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**WELFARE
AND
ENLIGHTENMENT**

**AN ENQUIRY INTO
THE RATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE WELFARE STATE**

HANS LINDAHL

LOUVAIN PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES 9

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WELFARE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

An Enquiry Into the
Rational Foundations of the Welfare State

Hans Lindahl



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1995

Para Geertje

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H.L.

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of 1993 Western Europe witnesses its severest recession since the outbreak of the Second World War. The stagnation of economic growth is accompanied by extremely high unemployment figures. Simultaneously, swelling budget deficits, for which the Belgian case is only the most prominent West European example, testify to the difficulties experienced in the key sector of social security. The disbursements in services such as health, education and unemployment have been increasing more quickly than the incomes used to pay for those services. On the other hand, it is asserted, high levels of taxation and of labor costs have greatly eroded the international competitiveness of the productive sector. Elements such as these are invoked in what is often called the 'crisis' of the welfare state. It remains to be seen in what direction the resolution of these difficulties will move. But if the retrenchment yielded by four consecutive terms in office of the Conservative Party in Great Britain is any indication, it is hardly necessary to say that political decisions about the welfare state have very important effects on contemporary society. In particular, it remains to be seen whether we shall witness the definitive consolidation of one or other brand of liberal economics, or whether another social framework can be devised in which the redistributive and egalitarian vocation of the welfare state can be maintained or even radicalized. Here, again, one can hardly overestimate the significance of the bankruptcy of communism as a viable social alternative to advanced capitalism.

One thing is sure: the 'crisis' of the welfare state not merely calls into question its economics but also, and more fundamentally, draws attention to the constellation of presumptions and anticipations guiding Western man's self-understanding and his understanding of the social and natural world in which the welfare state finds its condition of possibility: Enlightenment. Indeed, one would be mistaken in ascribing Enlightenment to a particular century of the modern era or to a personal 'attitude' amongst others. In its fundamental meaning, Enlightenment is modern rationality as such. Paradoxically, however, it is not the economics of Enlightenment which is brought to the test in our days. However drastic the theoretical revisions that will be required to deal effectively with unemployment and create conditions of (sustainable) economic growth, the modern *concepts* of theory and technique already effectual in the welfare state will remain unchanged. The problem presents itself elsewhere, namely, in the concept of *political practice*. The well-known definition of Enlightenment with which Kant inaugurates his essay of 1784, first formulated its emancipatory and utopian vocation, a vocation that it has retained in modern philosophical thinking on political practice. Does this interpretation of Enlightenment conserve any meaning at all in the spiritual

climate of our times? Does it offer a viable *practical* project for contemporary Western society? This is not a merely 'intellectual' issue; it concerns how the social implications of changes to the welfare state are to be assessed and justified. Whatever their efficacy, economic theory and technique are incapable of resolving what is at bottom a practical problem.

This historical situation, and the questions it raises, is the horizon motivating the forthcoming investigation. The title 'Welfare and Enlightenment' announces an enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state in the framework of an enquiry into modern rationality in general. More specifically, *my aim will be to elaborate a general concept of Enlightenment working out from a characterization of the rational foundations of welfare economics*. This decision may seem surprising in light of the foregoing comments. If the problem of the viability of Enlightenment centers in its concept of an emancipatory political practice, rather than that of technique, why begin with welfare economics? Actually, the response to this question is the further implication of what has been mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. If it is the case that economic technique in the welfare state fully embodies modern rationality, then, conceived as a practical project, one may conjecture that Enlightenment radicalizes the concept of rationality already effectual in the economics of the welfare state. Certainly, this does not mean a more enhanced 'technification' of society than what is already the case in the welfare state. In fact, it may even be consistent with a decrease of the scope of action of technique. But it does suggest that an emancipatory concept of political practice rests on a set of presuppositions it shares with modern technique. A sufficiently thoroughgoing analysis of economic technique in the welfare state should lead us in the direction of those presuppositions and help us to formulate a general concept of Enlightenment. Only then will it be possible to assess the question of its viability.

