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Off the Beaten Track

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The problematic issue that prevails here, then, comes to a head at the very place in the discussion where the essence of language and of poetry is touched upon, all this, again, only in reference to the belonging together of being and saying.

It remains an unavoidable necessity that the reader, who naturally comes to the essay from without, at first and for a long time thereafter, represent and interpret the facts of the case from out of the silent domain that is the source of what has been thought. But for the author himself there remains the necessity to speak each time in the language that is, in each case, appropriate to the various stations on his way.

The Age of the World Picture

In metaphysics, reflection on the essence of beings and a decision concerning the essence of truth is accomplished. Metaphysics grounds an age in that, through a particular interpretation of beings and through a particular comprehension of truth, it provides that age with the ground of its essential shape. This ground comprehensively governs all decisions distinctive of the age. Conversely, in order for there to be adequate reflection on these phenomena [*Ercheinungen*], their metaphysical ground must allow itself to be recognized in them. Reflection is the courage to put up for question the truth of one's own presuppositions and the space of one's own goals (Appendix 1).¹

One of the essential phenomena of modernity is its science. Of equal importance is machine technology. One should not, however, misconstrue this as the mere application of modern mathematical science to praxis. Machine technology is itself an autonomous transformation of praxis, a transformation which first demands the employment of mathematical science. Machine technology still remains the most visible outgrowth of the essence of modern technology, an essence which is identical with the essence of modern metaphysics.

A third, equally essential phenomenon of modernity lies in the process of art's moving into the purview of aesthetics. This means the artwork becomes an object of experience [*Erlebens*] and consequently is considered to be an expression of human life.

A fourth modern phenomenon announces itself in the fact that human action is understood and practiced as culture. Culture then becomes the realization of the highest values through the care and cultivation of man's highest goods. It belongs to the essence of culture, as such care, that it, in turn, takes itself into care and then becomes the politics of culture.

A fifth phenomenon of modernity is the loss of the gods [*Entgötterung*]. This expression does not mean the mere elimination of the gods, crude atheism. The loss of the gods is a twofold process. On the one hand, the world picture Christianizes itself inasmuch as the ground of the world is posited as infinite and unconditioned, as the absolute. On the other hand, Christendom reinterprets its Christianity as a world view (the Christian world view) and thus makes itself modern and up to date. The loss of the gods is the condition of indecision about God and the gods. Christianity is chiefly responsible for bringing it about. But loss of the gods is far from excluding religiosity. Rather, it is on its account that the relation to the gods is transformed into religious experience [*Erleben*]. When this happens, the gods have fled. The resulting void is filled by the historical and psychological investigation of myth.

What conception of beings and what interpretation of truth lies at the basis of these phenomena?

We confine the question to the first of the phenomena mentioned above, natural science.

In what is the essence of modern science to be found?

What conception of beings and of truth grounds this essence? If we can manage to come upon the metaphysical ground which provides the foundation of science as a modern phenomenon, then it must be possible to recognize from out of that ground the essence of modernity in general.

As we use the word science these days, it means something essentially different from the *doctrina* and *scientia* of the Middle Ages, different, too, from the Greek *ἐπιστήμη*. Greek science was never exact precisely because, according to its essence, it neither could be, nor needed to be, exact. Hence, it makes no sense at all to assert that contemporary science is more exact than the science of antiquity. Neither can one say that Galileo's doctrine of free-falling bodies is true while Aristotle's teaching that light bodies strive upwards is false. For the Greek understanding of the nature of body and place and of the relation between them rests on a different interpretation of beings. It determines, therefore, a correspondingly different way of seeing and questioning natural occurrences. No one would presume to say that Shakespeare's poetry is more advanced than that of Aeschylus. It is even more impossible to say that the contemporary understanding of beings is more correct than that of the Greeks. If, then, we wish to grasp the essence of contemporary science we must first free ourselves of the habit of comparing modern with older science – from the perspective of progress – merely in terms of degree.

The essence of what is today called science is research. In what does the essence of research consist?

It consists in the fact that knowing establishes itself as a procedure within some realm of beings in nature or history. Procedure, here, does not just mean methodology, how things are done. For every procedure requires, in advance, an open region within which it operates. But precisely the opening up of such a region constitutes the fundamental occurrence in research. This is accomplished through the projection, within some region of (for example, natural) beings, of a ground-plan [*Grundriss*] of natural processes. Such a projection maps out in advance the way in which the procedure of knowing is to bind itself to the region that is opened up. This commitment [*Bindung*] is the rigor of research. Through the projection of the ground-plan and the prescribing of rigor, procedure secures for itself, within the realm of being, its sphere of objects. A glance at mathematical physics – the earliest of modern sciences which is, at the same time, normative for the rest – will make clear what we mean. Insofar as modern atomic physics still remains physics, what is essential – which is all that concerns us here – will be true of it as well.

Modern physics is called “mathematical” because it makes use, in a remarkable way, of a quite specific kind of mathematics. But it is only able to proceed mathematically because, in a deeper sense, it is already mathematical. *Τὸ μαθηματικόν* means, in Greek, that which, in his observation of beings and interaction with things, man knows in advance: the corporeality of bodies, the vegetable character of plants, the animality of animals, the humanness of human beings. Along with these, belonging to the already-known, i.e., “mathematical,” are the numbers. When we discover three apples on the table we recognize that there are three of them. But the number three, threeness, we know already. That is to say: the number is something “mathematical.” Only because numbers represent, so to speak, the most striking of the always-already-known, and therefore the best-known instances of the mathematical, is “the mathematical” directly reserved as a name for the numerical. The essence of the mathematical, however, is in no way defined in terms of the numerical. Physics is, in general, knowledge of nature. In particular, it is knowledge of material corporeality in motion; for corporeality manifests itself immediately and universally – albeit in different ways – in all natural things. When, therefore, physics assumes an explicitly “mathematical” form, what this means is the following: that through and for it, in an emphatic way, something is specified in advance as that which is already known. This specification concerns nothing less than

what, for the sought-after knowledge of nature, is henceforth to count as "nature": the closed system of spatio-temporally related units of mass. Pertaining to this ground-plan, in accordance with its prior specification, are to be found, among others, the following definitions. Motion is change of place. No motion or direction of motion takes precedence over any other. Every place is equal to every other. No point in time has precedence over any other. Every force is defined as – is, that is, nothing but – its consequences as motion within the unity of time; and that means, again, change of place. Every natural event must be viewed in such a way that it fits into this ground-plan of nature. Only within the perspective of this ground-plan does a natural event become visible as such. The ground-plan of nature is secured in place in that physical research, in each step of investigation, is obligated to it in advance. This obligation [*Bindung*], the rigor of research, has, at a given time, its own character in keeping with the ground-plan. The rigor of mathematical science is exactitude. Every event, if it enters at all into representation as a natural event, is determined, in advance, as a magnitude of spatio-temporal motion. Such determination is achieved by means of numbers and calculation. Mathematical research into nature is not, however, exact because it calculates precisely; rather, it must calculate precisely because the way it is bound to its domain of objects has the character of exactness. The human sciences, by contrast, indeed all the sciences that deal with living things, precisely in order to remain disciplined and rigorous, are necessarily inexact. One can, indeed, view living things, too, as magnitudes of spatio-temporal motion, but what one apprehends is then no longer living. The inexactness of the historical human sciences is then a deficiency but rather the fulfillment of an essential requirement of this type of research. It is true, also, that the projecting and the securing of the domain of objects is, in the historical sciences, not only different, but far more difficult to achieve than is the rigor of the exact sciences.

