages, the principle of birth was identical to the rule of chance, for no one was at fault in determining it. In the age of the bourgeoisie, this concept of chance was repudiated, and the natural equality of all human beings was proclaimed. Achievement, not birth, was now the decisive element. In

reality, however, chance reasserted itself, since the conditions for labor and for pleasure were contingent on class. We have now reached the point at which mere admission into the world means luck, not through the power over others but rather through the dominion of man over nature. The man who is noble by birth appears again when his opposite, the man who is equal by nature, is transformed from an ideology into a truth. The preconditions for this lie neither in the state constitution and legislature—this was the illusion of the French Revolution—nor in the souls of human beings—this was German idealism—but rather in the foundational structures of the social life process, in which both elements are tightly interwoven.

The meaning of all anthropological categories is changed in their very foundations concomitantly with great historical transformations. This occurs without any interruption in historical continuity. If one analyzes the meaning of the concept "equality" in two distinct historical phases, one sees that the notion has a different significance in each. Positivism and its contemporary scientific and logical progeny, which emphasize exact definitions, reject the possibility of speaking of a transformation within one and the same concept. However, they do allow for the possibility of one meaning taking the place of another, and of various new linguistic signs being established. They rightly demand that distinct meanings not be confused and that what should be kept separate be so. This rule, so central to mathematics and natural sciences, is opposed by another that finds its expression in historical studies and according to which elements flow into one another and form a structural unity. These are to be reconstructed as a unity and reflected precisely as such. If the meaning and the object themselves are changed, we cannot decide whether or not the same name is to be preserved on the basis of the claim that the concepts themselves remain the same. We must instead determine whether the name designates something that has continuity or not. The function of a name in the course of history, in which the transformation in meaning occurs, can entail that the name must remain the same whether or not the majority of all of its representational meanings have changed. On the other hand, when only a nuanced change in the meaning occurs, then we can, under certain circumstances, introduce a new name. This nuance can be strong enough that it requires a change of linguistic sign so that its significance becomes sufficiently clear. The

revolts of the Roman slaves were quite different from the battles against the feudal power organizations of the eighteenth century. However, the goals of both were designated by the same name: freedom. In turn, English economists and jurists unjustly invoked this same word a century ago when, after the fall of absolutism, they demolished the remains of social support networks that could have been reminiscent of absolutism. The relationship between the name, the representation, and the object is extremely complex, and everything that is evil exploits this complexity as a means of confusion. In the theoretical application of a name, arbitrariness must be avoided. However, there exists no recipe for doing this. The period of transition to the monopolistic phase of economic systems is characterized by a change in human beings. The names remain the same, but the anthropological realities are altered. Love, understanding, and sympathy, for example, assume such differing functions today in the relationships between human beings that the corresponding phenomena have been changed accordingly. These processes do not occur in an independent and isolated fashion, but rather in connection with transformations in the society as a whole.

In the bourgeois age, when one was incapable of looking after others, he was termed inferior. The lack of influence and understanding associated with certain individuals vis-à-vis other group members commonly originates in their inability to love someone and their ability only to brood over their own concerns. Because such people never communicate their anxieties or express their joy to someone, they ultimately forfeit their place in their milieu and become failures. Economic development has progressed to a point where even successful advancement within society is contingent on the ability to show interest in the concerns of others. In a free market economy, other things being equal, the salesman who shows such concern for his customers has a distinct advantage over his competitor. Besides the participation of the bourgeoisie in the government, each citizen is bound by the necessities of taking pains for customers, of showing them what is to their advantage, and of guessing and influencing their inclinations. These exigencies counteract purely selfish dispositions and develop the capacity for compassion toward others. This interpersonal understanding, which even in its more sublime manifestations bears the mark of its relationship with trade and commerce, is not equivalent to the

spontaneous feeling of unity in prebourgeois forms of community or to unconditional solidarity. Nevertheless, bourgeois commerce in conjunction with egoism has nurtured its own negation: altruism. Classes that were left behind in economic development—for example, a segment of the farmers in certain parts of a country—appear to the more refined, bourgeois consciousness as emotional cripples, not least because of their concern only with themselves.