This stipulation introduces an important restriction into the scope of the forthcoming consideration of the welfare state, and about which it is necessary to be clear from the very beginning. In effect, the analysis of economic technique will not carry over into a parallel description of the political practice *effectively* unfolded in the welfare state. Rather than taking the law and politics of the welfare state as the point of departure for elaborating a *descriptive* concept of its political practice, the task to be addressed hereafter consists in gaining insight into the most general concepts whence Enlightenment can *criticize* law and politics in the welfare state. As a consequence, how law functions politically in contemporary Western society, and in what way the concept of state implied in the welfare state is a *legal concept*, are questions which will not be posed directly. This omission is not inadvertent, nor does it aim to deny or minimize the importance of these questions for an enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state. Instead, the decision to follow the

route that goes from technique in welfare economics to practical Enlightenment obeys the conviction that only when one has succeeded in grasping the concept of Enlightenment in its most general contours and presuppositions can the adequate questions be formulated in respect of law and its political functioning in the welfare state.

The envisaged problem-field will be worked out in three parts:

- 1) The first takes up the relation between welfare economics and Enlightenment in a two-fold perspective. On the one hand, it grasps the relation as an *identity*, where the concept of technique presupposed in welfare economics is shown to coincide with the most basic characterization possible of modern rationality. On the other hand, the relation will be considered from the point of view of *difference*; a critique of advanced capitalism opposes political practice to the ideological restriction of reason to technique. Nonetheless, it will become apparent that the concept of rationality to which a critique of advanced capitalism has recourse, when opposing political practice to technique, is, essentially considered, the same as that already effectual in economic technique in the welfare state, namely, the *cogito*.
- 2) The *cogito* is the rational principle of the modern era. As such, it comes 'earlier' than the welfare state, and this in a temporal sense. In effect, the conditions of possibility for the emergence of welfare economics in the course of this century are not simply to be found in the demise of the liberal state, but are situated much further back, in the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity. A genealogy of the economic foundations of the welfare state are part and parcel of the genealogy of modern rationality itself. Whereas Part I focuses on the *present* status of the relation between the welfare state and Enlightenment, Part II takes this relation up from the viewpoint of its *past*.
- 3) Part III has as its task providing a general answer to the question 'What is Enlightenment?' In taking up this Kantian question once again, I wish to explore the *cogito* principle as what comes 'earlier' than the welfare state, no longer in the temporal sense elaborated in Part II, but in the sense of the *a priori* within which *other* social variations on Enlightenment are imaginable. At issue is not whether and how it might be possible to radicalize the project of Enlightenment beyond the stage it has attained in the welfare state, but an explication of the basic presuppositions which would necessarily go in advance of and determine its course if such a radicalization were possible. Enlightenment *is* this set of presuppositions, grasped in their systematic unity. In short, Part III takes up the relation between the welfare state and Enlightenment from the viewpoint of its *future*.

A more detailed presentation of the argument developed in the course of the coming pages completes these introductory pages:

Part I. Welfare. This first part develops the question concerning the rational foundations of the welfare state in the framework of the basic distinction between technique and practice.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the three basic economic functions of allocation, distribution, and stabilization into which are grouped the manifold of means-end relations that lend the welfare state its distinctively *technical* character. Two general assumptions guide our analysis: negatively, that the means-end relation neither exhausts the rational significance of (economic) technique, nor gives account of its essential modernity; positively, that economic technique, as a particularization of *modern* technique, is bound up with an epochal concept of reality. These assumptions are worked out on the basis of a concrete consideration of the presuppositions orienting John Maynard Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), the theoretical work wherein the groundplan of welfare economics was laid.

Chapter 2 generalizes the insights gained earlier, arguing that the concept of reality emerging as the presupposition of economic technique in the welfare state is constitutive for modern technique in general. Drawing on Martin Heidegger's characterization of modern technique, the properly *epochal* concept of reality implied in Keynes's work is generalized and further clarified by comparing economic technique with the concept of *techne* delineated by Aristotle. A fundamental identity and differentiation is therewith brought to light. While the central banks and fiscal agencies, the mathematical formulas and regulatory activity of the welfare state are utterly alien to Aristotle's descriptions of poetic production, both *techne* and modern technique receive their fundamental ontological determination in the manner of a 'making' or 'change'. Nonetheless, an essentially different understanding of reality, of technique's mimetic relation to reality, and of the relation between existence and possibility separates the *Metaphysics* from the theoretical grounding of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in the *General Theory*. These different strands of analysis are brought together at the end of the chapter in a formulation of the concept of rationality constitutive for modern technique: setting-a-given-in-order. The *Critique of Pure Reason* designated this concept of rationality with the expression 'synthesis', i.e. the cogito principle.