Science becomes research through the projected plan and through the securing of the plan in the rigor of procedure. Projection and rigor, however, first develop into what they are in method. Method constitutes the second essential characteristic of research. If the projected region is to become objectified, then it must be brought to encounter us in the full multiplicity of its levels and interweavings. Procedure must therefore be free to view the changeableness in what it encounters. Only from within the perspective of the ever-otherness of change does the plenitude of the particular, of the facts, reveal itself. The facts, however, are to become objective. Procedure must, therefore, represent the changeable in its changing; it must bring it

to stand and yet allow the motion to remain a motion. The fixedness of the facts and the constancy of their change as such is the rule. The constancy of change in the necessity of its course is the law. Only from the perspective of rule and law do facts become clear as what they are. Research into the facts in the realm of nature is the setting up and confirmation of rule and law. The method by means of which a domain of objects is represented has the character of a clarification [*Klärung*] from out of the clear, of explanation [*Erklärung*]. Explanation always has two sides to it. It accounts for something unknown through something known, and at the same time confirms the known through that unknown. Explanation takes place in investigation. In the natural sciences this happens in the experiment, always according to the nature of the field of investigation and the kind of explanation aimed at. However, natural science does not first become research through experiment. It is rather the other way round: experiment is only possible where knowledge of nature has already transformed itself into research. It is only because contemporary physics is a physics that is essentially mathematical that it is capable of being experimental. Since neither the medieval *doctrina* nor the Greek *ἐπιστήμη* were science in the sense of research, there was, for them, no question of experiment. To be sure, Aristotle was the first to grasp the meaning of *ἐμπειρία* (*experientia*): the observation of the things themselves, their characteristics and alterations under changing conditions, resulting in knowledge of the way in which they behave as a rule. But observation directed toward knowledge of this kind, the *experimentum*, is essentially different from that which belongs to science as research, the research-experiment. It remains essentially different even where ancient and medieval observation also works with number and measure, and even where it makes use of specific apparatus and instruments. For what is completely absent here is what is decisive about the experiment. This begins with the fundamental postulation of a law. To set up an experiment is to represent a condition according to which a specific nexus of motions can become capable of being followed in its necessary course, which is to say that it can be mastered, in advance, by calculation. The setting up of the law, however, is accomplished with reference to the ground-plan of the sphere of objects. This provides the standard and constrains the anticipatory representation of the condition. Such representing with and within which the experiment begins is no arbitrary invention. This is why Newton says *hypotheses non fingo*; the fundamental postulations are not arbitrarily thought up. They are, rather, developed out of the ground-plan of nature and are sketched into it. Experiment is that method which,

in its planning and execution, is supported and guided by what is postulated as a fundamental law, in order to bring forth the facts which either confirm the law or deny it such confirmation. The more exact the projection of the ground-plan of nature the more exact is the possibility of experiment. The often mentioned medieval scholastic, Roger Bacon, can, therefore, never be the forerunner of the contemporary experimental researcher but remains, rather, merely the successor of Aristotle. For in the meantime, genuine possession of the truth has, through Christianity, been transferred to faith – to the truth preserved in the written word and in church doctrine. The highest knowledge and teaching is theology considered as interpretation of the divine word of revelation that is recorded in scripture and proclaimed by the Church. Here, knowledge is not research but rather right understanding of the normative word and of the authorities who proclaim it. For this reason, discussion of the words and doctrinal opinions of the various authorities takes precedence in the process of knowledge-acquisition in the Middle Ages. The *componere scripta et sermones*, the *argumentum ex verbo*, is decisive and, at the same time, the reason why the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy that had been adopted, had to become scholastic dialectic. If, then, Roger Bacon demands the *experimentum* – as he did – what he means is not the experiment of science as research. Rather he demands, in place of the *argumentum ex verbo*, the *argumentum ex re*;² instead of the discussion of doctrinal opinions, observations of the things themselves, in other words, Aristotelian ἐμπειρία.

The modern research-experiment is, however, not merely an observation that is more precise in degree and scope. It is, rather, an essentially different kind of methodology for the verification of law within the framework and in the service of an exact projection of nature. In the historical human sciences “source criticism” corresponds to the experiment of physical research. This name covers, here, the whole range of discovery, examination, verification, evaluation, preservation, and interpretation. It is indeed true that the historical explanation based on source-criticism does not subsume the facts under laws and rules. Yet it is not reduced to a mere reporting of the facts. As in the natural sciences, method in the historical sciences is aimed at presenting the constant and at making history an object. History can only be objectified when it is something past. The constancy of the past, that on the basis of which historical explanation takes into account the unique and diverse in history, is the having-always-already-been-there, that which can be compared. Through the constant comparisons of everything with everything else the intelligible is worked out and, as the ground-plan

of history, certified and secured. The sphere of historical research extends only as far as the reach of historical explanation. The unique, the rare, the simple – in short, greatness in history – is never self-evident and hence remains incapable of explanation. It is not that historical research denies greatness in history; rather, it explains it as the exception. In such explanation the great is measured against the ordinary and average. There is no other kind of historical explanation as long as explanation means subsuming under the intelligible, and as long as historical science remains research, i.e., explanation. Because, as research, history projects and objectifies the past as an explicable and surveyable nexus of effects, it demands source-criticism as the instrument of objectification. The standards of such criticism alter to the degree that historical science approaches journalism.

As research, every science is based on the projection of a bounded object domain and necessarily possesses, therefore, an individualized character. In developing its projection through its methodology, moreover, every individual science must focus on a particular field of investigation. This focusing (specialization) is, however, by no means merely the dire side effect of the increasing unsurveyability of the results of research. It is not a necessary evil, but rather the essential necessity of science as research. 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 [Betriebl] (Appendix 2).

By this term is to be understood, first of all, that phenomenon whereby a science, whether natural or humanistic, in order to achieve proper recognition today as a science is required to be capable of being institutionalized. Research is not, however, constant activity because its work is carried out in institutions; rather, institutions are necessary because science, as, intrinsically, research, has the character of constant activity. The methodology through which individual object domains are conquered does not simply amass results. Rather, it uses its results to direct itself toward a new procedure. In the mechanical installation that enables physics to smash the atom we have the whole of physics up to now. Similarly, in historical research, the stock of sources only becomes usable when the sources themselves are verified by historical explanation. In these processes the methodology of a science is circumscribed by its own results. More and more, methodology adapts itself to the possibilities of procedure it itself opens up. This having-to-be-based on its own results as the ways and means of a progressing

methodology, is the essence of the character of research as constant activity. That character, however, is the inner ground for the necessity of its institutional character.

It is in constant activity that the projection of the object domain is, for the first time, built into beings. All arrangements that facilitate the planned amalgamation of different types of methodology, promote the reciprocal checking and communication of results, and regulate the exchange of labor are measures which are by no means merely the external consequence of the fact that research work is expanding and diversifying. Rather, they are the distant and still by no means comprehended sign that modern science begins to enter the decisive phase of its history. Only now does it take possession of its own complete essence.