However, just like other economic mechanisms that originally facilitated the unfolding of human qualities but that have now lost their meaning or come to mean their opposite, hate and mistrust gain the upper hand in human relationships in times of growing economic crisis. One of the most important tasks of the latest *Weltanschauung* consists in channeling the huge amounts of aggression, which are emerging in a climate of destitution, either into self-sacrificial devotion against each particular individual or into a spirit of battle against potential national enemies. This deflection of an originally positive side of bourgeois man into destructive aims becomes more and more difficult under worsening economic conditions and requires an increasingly complicated apparatus. At the same time, however, contempt for an all too individualistic character loses its relevance. The staunchly zealous person who succeeds in steering his hatred and his love in the prescribed direction has nothing on the narrow egoist who has only his own interests at heart. In a society in which everyone is alike, the analysis of which is immediately useful, the relationship to unfamiliar individuals is no longer mediated by an understanding of their particular individuality. Love and hate originate here from commands, not from insight. Precisely because of this, there exists less that can be objectively understood. Under these conditions the individual sinks to the level of an element of the masses that ultimately looks similar to all other elements. This form of equality does not entail that each person is able to survey the whole and find his own goals sublated in it on the basis of a rationalization of the labor process. Rather, it implies only negative equality before the law, which recognizes no differences. Not everyone has the same freedom to develop his or her potentials. Rather, each person must sacrifice them equally.

It is axiomatic that those who fail because of their lack of participation in society surface again and again. However, they are difficult

to identify for two reasons. First, the majority of human beings regard success as a legend whose main sources are revealed in the biographies of heroes and leaders. Second, under the conditions of current economic trends, increasingly questionable human qualities are coming to form the criteria for building a hierarchy. The virtues that decide whether or not one climbs socially are these days more often than not connected with ruthlessness. In the age of the totalitarian state, competition has become wilder and more unscrupulous not only on the world market but also among peoples. The bad elements of liberalism are proliferating madly at present, while the good ones have come under censure.

The attempt to conceive of human beings either as a fixed or as an evolving unity is futile. Anthropology assumes "that the complex of questions regarding human beings represents a matter that is closed in itself and, in a manner of speaking, primary. Modern developments lead us increasingly to destroy this unity and to challenge the claim of man in the questions that he poses to himself in order to find something original."[21] Human characteristics are inextricably linked to the course of history, and history itself is in no way marked by a uniform will. Like the object of anthropological studies, even history itself represents no autonomous entity. Our own concept of history is structured by both theoretical and practical considerations of the present. The reconciliation of theory with its object, which in fact constitutes intellectual progress, does not mean that knowledge and existence will ever be in accord, for as the function of knowledge in society changes, so too does its meaning and the reality on which it is based. When knowledge loses this insight into itself, it becomes a fetish that finds expression in philosophy and in the battle of skepticism against philosophy. The foregoing remarks challenge the notion of a uniform definition of man, since history up to now has shown us that the fate of human beings is infinitely varied. The argument that has been advanced against any concept of historically necessary transformations, namely that such a concept is contrary to human nature, must be put to rest once and for all. It may be true that the more liberal philosophical anthropologists are in fact not subject to this criticism and explicitly teach that we cannot predict what potentials mankind has yet to fulfill. However, their undialectical method has, at least for the social pessimism that emerges from allegedly conflicting experi-

ence, made their appeal to essence and determination seem "plebeian" and has distorted the actual state of affairs. The denial of an unchanging, constant human nature should, on the other hand, not be taken as an absolute to the extent that the belief in a universal human nature appears only as a slight error. One must also recognize that happiness and misery run constantly through history; that human beings as they are have their limits and deserve consideration; and that there is a price to be paid for overlooking those limits.