Chapter 3 reviews Habermas's critique of the ideological function taken over by technique in advanced capitalism. For if welfare state economics only is imaginable by reference to the most elemental presuppositions constitutive for modern rationality, it is already a *restriction* of the latter's more original possibilities. The critique surveyed in this chapter centers on the obliteration of the category distinction

between technique and practice. The effectiveness of the welfare state in satisfying basic needs is accompanied by a process in which the public sphere, where practical questions about social ends are discussed and decided, has been abandoned to technocratic decision-making concerning means. A closer consideration of Habermas's exposition reveals, however, that the discontinuity between technique and practice is only relative. *Also* the modern concept of practice, I argue, rests on the determination of reason as a setting-a-given-in-order, the cogito principle. Habermas's attempt to recover practice as the mode of rationality proper to a democratic politics, over against its technical and functional circumspection, in effect radicalizes, without essentially modifying, the concept of rationality already at work in welfare economics.

Part II. Two Genealogies of Modern Rationality. From the concept of rationality gained as a result of an immanent analysis of the economic functions of the welfare state, Part II passes over to the genealogy of this rationality. My basic contention here is that the conditions of possibility governing the historical inception of welfare economics are to be searched for in the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity, and which make comprehensible the specificity of modern rationality. Two alternatives are explored, and both center on giving account of the productive relation to reality implied in the cogito.

Chapter 4 is consecrated to Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality. To explain the continuities and discontinuities between modernity and the Middle Ages, Heidegger resorts to the secularization theorem. At the end of the Middle Ages, in this view, European mankind was forced to secure its salvation in another way than that availed by Scholastic philosophy. Descartes would have provided the metaphysical solution to this problem: *ego cogito cogitata* secularizes the relation between the Scholastic *causa sui* and the created world, such that the subject becomes the self-secured producer of the world. The cogito provides the metaphysical ground for the central manifestations of modernity, amongst them modern science and technique. In the extension of Heidegger's thinking, the welfare state marks the stage in modernity's social history wherein the subject's claim to an unconditioned self-security is divested of its inarticulate character and reflexively posited as the necessary presupposition of state activity.

Chapter 5 provides a competing genealogy of modern rationality. It agrees with Heidegger that the relation between the *ego cogito* and its *cogitata* concentrates the effort of modern metaphysics to understand reality as the 'made' of a human 'making'. But it rejects as untenable the thesis that the subject is a secularized *causa sui*. Developed in response to the paradoxes of the secularization theorem, Hans Blumenberg's 'reoccupation theory' situates the epochal threshold leading into modernity

in the passage from 'transitive' to 'intransitive conservation' (*conservatio sui*). The cogito principle denotes self-*preservation*, not self-*causation*, and wherein the ontological productivity of human activity is determined as a principle of *formal* causality.

Part III. Enlightenment. Although the immanent analysis of economic technique in the welfare state has led to the cogito principle, the review of the two genealogies of modern rationality makes clear that this concept is neither 'technical' nor 'practical'. To the contrary, both modern technique and practice refer, in their peculiar modernity, to a wider set of concepts in which they are embedded. In particular, it will be shown that Enlightenment encompasses and integrates determinate concepts of human being, of reality, of truth, of time, and of history. These concepts are the a priori of Enlightenment.

Chapter 6 develops the first of these concepts, namely subjectivity. Building on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, wherein the cogito principle obtains its mature formulation, I argue that the basic constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity is definitive for the modern concept of the subject. The sharpening of human contingency transpired in Scholastic philosophy offers the opportunity of elaborating the modern concept of security in a way that does not interpret it simply as the secularization of the certainty of salvation. Drawing on the concept of subjectivity outlined in the *Critique*, the presuppositions are exhibited that go in advance of, and determine, the possible empirical content of the concept of security at work in the welfare state. The chapter concludes by anchoring self-determination, the core of subjectivity, in the analytic of dependent spontaneity worked out in Kant's *Critique*.