What is going on in the spread and entrenchment of the institutional character of the sciences? Nothing less than the establishment of the precedence of methodology over the beings (of nature and history) which, at a particular time, are objectified in research. On the basis of their character as constant activity, the sciences create for themselves the appropriate coherence and unity. For this reason, historical or archeological research that has become institutionally active is essentially nearer to research in physics than is organized in a similar way than it is to a discipline in its own faculty of humanities which has remained within mere scholarship. The decisive unfolding of the character of modern science as constant activity produces, therefore, a human being of another stamp. The scholar disappears and is replaced by the researcher engaged in research programs. These, and not the cultivation of scholarship, are what places his work at the cutting edge [*gehen seiner Arbeit die scharfe Luft*]. The researcher no longer needs a library at home. He is, moreover, constantly on the move. He negotiates at conferences and collects information at congresses. He commits himself to publishers' commissions. It is publishers who now determine which books need to be written (Appendix 3).

From an inner compulsion, the researcher presses forward into the sphere occupied by the figure of, in the essential sense, the technologist. Only in this way can he remain capable of being effective, and only then, in the eyes of his age, is he real. Alongside him, an increasingly thinner and emptier romanticism of scholarship and the university will still be able to survive for some time at certain places. The effective unity and therefore the reality of the university, however, does not lie in the spiritual-intellectual [*geistige*] power of the primordial unity of the sciences, a power emanating from the university because nourished and preserved by it. The reality of

the university is that it is an establishment which still, in a unique way, on account of its administratively self-contained form, makes possible and visible both the fragmentation of the sciences into the specialities and the peculiar unity of constant activity. Because it is in constant activity that the essential forces of modern science become immediately and unambiguously effective, it is only self-directed research activities which, proceeding from themselves, can prefigure and establish an inner unity with other appropriate research activities.

The real system of science consists in the coherence of procedure and stance with respect to the objectification of beings, in conformity, at any given time, with planning. The advantage this system is required to promote is no contrived and rigid unification of the contents of the object domains. Rather, it is the greatest possible free, though regulated, flexibility in the changing around and initiation of research with respect to whatever are the principle tasks of the moment. The more exclusively a science becomes focused on the complete carrying out and mastery of its process of working, the more these activities are – without illusion – shifted into research institutes and professional schools for research, then the more irresistibly do the sciences achieve the completion of their modern essence. The more unconditionally, however, science and research take seriously the modern shape of their essence, the more unequivocally and immediately are they themselves able to stand ready to serve the common good; and the more unreservedly, too, will they have to withdraw into the public anonymity of all socially useful work.

Modern science simultaneously founds and differentiates itself in the projection of particular object domains. These projections are developed by the appropriate methodologies which are made secure by means of rigor. Method establishes itself at any given time in constant activity. Projection and rigor, method and constant activity, each demanding the other, make up the essence of modern science, make it into research.

We are reflecting on the essence of modern science in order to discover its metaphysical ground. What understanding of beings and what concept of truth is it that underlies the transformation of science into research?

Knowledge as research calls beings to account with regard to the way in which, and the extent to which, they can be placed at the disposal of representation. Research has beings at its disposal when it can, through calculation, either predict their future or retrodict their past. In the prediction of nature and retrodiction of history, nature and history are set in place in the same way. They become objects of explanatory representation. Such

representation counts on nature and takes account of history. Only what becomes, in this way, an object *is* – counts as in being. We first arrive at science as research when the being of beings is sought in such objectness.

This objectification of beings is accomplished in a setting-before, a representing [*Vor-stellen*], aimed at bringing each being before it in such a way that the man who calculates can be sure – and that means certain – of the being. Science as research first arrives when, and only when, truth has transformed itself into the certainty of representation. It is in the metaphysics of Descartes that, for the first time, the being is defined as the objectness of representation, and truth as the certainty of representation. The title of his main work reads *Meditationes de prima philosophia, Meditationes on First Philosophy*. Πρώτη φιλοσοφία is the term coined by Aristotle for that which was later called “metaphysics.” The whole of modern metaphysics, Nietzsche included, maintains itself within the interpretation of the being and of truth opened up by Descartes (Appendix 4).

If, now, science as research is an essential phenomenon of modernity, it must follow that what constitutes the metaphysical ground of research determines, first, and long in advance, the essence of modernity in general. The essence of modernity can be seen in humanity’s freeing itself from the bonds of the Middle Ages in that it frees itself to itself. But this characterization, though correct, is merely the foreground. And it leads to those mistakes which prevent one from grasping the essential ground of modernity and, proceeding from there, judging the breadth of that essence. Certainly the modern age has, as a consequence of the liberation of humanity, introduced subjectivism and individualism. But it remains just as certain that no age before this one has produced a comparable objectivism, and that in no age before this has the non-individual, in the shape of the collective, been accorded prestige. Of the essence here is the necessary interplay between subjectivism and objectivism. But precisely this reciprocal conditioning of the one by the other refers us back to deeper processes.

What is decisive is not that humanity frees itself from previous bonds but, rather, that the essence of humanity altogether transforms itself in that man becomes the subject. To be sure, this word “subject” must be understood as the translation of the Greek ὑποκείμενον. The word names that-which-lies-before, that which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself. This metaphysical meaning of the concept of the subject has, in the first instance, no special relationship to man, and none at all to the I.

When, however, man becomes the primary and genuine *subiectum*, this means that he becomes that being upon which every being, in its way of

being and its truth, is founded. Man becomes the referential center of beings as such. But this is only possible when there is a transformation in the understanding of beings as a whole. In what does this transformation manifest itself? What, in accordance with it, is the essence of modernity?

When we reflect on the modern age, we inquire after the modern world picture. We characterize this by contrasting it with the world picture of the Middle Ages and of antiquity. But why is it that, in interpreting a historical age, we inquire into its world picture? Does every historical epoch have its world picture – have it in such a way, indeed, so as, from time to time, to concern itself about that picture? Or is it only a modern kind of representing that inquires into a world picture?

What is it – a “world picture”? Obviously, a picture of the world. But what is a world? What does “picture” mean here? “World” serves, here, as a name for beings in their entirety. The term is not confined to the cosmos, to nature. History, too, belongs to world. But even nature and history – interpenetrating in their suffusion and exceeding of each other – do not exhaust world. Under this term we also include the world-ground, no matter how its relation to world is thought (Appendix 5).

Initially, the word “picture” makes one think of a copy of something. This would make the world picture, as it were, a painting of beings as a whole. But “world picture” means more than this. We mean by it the world itself; the totality of beings taken, as it is for us, as standard-giving and obligating. “Picture” means, here, not a mere imitation, but rather that which sounds in the colloquial expression to be “in the picture” about something. This means: the matter itself stands in the way it stands to us, before us. To “put oneself in the picture” about something means: to place the being itself before one just as things are with it, and, as so placed, to keep it permanently before one. But a decisive condition in the essence of the picture is still missing. That we are “in the picture” about something means not just that the being is placed before, represented by, us. It means, rather, that it stands before us together with what belongs to and stands together with it as a system. To be “in the picture” resonates with: being well informed, being equipped and prepared. Where the world becomes picture, beings as a whole are set in place as that for which man is prepared; that which, therefore, he correspondingly intends to bring before him, have before him, and, thereby, in a decisive sense, place before him (Appendix 6). Understood in an essential way, “world picture” does not mean “picture of the world” but, rather, the world grasped as picture. Beings as a whole are now taken in such a way that a being is first and only in being insofar as it is set in place

by representing-producing [*vorstellend-herstellenden*] humanity. Whenever we have a world picture, an essential decision occurs concerning beings as a whole. The being of beings is sought and found in the representedness of beings. Where, however, beings are *not* interpreted in this way, the world, too, cannot come into the picture – there can be no world picture. That beings acquire being in and through representedness makes the age in which this occurs a new age, distinct from its predecessors. The familiar phrases “world picture of modernity” and “modern world picture” say the same thing twice. And they presuppose something that could never before have existed, namely, a medieval and ancient world picture. 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. For the Middle Ages, by contrast, the being is the *ens creatum*, that which is created by the personal creator-God who is considered to be the highest cause. Here, to be a being means: to belong to a particular rank in the order of created things, and, as thus created, to correspond to the cause of creation (*analogia entis*) (Appendix 7). But never does the being’s being consist in its being brought before man as the objective. Never does it consist in being placed in the realm of man’s information and disposal so that, in this way alone, is it in being.

The modern interpretation of beings is still further removed from that of the Greeks. One of the oldest expressions of Greek thinking about the being of beings reads: *Tò γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι*.³ This statement of Parmenides means: the apprehension of beings belongs to being since it is from being that it is demanded and determined. The being is that which rises up and opens itself; that which, as what is present, comes upon man, i.e., upon him who opens himself to what is present in that he apprehends it. The being does not acquire being in that man first looks upon it in the sense of representation that has the character of subjective perception. Rather, man is the one who is looked upon by beings, the one who is gathered by self-opening beings into presencing with them. To be looked at by beings,^a to be included and maintained and so supported by their openness, to be driven about by their conflict and marked by their dividedness, that is the essence of humanity in the great age of Greece. In order to fulfill his essence, therefore, man has to gather (*λέγειν*) and save (*σώζειν*), catch up and preserve, the self-opening in its openness; and he must remain exposed to all of its divisive confusion. Greek humanity is the receiver [*Vernehmer*] of beings,

^a First edition, 1950: by being as presencing *taken as* εἶδος.

which is the reason that, in the age of the Greeks, the world can never become picture. On the other hand, however, is the fact that the beingness of beings is defined, for Plato, as εἶδος (appearance, view). This is the presupposition which – long prevailing only mediately, in concealment and long in advance – predestined the world’s having to become picture (Appendix 8). In distinction from the Greek apprehension, modern representing, whose signification is first expressed by the word *repräsentatio*, means something quite different. Representation [*Vorstellen*] here means: to bring the present-at-hand before one as something standing over-and-against, to relate it to oneself, the presenter, and, in this relation, to force it back to oneself as the norm-giving domain. Where this happens man “puts himself in the picture” concerning beings. When, however, in this way, he does this, he places himself in the scene; in, that is, the sphere of what is generally and publicly represented. And what goes along with this is that man sets himself forth as the scene in which, henceforth, beings must set-themselves-before, present themselves – be, that is to say, in the picture. Man becomes the representative [*Repräsentant*] of beings in the sense of the objective.

What is new, however, in this occurrence does not at all consist in the fact, merely, that the position of man in the midst of beings is other than it was for ancient of medieval man. What is decisive is that man specifically takes up this position as one constituted by himself, intentionally maintains it as that taken up by himself, and secures it in place as the basis for a possible development of humanity. Now for the first time there exists such a thing as the “position” of man. Man makes depend on himself the way he is to stand to beings as the objective. What begins is that mode of human being which occupies the realm of human capacity as the domain of measuring and execution for the purpose of the mastery of beings as a whole. The age that is determined by this event is not only new in retrospective comparison with what had preceded it. It is new, rather, in that it explicitly sets itself up as the new. To be “new” belongs to a world that has become picture.

If, then, we wish to clarify the pictorial character of the world as the representedness of beings, then in order fully to grasp the modern essence of representedness we must scent out the original naming power of that worn-out word and concept “to represent”: to put forth and relate to oneself. It is through this that the being comes to stand as an object and so first receives the seal of being. That the world becomes picture is one and the same process whereby, in the midst of beings, man becomes subject (Appendix 9).

Only because and insofar as man, altogether and essentially, has become subject is it necessary for him to confront, as a consequence, this explicit

question: is it as an "I" that is reduced to its random desires and abandoned to an arbitrary free-will or as the "we" of society; is it as individual or as community; is it as a personal being within the community or as a mere member of the body corporate; is it as a state, nation, or people or as the indifferent humanity of modern man, that man wills and must be that subject which, as the essence of modernity, he *already is*? Only where, in essence, man has become subject does there exist the possibility of sliding into the unbeing of subjectivism in the sense of individualism. But it is also the case that only where man *remains* subject does it make any sense to struggle explicitly against individualism and for the community as the goal and arena of all achievement and utility.

The interweaving of these two processes – that the world becomes picture and man the subject – which is decisive for the essence of modernity illuminates the founding process of modern history, a process that, at first sight, seems almost nonsensical. The process, namely, whereby the more completely and comprehensively the world, as conquered, whereby the more disposal, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively (i.e., peremptorily) does the *subjectum* rise up, and all the more inexorably, too, do observations and teachings about the world transform themselves into a doctrine of man, into an anthropology. No wonder that humanism first arises where the world becomes picture. In the great age of the Greeks, however, it was as impossible for a humanism to gain currency as it was for there to be anything like a world picture. Humanism, therefore, in the narrower, historical sense, is nothing but a moral-aesthetic anthropology. The name "anthropology," here, does not refer to an investigation of humanity by natural science. Neither does it mean the doctrine established within Christian theology concerning created, fallen, and deemed humanity. It designates, rather, that philosophical interpretation of man which explains and evaluates beings as a whole from the standpoint of and in relation to, man (Appendix 10).

The ever more exclusive rooting of the interpretation of the world in anthropology which has set in since the end of the eighteenth century finds expression in the fact that man's fundamental relation to beings as a whole is defined as a world view [*Weltanschauung*]. It is since then that this term has entered common usage. As soon as the world becomes picture the position of man is conceived as world view. It is, to be sure, easy to misunderstand the term "world view," to suppose it to have to do merely with a disengaged contemplation of the world. For this reason, already in the nineteenth century, it was rightly emphasized that "world view" also means, and even means

primarily, "view of life." The fact that, nonetheless, "world view" has asserted itself as the name for the position of man in the midst of beings proves how decisively the world becomes picture as soon as man makes his life as subject the primary center of reference. This means: the being counts as in being only to the degree and extent that it is taken into, and referred back to, this life, i.e., is lived out [*er-lebt*], and becomes life-experience [*Er-lebnis*]. As every humanism had to remain something unsuited to Greece, so a "medieval world view" was an impossibility; and a "Catholic world view" is an absurdity. Just as, for modern man, the more unbounded the way in which he takes charge of the shaping of his essence, everything must, by both necessity and right, become "experience," just as certainly, the Greeks at the Olympic festivals could never have had "experiences."