Chapter 7, for its part, deals with the concepts of reality and truth. It suggests that the concept of reality governing modern theory, technique, and practice obtains its philosophical grounding in Kant's 'ontology of appearances'. Modernity first acquires full awareness of what it could mean that reality is the realized of a realizing (productive) activity in the idea of transcendental philosophy—an insight which was to become the unquestioned presupposition of Keynes's theory of full employment. In connection with this, the productive relation of the subject to objectivity shuts out the Scholastic interpretation of the traditional truth-formula, *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, wherein the autonomy of reality in respect of thinking implies that things, and things alone, are the measure of truth. The purely epistemological domain of knowledge and judgment is shown to be a restriction of the broader scope of the cogito-bound concept of truth, that includes the relation to the social world implied in (economic) technique and in Enlightened political practice.

Chapter 8 takes its point of departure in the priority of the future, both collectively and individually, developing the thesis that the concept of

subjectivity encloses a specific interpretation and experience of the three-fold unity and differentiation of time. The nucleus of my argument is that if the sharpening of human contingency in Scholastic philosophy brought the unity of time under severe pressure, modernity was forced to radicalize the problem of time when it rejected the divine concursion of a *causa sui*, inasmuch as the relation between past, present, and future could now only be guaranteed by reference to the structure of human being as a dependent spontaneity. In the process of responding to the challenge of contingency, the future ends up as the privileged temporal dimension of the modern subject.

Chapter 9 brings together and interconnects the foregoing elements of Enlightenment into a comprehensive concept of history. That there is a properly *modern* concept of history means (1) that history has a subject, hence that history first becomes a properly human history; (2) that history is real in the manner of a 'made' of a human 'making'; (3) that the possibility of taking up a critical stance in respect of history as a human achievement, hence of man himself as its artificer, already moves within the more original domain opened up by the cogito-bound truth concept; and (4) that historical time in modernity presents the structure of a 'taking-up-and-working-through-of-a-given-material-in-view-of-a-project'. These different elements are concretized in a consideration of the ontological, purposive, and temporal determinations of the modern concept of utopia.

The **Conclusion** returns to the initial questions of this Introduction to determine whether Enlightenment can be sustained as a *practical* project on the basis of these presuppositions.

PART I: WELFARE

CHAPTER 1. REASON AS TECHNIQUE

The forthcoming chapter unfolds a reflection on the relation between the economic theory of the welfare state and the concept of technique. Identifying and analyzing the most basic presuppositions of welfare economics, it aims to clarify the concept of rationality implied in the technical interpretation of the welfare state. This does not mean, however, that what comes hereafter takes the form of a 'philosophy of economics'. The considerations contained in this and the following chapters are both less and more than a philosophy of economics. *Less*, because they are restricted to the examination of a single economic text, namely, John Maynard Keynes's *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. No systematic and general philosophical consideration of economics is attempted and, in particular, no epistemological issues are brought into focus. My sole interest in the *General Theory* consists in that, by laying the groundplan of welfare economics, it affords us access to the concept of technique intrinsic to the welfare state.

But, insofar as my interest regards this concept of rationality, the following considerations are *more* than a philosophy of economics. I envisage uncovering the *historical* character of the concept of technique which reaches expression in the *General Theory*. Succinctly, the butt of the forthcoming analyses will be to suggest that an investigation into the rational foundations of the welfare state can be taken up in the perspective of an enquiry into *modern rationality* as such and in general. Trivially, of course, the welfare state is modern. Although its historical roots go back perhaps as early as the French Revolution, the institutionalization of the welfare state, if one takes the well-known Beveridge Report as a watershed, is scarcely some fifty years old. But this merely chronological dating of the welfare state does not grasp its essential modernity. As unfolded hereafter, the enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state concerns its properly *epochal* character, its interpretation as a figure of Enlightenment. I will argue that at the core of modern rationality is a specific ontology. Keynes's text is philosophically interesting, in this respect, because it shows that and how the economic foundations of the welfare state are imaginable only within the context of the concepts of rationality and reality constitutive for the modern era.