The fundamental event of modernity is the conquest of the world as picture. From now on the word "picture" means: the collective image of representing production [*das Gebild des vorstellenden Herstellens*]. Within this, man fights for the position in which he can be that being who gives to every being the measure and draws up the guidelines. Because this position secures, organizes, and articulates itself as world view, the decisive unfolding of the modern relationship to beings becomes a confrontation of world views; not, indeed, any old set of world views, but only those which have already taken hold of man's most fundamental stance with the utmost decisiveness. For the sake of this battle of world views, and according to its meaning, humanity sets in motion, with respect to everything, the unlimited process of calculation, planning, and breeding. Science as research is the indispensable form taken by this self-establishment in the world; it is one of the pathways along which, with a speed unrecognized by those who are involved, modernity races towards the fulfillment of its essence. With this battle of world views modernity first enters the decisive period of its history, and probably the one most capable of enduring (Appendix 11).

A sign of this event is the appearance everywhere, and in the most varied forms and disguises, of the gigantic. At the same time, the huge announces itself in the direction of the ever smaller. We have only to think of the numbers of atomic physics. The gigantic presses forward in a form which seems to make it disappear: in destruction of great distances by the airplane, in the representations of foreign and remote worlds in their everydayness produced at will by the flick of a switch. One thinks too superficially, however, if one takes the gigantic to be merely an endlessly extended emptiness of the purely quantitative. One thinks too briefly if one finds the gigantic,

in the form of the continual never-having-been-here-before, to spring merely from a blind impulse to exaggerate and excel. One thinks not at all if one takes oneself to have explained this appearance of the gigantic with the slogan "Americanism" (Appendix 12).

The gigantic is, rather, that through which the quantitative acquires its own kind of quality, becoming thereby, a remarkable form of the great. A historical age is not only great in a different way from others; it also has, in every case, its own concept of greatness. As soon, however, as the gigantic, in planning, calculating, establishing, and securing, changes from the quantitative and becomes its own special quality, then the gigantic and the seemingly completely calculable become, through this shift, incalculable. This incalculability becomes the invisible shadow cast over all things when man has become the *subiectum* and world has become picture (Appendix 13).

Through this shadow the modern world withdraws into a space beyond representation and so lends to the incalculable its own determinateness and historical uniqueness. This shadow, however, points to something else, knowledge of which, to us moderns, is refused (Appendix 14). Yet man will never be able to experience and think this refusal as long as he goes around merely negating the age. The flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and presumption, achieves, in itself, nothing, is merely a closing the eyes and blindness towards the historical moment [*Augenblick*].

Man will know the incalculable – that is, safeguard it in its truth – only in creative questioning and forming from out of the power of genuine reflection. Reflection transports the man of the future into that "in-between" in which he belongs to being and yet, amidst beings, remains a stranger (Appendix 15). Hölderlin knew about this. His poem, above which is written "To the Germans," closes:⁴

True, narrowly bounded is our lifetime,
We see and count the number of our years
But the years of the peoples,
Have they been seen by mortal eye?

Even if your soul soars in longing
Beyond its own time, mourning
You linger on the cold shore
Among your own, and know them not.

Wohl ist enge begrenzt unsere Lebenszeit,
Unserer Jahre Zahl sehen und zählen wir,
Doch die Jahre der Völker
sah ein sterbliches Auge sie?

Wenn die Seele dir auch über die eigne Zeit
Sich die schnende schwingt, trauernd verweilst du
Dann am kalten Gestade
Bei den Deinen und kennst sie nie.

APPENDICES

(1) Such reflection is neither necessary for all nor is it to be accomplished, or even found bearable, by everyone. On the contrary, absence of reflection belongs, to a very great extent, to the particular stages of accomplishing and being constantly active. The questioning that belongs to reflection, however, does not fall into that which is groundless and beyond questioning because, in advance, it asks after being. This remains that which is most worthy of question [*Fragewürdigste*]. Reflection finds in being the utmost resistance, which constrains it to deal seriously with beings as they are drawn into the light of their being. Reflection on the essence of modernity places thought and decision within the sphere of effectiveness belonging to the authentically essential forces of the age. These forces work, as they work, beyond the reach of everyday evaluation. With respect to such forces there is only preparedness for the resolution or else the evasive turning to the ahistorical. In this connection, however, it is not sufficient, for example, to affirm technology or, out of a stance incomparably more essential, to set up "total mobilization" as an absolute, once it is recognized as being at hand.⁵ It is a matter of, in advance and continually, grasping the essence of the age from out of the truth of being that prevails in it; for only thus is that which is most-worthy-of-questioning simultaneously experienced – that which bears and constrains a creating into the future which takes us beyond what is at hand, and lets the transformation of humanity become one that springs from the necessity of being itself.⁶ No age lets itself be done away with by a negating decree. Negation merely throws the negator off the track. Modernity requires, however, in order, in the future, for it to be resisted in its essence and on the strength of that essence, an originality and breadth of reflection for which, perhaps, we moderns can prepare somewhat, but over which we can certainly never gain mastery.

(2) The phrase "constant activity" [*Betrieb*] is not intended here in a pejorative sense. Yet because the essence of research is constant activity, the

⁵ First edition, 1950: usage [*Brauch*].

industrious activity of mere busyness [*Betriebsamkeit des bloßen Betriebs*] which is always a possibility, creates the appearance of a higher reality behind which the excavations of research-work are accomplished. Constant activity becomes mere busyness when its methodology no longer holds itself open on the basis of an ever new completion of its projection, but rather leaves this behind as something simply given and no longer ever requiring confirmation; instead, all it does is to chase after results piling on top of each other and their calculation. Mere busyness must, at all times, be resisted – precisely because, in its essence, research is constant activity. If one seeks to discover the scientific in science merely in serene erudition, then it indeed seems as though the repudiation of constant activity would also be the denial of the essential character of research as constant activity. What, however, is certainly true is that the more completely research becomes constant activity and in this way becomes fruitful, the more steadily there grows within it the danger of becoming mere busyness. In the end we reach a situation where the difference between constant activity and busyness [*Betrieb und Betriebl*] is not only unrecognizable, but has become unreal. Precisely the leveling out of its essence and non-essence in the averageness of the taken-for-granted, makes research – as the shape of science and so of modernity in general – capable of enduring. But where, within constant activity, is research to discover a counter-balance to mere busyness?

(3) The growing importance of the publishing business is not merely based on the fact that the publishers (through, for example, the book trade) have a better eye for the needs of the public, or that they understand business better than do authors. Rather, their distinctive work takes the form of a process of planning and organizing aimed, through the planned and limited publication of books and periodicals, at bringing the world into the picture the public has of it and securing it there. The predominance of collected works, sets of books, journal series, and pocket editions is already the result of this work on the part of the publishers. This work coincides, in turn, with the aims of researchers, since these not only become more easily and rapidly known and respected through series and collections, but also, along a wider front, immediately achieve their intended effect.

(4) The metaphysical foundation of Descartes' position is taken over historically from Platonic-Aristotelian metaphysics. Despite its new beginning, it attends to the very same question: what is the being? That this question is not explicitly posed in Descartes' *Meditations* only goes to prove how

essentially the fundamental position determines a transformation in the answer to it. It is Descartes' interpretation of beings and of truth which first creates the preconditions for the possibility of a theory or metaphysics of knowledge. Through Descartes, realism is for the first time put in the position of having to prove the reality of the external world, of having to rescue the being as such.

The essential modifications of Descartes' fundamental position which have been achieved by German thinking since Leibniz in no way overcome this fundamental position. They only expand its metaphysical scope and establish the preconditions of the nineteenth century – still the most obscure of all the centuries up to now. They indirectly reinforce Descartes' fundamental position in a form that is scarcely recognizable, yet not, on that account, any the less real. By contrast, mere Cartesian scholasticism, together with its rationalism, has lost all power for the further shaping of the character of modernity. With Descartes, there begins the completion of Western metaphysics. Since, however, such a completion is only possible as metaphysics, modern thinking has its own kind of greatness.

With the interpretation of man as *subiectum*, Descartes created the metaphysical presupposition for future anthropology of every kind and tendency. In the rise of anthropologies he celebrates his greatest triumph. Through anthropology, the transition of metaphysics into the event of the simple cessation and suspension of all philosophy is inaugurated. That Dilthey disavowed metaphysics – that, at bottom, he no longer understood its question and stood helpless before metaphysical logic – is the inner consequence of the anthropological character of his fundamental position. His "philosophy of philosophy" is a leading example of anthropology's doing away with – as opposed to overcoming – philosophy. This is why every anthropology that makes use of philosophy as the occasion arises, yet simultaneously declares it to be, as philosophy, superfluous, has the advantage of seeing clearly what is demanded by the affirmation of anthropology. Through this, the intellectual situation is somewhat clarified. The laborious fabrication of such absurd entities as "National Socialist philosophies," on the other hand, merely creates confusion. The world view indeed needs and makes use of philosophical erudition, but it needs no philosophy since, as world view, it has already adopted its own interpretation and structuring of what is. But one thing, surely, even anthropology cannot do. It cannot overcome Descartes, nor even resist him. For how could the consequence ever attack the ground on which it stands?

Descartes can only be overcome through the overcoming of that which he himself founded, through the overcoming, namely, of modern (and that means, at the same time, Western) metaphysics. "Overcoming" means here, however, the primal asking of the question of the meaning of being; of, that is, the sphere of projection and with it the truth of being. This question unveils itself as, at the same time, the question of the being of truth.

(5) The conception of the world as developed in *Being and Time* is to be understood only within the perspective of the question about "being-there [*Da-sein*]." This question remains, for its part, closely connected with the fundamental question concerning the meaning of being (not of beings).

(6) To the essence of the picture belongs standing-together, system. By this, however, we do not mean the artificial, external simplification and collecting together of the given but, rather, the unfolding, developing unity of structure within that which is set-before, represented as such, which arises from the projection of the objectness of beings. In the Middle Ages a system is impossible. For there, all that is essential is the order of correspondences or, more precisely, the order of beings in the sense of what is created and, as his creation, watched over by God. System is still more foreign to Greece – even though, these days, one speaks, in a quite unjustified way, of the Platonic and Aristotelian "systems." The constant activity of research is a particular embodiment and ordering of the systematic, in which, at the same time, the latter reciprocally determines the ordering. When the world becomes picture, system achieves dominion – and not only in thought. Where system takes the lead, however, there always exists the possibility of its degeneration into the externality of a system that is merely fabricated and pieced together. This is what happens when the original power of the projection remains absent. The uniqueness of the systematic of Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling – a systematic that is inherently diverse – has still not been understood. The greatness of the systematic of these thinkers consists in the fact that it does not unfold, as with Descartes, out of the *subiectum* as *ego* and *substantia finita*. Rather, it unfolds either, as with Leibniz, out of the monad or, as with Kant, out of the transcendental essence of finite reason rooted in the imagination, or, as with Fichte, out of the infinite "I," or, as with Hegel, out of the spirit of absolute knowledge, or, finally, as with Schelling, from out of freedom as the necessity of every particular being which, as such a being, remains determined through the distinction between ground and existence.

No less essential to the modern interpretation of beings is the representation of value. Where beings have become objects of representation, there, for the first time, in a certain sense, a loss of being occurs. This loss – vaguely and uncertainly enough perceived – is correspondingly quickly made up for through the fact that we attribute to the object and the thus-interpreted being a value; in general, we assess beings according to values and make them the goal of all action and activity. Since this latter conceives itself as culture, values become "cultural values" and these become the general expression of the highest goals of creation devoted to the self-establishment of man as *subiectum*. From here it is only a short step to making values into objects in themselves. Values become the objectification of needs as goals brought about by a representing self-establishment within the world as picture. Values appear to be the expression of the fact that, in relation to them, man strives to promote precisely what is most valuable. In fact, however, it is precisely "values" that are the powerless and threadbare mask of the objectification of beings, an objectification that has become flat and devoid of background. No one dies for mere values. For the sake of illuminating the nineteenth century, we should note, here, the intermediate position of Hermann Lotze. At the same time as he was interpreting Plato's ideas as values, Lotze undertook, under the title *Microcosmos*, that Attempt at an *Anthropology* (1856) which, while still drawing on the spirit of German idealism for the nobility and simplicity of its mode of thinking, at the same time also opened that thinking to positivism. Because Nietzsche's thought remains imprisoned in value-representation, he has to express what is essential to him in a retrospective form as the revaluation of all values. Only when we succeed in grasping Nietzsche's thought independently of value-representation, do we achieve a standpoint from which the work of the last thinker of metaphysics can be comprehended as an exercise in questioning, and his antagonism to Wagner as a necessity of our history.

(7) Correspondence, thought as the fundamental feature of the being of beings, provides the pattern for the very definite possibilities and ways in which the truth of this being of beings, within beings, sets itself into the work. The artwork of the Middle Ages and the absence of a world picture during this age belong together.

(8) But did not a Sophist at about the time of Socrates venture to say that "Man is the measure of all things, of what are, that they are, of what are not, that they are not"? Does not this statement of Protagoras sound as

though it were Descartes speaking? Is it not through Plato that the being of beings is fully grasped as the visible, the *ἰδέα*? Is not the relation to beings as such, for Aristotle, pure looking? And yet it is no more the case that Protagoras' Sophistic statement is subjectivism than it is the case that Descartes had the capacity to bring about the overturning of Greek thought. Through Plato's thinking and Aristotle's questioning there occurred, to be sure, a decisive transformation of the interpretation of beings and of man. But this transformation always remained within the Greeks' fundamental experience of beings. Precisely as a struggle against the Sophistic, and so as dependent on it, this transformed interpretation proves so decisive as to become the ending of the Greek world, an ending which indirectly helps to prepare the possibility of the modern age. This is the reason that, later on, not just in the Middle Ages but right through the modern age and up to the present, Platonic and Aristotelian thought was able to be taken as Greek thought *per se*, and why all pre-Platonic thought could be considered to be merely a preparation for Plato. Because we have long been accustomed to understand Greece in terms of a modern humanistic interpretation, it remains denied to us to think being as it opened itself to Greek antiquity, to think it in a way that allows it its ownness and strangeness.

Protagoras' statement reads:

πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν.

(cf. Plato's *Theaetetus* 152a)
Of all things (those, namely, that man has around him in use and usage, χρήματα χρήσθαι) man is (in each case) the measure, of what presences, of that, however, to which presencing is denied, that it does not presence.

The being whose being is up for decision is understood, here, as that which is present in the sphere of man, arriving in this region, of itself. Who, however, is "man"? Plato tells us in the same passage by having Socrates say:

Does he (Protagoras) not understand this somewhat as follows? Whatever, at a given time, something shows itself to me as, of such an aspect is it (also) for me; but whatever it shows itself to you as, is it not such in turn for you? But you are a man just as much as I.

Man is here, accordingly, the man in each particular case (I and you, he and she). And should not this *ἐγώ* coincide with Descartes' *ego cogito*?