The chapter provides an initial approximation to this problem-field, further developed in Chapter 2. At the outset, §1 provides an overview of the priority of economics and the consolidation of the technical conception of the state, drawing attention to the three basic 'functions' assigned to the welfare state and which specify it, economically speaking, over against the liberal state. Subsequently, §2 shifts attention to the *General Theory*, focusing on the theoretical concept of an economic system. The Keynesian

reelaboration of the independent and dependent variables of the economic system first allows of technical intervention by the state designed to change or transform a condition of unemployment into one of stable full employment. Economic theory's assumption that society is an economic system, will be the kernel of a first ontological reflection in §3. Husserl's writings on the objectivation and sedimentation of meaning brought about by the mathematization of nature in modern empirical sciences proves pertinent to the parallel process taking place in economic theory. Nonetheless, as is argued in §4, this approach does not exhaust the concept of reality at work in modern economic theory and technique. Closer examination of Keynes's text shows that the core of economic theory and technique is a reduction of the reality of the existent (state of the economic system) to what 'merely' is. The existent forfeits its persuasive power to become a non-binding fact, a 'given' for technical transformation. Consequently, and more fundamental than its 'numerical' significance, transformation or change acquires the ontological significance of a *realizing*. Economic technique in the welfare state rests on the assumption that reality is the realized of a realizing activity operating on a given.

§1. Overview: The Priority of Economics and the Technical Conception of the State

In view of a fundamental enquiry into the welfare state, i.e. an enquiry into its *rational* foundations, the following evidence counts as our point of departure: the consolidation of a technical conception of the state is bound up with the preponderance of economics.

In a preliminary and quite unremarkable manner, the assertion says nothing more than that, in the welfare state, (1) an important part of economic activity is submitted to government direction of one form or another, and, conversely, (2) that directing the economy is the central task assigned to the welfare state. With this one says what everybody already knows. For, in a marked out manner, the welfare state is present to ordinary consciousness in the mode of the economic. In everyday life, this is reflected in the recognition of a relation holding between the personal situation and the general economic condition. To be sure, that relation is not generally experienced as 'causal', although, say, lay-offs or early pensioning attributed to 'the difficult times' suddenly bring the relation, as causal, into stark focus. Nor, for that matter, does everyday experience thematize the relation *as* a relation. Instead, the 'state of the economy' functions as a blurred backdrop or horizon in respect of which one learns to assess one's prospects, and towards which one is oriented in the manner of a more or less vague attentiveness and even concern. The individual's perception of his or her 'possibilities' are mediated by economic concepts immediately associated with that of the welfare state, such as growth or recession, unemployment, inflation, budgetary restrictions, tax schemes, and so forth.

On the other hand, *dealing* with situations such as those of

unemployment, inflation or long-range planning for sustained development has acquired a central role in justifying the exercise of state powers and prerogatives. From the perspective of everyday life, the individual's expectations in respect of the state are continuously shaped by economic considerations. The economy is not only perceived as a zone of danger, capable of inflicting severe individual or collective damage, at the limit capable of endangering one's very survival, but also as a hazard which it is the task of the state to keep or to bring under control. The claim to the elemental manipulability of the economic sphere, at the core of the welfare state's technical character, reappears in the ascent to (or eviction from) power of political parties, depending on the public's perception of their capacity or incapacity to handle the situation they find at hand.

No less than for ordinary consciousness, a technical conception of the state is the self-evidence of economic theory proper. In effect, there is no place in the latter for a reflection on the state 'as such'; the state is merely the institutional referent of a constellation of means-end relations.¹ Which is not to say that an 'economic theory of the state' is conceptually destitute, but that its richness depends on its capacity to conceptualize a manifold of means-end relations, and this in a two-fold sense of the term 'conceptualizing': distinguishing and interconnecting. The technical essence of the welfare state obtains concretion in the concept of 'public policy': fiscal, monetary, regulatory, educational, health policies, and so forth. Inasmuch as state activity takes place within the framework of a policy, the welfare state gainsays its elementary claim to rationality. From within the standpoint of public policy, however, the claim to rationality rests on a requirement of policy content, namely, the *compatibility* of the various ends simultaneously envisaged by way of an adequate 'policy mix'.