Never. For in every essential respect, what determines the two fundamental metaphysical positions with equal necessity is different. What is essential to a fundamental metaphysical position embraces:

- (1) The manner and way in which man is man, that is, himself: the essential nature of selfhood which by no means coincides with I-ness, but is rather determined by the relationship to being as such.
- (2) The essential interpretation of the being of beings.
- (3) The essential projection of truth.
- (4) The sense in which, in any given instance, "man is the measure."

None of the essential moments of the fundamental metaphysical position can be understood apart from the others. Each, by itself, indicates the totality of a fundamental metaphysical position. For what reason, and to what extent, just these four moments bear and structure a fundamental metaphysical position in advance is a question which can no longer be asked or answered out of or through metaphysics. To ask it is already to speak out of the overcoming of metaphysics.

For Protagoras, to be sure, beings remain related to man as *ἐγώ*. Of what kind is this relation to the I? The *ἐγώ* stays, in the sphere of that which is apportioned to it as this particular unconcealment. Accordingly, it apprehends everything that presences within this sphere as in being. The apprehending of what presences is grounded in this staying within the sphere of unconcealment. The belonging of the I to what presences is through this staying alongside what presences. This belonging to what presences in the open draws the boundary between what is present and what absent. From out of this boundary man receives and preserves the measure of that which presences and that which absences. In his restriction to that which is unconcealed at a particular time, man gives himself the measure which confines a self in each case to this and that. Man does not set the measure to which all beings in their being here have to accommodate themselves, out of a detached I-ness. One who stands in the Greeks' fundamental relationship to beings and their unconcealment is *μέτρον* (measure) insofar as he accepts restriction to the sphere of unconcealment limited after the manner of the I; and, as a consequence, acknowledges the concealment of beings and that their presence or absence, together with the visible appearance of what is present, lies beyond his power of decision. This is why Protagoras says (Fragment 4 in Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*) *περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὐθ' ὡς εἰσὶν, οὐθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐθ' ὅποιοί τινες ἰδέναι*. "Concerning the gods, I am, admittedly, not in the position to know (i.e., for the

Greeks, to have something in "sight") either that they are, or that they are not, nor how they are in their visible aspect (*ἰδέα*)."

πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κολύοντα εἶδέναι, ἢ τ' ἀδηλόγτης καὶ βραχυῦς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. "Many, that is, are the things that prevent the apprehending of the being as what it is: both the un-openness (concealment) of beings and the brevity of man's course in history.

In view of this thoughtful circumspection on Protagoras' part, it is no wonder that Socrates says of him (Plato, *Theaetetus* 152 b) *eikōs ménτοι σοφὸν ἀνδρὰ μὴ ληπεῖν*. "We may suppose that he (Protagoras), as a sensible person, was not (in his statement about man as the μέτρον) simply babbling."

The fundamental metaphysical position of Protagoras is merely a narrowing down – which means, nonetheless, a preserving – of the fundamental position of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Sophism is only possible on the basis of *σοφία*, i.e., on the basis of the Greek interpretation of being as presence and truth as unconcealment – an unconcealment which remains itself an essential determination of being, which is why that which presences is determined out of unconcealment, and presencing out of the unconcealed as such. But how far removed is Descartes from this beginning of Greek thought, how different is the interpretation of man which represents him as subject? In the concept of the *subiectum*, there still lingers on the sound of the Greek essence of being (the ὑποκείμενα of the ὑποκείμενον) in the form of a presencing that has become unrecognizable and unquestioned (namely, that which lies permanently at hand). Precisely because of this, we can recognize in this concept of presencing the transformation of the fundamental metaphysical position.

It is one thing to preserve the always limited sphere of unconcealment through the apprehension of what presences (man as μέτρον). It is something different to proceed into the unlimited region of possible objectification through the calculating of the representable of which everyone is capable and which is binding on all.

Every subjectivism is impossible within Greek Sophism since man can never, here, become *subiectum*. This cannot happen because, in Sophism, being is presencing and truth is unconcealment.

In unconcealment, φαντασία happens: the coming to appearance, as a particular something, of that which presences – for man, who himself presences to what appears. Man as the representing subject fantasizes, however: he moves in *imaginatio* in that his representation imagines the being as object into the world as picture.

(9) How does it happen at all that that which is sets itself forth, in an emphatic way, as *subiectum*, with the result that the subjective achieves dominance? For up to Descartes, and still within his metaphysics, the being, insofar as it is a being, is a *sub-iectum* (ὑπο-κείμενον); something which lies before us from out of itself and which, as such, lies at the foundation of both its own permanent characteristics and its changing circumstances. The preference given to a *sub-iectum* (that which lies at the basis as ground) which is preeminent in that it is, in an essential respect, unconditioned, stems from man's demand for a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*; for an unshakable ground of truth, in the sense of certainty, which rests in itself. Why and how does this demand come to have decisive validity? The demand springs from the liberation of humanity from the bonds of the truth of Christian revelation and the doctrines of the Church, a liberation which frees itself for a self-legislation that is grounded in itself. Through this liberation the essence of freedom – being bound to something that binds – is posited anew. Because, however, in accordance with this freedom, self-liberating man himself posits what is obligatory, this can henceforth be defined in different ways. The obligatory may be human reason and its law; it may be beings, set up and ordered as objects by such a reason; or it may be that chaos – not yet ordered and only to be mastered through objectification – which, in a certain age, comes to demand mastery.

This liberation, however, without knowing it, is still freeing itself from the bonds of the truth of revelation in which the salvation of man's soul is made certain and guaranteed. Hence this liberation *from* the certainty of salvation disclosed by revelation has to be, in itself, a liberation *to* a certainty in which man secures for himself the true as that which is known through his own knowing. That was only possible in that self-liberating man himself self-guaranteed the certainty of the knowable. This, however, could only happen through man's deciding, from and for himself, what was knowable for him, and what the knowing and securing of the known, i.e., certainty, should mean. Descartes' metaphysical task became the following: to create the metaphysical ground for the freeing of man to freedom considered as self-determination that is certain of itself. This ground, however, not only had to be one that was certain. Since every measure taken from other domains was forbidden, it had, at the same time, also to be of such a nature that, through it, the essence of the freedom demanded was posited as a self-certainty. Everything that is certain from itself must, at the same time, however, certify as certain that being from which such knowledge is certain and through which everything knowable is made secure. The *fundamentum*,

the foundation at the basis of this freedom, the *subiectum*, must be something certain which satisfies the aforementioned essential requirements. A *subiectum* distinguished in all these respects becomes necessary. What is this certainty which forms and provides the ground? It is the *ego cogito (ergo) sum*. This certainty is a principle which says that, simultaneously with man's thinking (at the same time and lasting an equal length of time), he himself is indubitably co-present; is, that is, given to himself. Thinking is representation, setting-before, a representative relation to the represented (*idea* as *perceptio*).

To represent means here: of oneself, to set something before one and to make what has been set in place [*das Gestellte*] secure as thus set in place. This placing-in-securedness must be a calculating, since only calculation guarantees being certain, in advance and always, of that which is to be presented. Representing is no longer the apprehending of what presences within whose unconcealment the apprehending itself belongs, belongs, indeed, as its own kind of presence to the things that are unconcealedly present. Representation is no longer the self-disclosure for . . . but rather the laying hold and grasping of . . . That which presences does not hold sway; rather, setting-upon rules. According to the new freedom, representation is now something that proceeds from itself into the region of the secured, a region which has first to be made secure. The being is no longer that which presences. Rather, it is that which, in representation, is first set over and against [*entgegen Gestellte*], with the character of an object [*Gegen-ständige*]. Representation, setting-before, is a making everything stand over and against as object [*Vor-gegen-ständlichkeit*] which masters and proceeds against. In this way, representation drives everything into the unity of the thus-objectified. Representation is *cogitatio*.

Every relationship to something – will, point of view, sensibility – is already representing. It is *cogitans*, which one translates as “thinking.” This is why Descartes is able to label all forms of the *voluntas* and *affectus*, all *actiones* and *passiones* with the at first strange-sounding name “*cogitatio*.” In the *ergo cogito sum*, the *cogitare* is understood in this essential and new sense. The *subiectum*, the fundamental certainty, is that always secured entity which representing man always co-represents along with human or non-human beings, along, that is, with the objectified. The fundamental certainty is the *me-cogitare = me esse* which is, at all times, indubitably representable and represented. This is the fundamental equation of all calculating belonging to self-securing representing. In this fundamental certainty, man becomes certain that, as the representer of all representation, the setter-before of all

setting-before, and therewith the realm of all representedness and hence of all certainty and truth, he is securely established – which means, now, that he is. Only because, in the fundamental certainty (in the *fundamentum absolutum inconsumum* of the *me cogitare = me esse*), man is necessarily co-represented; only because man who has been liberated to himself belongs, of necessity, within the *subiectum* of this freedom – only for this reason can and must this man himself become the preeminent being, a *subiectum* which, in respect of the primary [*erste*] true (i.e., certain) beings, takes precedence over all other *subiecta*. That is the fundamental equation of certainty. The fact, therefore, that in the authentic *subiectum*, the ego is named, does not mean that man now becomes an I-ness and is egoistically defined. It means only this: to be the subject now becomes the distinctiveness of man, of man as the being that thinks and represents. The human “I” is placed in the service of this *subiectum*. The certainty lying at the foundation of this *subiectum* is, as such, indeed subjective i.e., holding sway in the essence of the *subiectum*, but is not egoistic. In the same way, everything that is to be secured by means of representing objectification, and is established thereby as in being, is binding for everyone. From this objectification, however, which is at the same time the decision as to what may count as an object, nothing can escape. To the essence of the subjectivity of the *subiectum*, and of man as subject, belongs the unconditional delimiting forth [*Entschränkung*] of the sphere of possible objectification and the right to determine this objectification.

We have now explained the sense in which man is, and must be, the subject, measure, and center of beings: of, that is, objects [*Objektel*], things which stand over and against [*Gegenstände*]. Man is no longer the μέτρον in the sense of restraining his apprehension to the sphere of the unconcealment of what presences at his time – the sphere toward which man then presences. As *subiectum* man is the *co-agitatio* of the *ego*. Man establishes himself as the measure of all measures with which whatever can count as certain, i.e., true, i.e., in being, is measured off and measured out. Freedom is new as the freedom of the *subiectum*. In the *Meditationes de prima philosophia* the liberation of man to his new freedom is brought to that which grounds it. The liberation of modern humanity does not first begin with the *ego cogito ergo sum*, and neither is the metaphysics of Descartes merely supplied later on as something built on externally, a metaphysics in the sense of an ideology. In the *co-agitatio* representation gathers everything that is an object in the gatheredness of representedness. The *ego* of the *cogitare* now discovers, in the self-securing togetherness of representedness, in the *con-scientia*, its essence. *Conscientia* is the representing gathering of

the objectual together with the representing man within the sphere of resentment which he preserves. Everything that presences receives from out of this representedness the meaning and mode of its presence [*Anwesenheit*]; the meaning and mode, that is, of presence [*Präsenz*] in *repräsentatio*. The *con-scientia* of the *ego* as the *subiectum* of the *coagitatio*, the subjectivity of the *subiectum* marked out in the above way, determines the being of beings.

The *Meditationes de prima philosophia* provide the pattern for the ontology of the *subiectum* constructed from the perspective of a subjectivity defined as *conscientia*. Man has become the *subiectum*. He can, therefore, determine and realize the essence of subjectivity – always according to how he conceives and wills himself. Man as the rational being of the Enlightenment is no less subject than man who grasps himself as nation, wills himself as people [*Völk*], nurtures himself as race and, finally, empowers himself as lord of the earth. Now in all these fundamental positions of subjectivism, too, different kinds of I-ness and egoism are possible; for man is always defined as I and thou, we and you. Subjective egoism for which – usually without knowing it – the I is pre-determined as subject can be beaten down through the insertion of the I into the we. Through this, subjectivity only gains in power. In the planetary imperialism of technically organized man the subjectivism of man reaches its highest point from which it will descend to the flatness of organized uniformity and there establish itself. This uniformity becomes the surest instrument of the total, i.e., technological, dominion over the earth. The modern freedom of subjectivity is completely absorbed into the corresponding objectivity. By himself, man cannot abandon this destining of his modern essence; he cannot abolish it by fiat. But he can, in thoughtful anticipation, ponder this: that mankind's being a subject is not the only possibility of the primal essence of historical humanity there has ever been or ever will be. The shadow of a passing cloud over a hidden land – that is the darkening which truth as the certainty of subjectivity (a truth prepared for by the certainty of salvation of Christianity) lays over an Event [*Ereignis*] that it remains denied to subjectivity to experience.

(10) Anthropology is that interpretation of humanity which already knows, fundamentally, who man is and can, therefore, never ask who he might be. For with this question it would have to confess itself shaken and overcome. But how is this to be expected of anthropology when the task is specifically to achieve nothing but the securing that follows from the self-security of the *subiectum*?

(11) For what is happening now is the melting down of the self-completing essence of modernity into the obvious. Only when this is secured as a world view will the possibility arise of a fertile ground for being to become capable of a primal questioning – a question-worthiness which opens the leeway for the decision as to whether being will once more be capable of a god, as to whether the essence of the truth of being will make a more primordial claim upon the essence of man. Only when the completion of the modern age affirms the ruthlessness of its own greatness is future history being prepared.

(12) Americanism is something European. It is that still uncomprehended species of the gigantic – the gigantic that is still not properly assembled and still fails to arise from the complete and collected essence of modernity. The American interpretation of Americanism in terms of pragmatism still remains outside the realm of metaphysics.

(13) Everyday opinion sees in the shadow merely the absence of light, if not its complete denial. But, in truth, the shadow is the manifest, though impenetrable, testimony of hidden illumination. Conceiving of the shadow this way, we experience the incalculable as that which escapes representation, yet is manifest in beings and points to the hidden being [*Sein*].

(14) But what if the refusal itself had to become the highest and hardest disclosure of being? Conceived from out of metaphysics (i.e., from the question of being in the form "What is the being?") the hidden essence of being, the refusal, reveals itself first of all as the absolute non-being, as the nothing. But the nothing, as the nothing of beings is the keenest opponent of mere negating. The nothing is never nothing, and neither is it a something in the sense of an object; it is being itself whose truth will be given over to man when he has overcome himself as subject, when, that is, he no longer represents beings as objects.

(15) This open in-between is the being-there [*Da-sein*], understanding the word in the sense of the ecstatic region of the disclosure and concealment of being.