If technique determines the limits of the imaginable for an economic theory of the state, conversely, institutions only appear to economic theory and practice as problematic, that is, as unequal to their concept, in the mode of *ineffectiveness*. The institution *as an institution* first reaches the level of explicit economic reflection in the question concerning its capacity to effect means-end relations, and the manner in which decision-taking and its implementation can be improved. The 'rationalization' of state activity becomes the order of the day. Such a reflection remains instrumental in an essential manner; while improving the institution's effectiveness means enhancing the efficacy of the means-end relations it agencies, this leaves untouched what goes of itself: the state is technical. This has its implications for our own endeavor: no *description* of the welfare state is possible without reference to its *functions*, to the plethora of means and ends it continuously deploys. In describing the welfare state, one describes

1. See, in this respect, William Jack Baumol, *Welfare Economics and the Theory of the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952)

what it *does*. For the economist and even the politician, the distinctions, more than the sameness derived from the formal repetition of the means-end relation, are what count. We shall rely on the economist's own distinctions, the distinctions that provide the conceptual touchstones on which the 'theory and practice' of the welfare state rests. What, then, does it do?

Allocation, Distribution, Stabilization

(1) The welfare state *allocates*.² It constructs a highway to connect a city with a far-away region, thereby opening up the latter's agricultural potential or making freight more efficient and cheaper. It supplies the street lights that make night-time traffic safer. The state regulates, introducing, modifying or repealing laws governing the market mechanism, such as transformations in company or insurance law, or restrictions on industrial pollution or monopolistic or oligopolistic practices. To pay for these activities, the state borrows money on the capital market, issuing long-term government bonds. The bond sale is a means to financing road-construction, street-lighting or air-cleansing measures, themselves means to further ends. In each of these, e.g. constructing, lighting, restricting, taxing, the welfare state 'allocates'; in the economist's words, each of these serves the same 'function', namely, "The provision for social goods or the process by which total resource use is divided between private and social goods and by which the mix of social goods is chosen." (pg. 6)

(2) Yet a second function accrues to the welfare state: it *distributes*. A regulatory measure is enacted to force employers to fill a certain quota of their labor force with minority groups, thereby offsetting discrimination against these. The state funds institutions with the purpose of paying out welfare entitlements, such as retirement pensions, sickness, injury or maternity benefits, child benefits and family income supplements, low-interest loans for house construction, etc. It targets manpower and educational measures on low-income groups with the purpose of enhancing their capabilities, itself a condition for improving their chances of finding a job in the labor market. A progressive tax structure envisages transforming relative income positions, reducing excessive income at the top of the income scale and/or reducing poverty at its lower end. To finance its social welfare programs, the state channels the money received from the progressive tax structure. Here again, channelling appears as a means to specific ends, themselves means to further ends. In each of these activities,

2. The economist will readily recognize that the proposed classification of functions is that put forth by Richard and Peggy Musgrave in *Public Finance in Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), pgs. 3-22.

e.g. anti-discriminatory measures, funding, labor resource enhancement, taxation, the welfare state distributes, that is to say, it adjusts “the distribution of income and wealth” in society (pg. 6).

(3) Thirdly, the welfare state *stabilizes*. Expenditure in public works—bettering the docking facilities of a harbor or the construction of an airport, for instance—serves to increase demand in the labor-intensive construction sector, itself a means for maintaining or creating conditions of high employment. Educational measures help unemployed workers acquire new skills, diminishing ‘frictional’ unemployment. In a strongly inflationary period, the central banking authorities introduce stringent reserve requirements on commercial banks, cutting down on the effective money supply. In an effort to increase private investment in capital goods, itself a means to increasing the rate of economic growth, discount rates are lowered. To make nationally produced products more competitive on the international market, itself a mechanism for the stabilization of the foreign accounts balance, monetary authorities devalue the currency. “Maintaining high employment, a reasonable degree of price level stability... an appropriate rate of economic growth... [and] stability in the balance of payments. All these we refer to as the stabilization function.” (pg. 6)

Allocation, distribution, stabilization; this breakdown of the welfare state’s functions does not make any claim to exhaustivity, nor is the concept of rationality I wish to exhibit tied down to *these* functions, such that their subsequent modification within economic theory would invalidate its formulation. With respect to exhaustivity, it is conceivable that economic theory add new functions to those surveyed hitherto, thereby extending the scope of the welfare state’s activities, or that further theoretical investigations required splitting up one or the other of the mentioned functions into conceptually distinct means-end relations. On the other hand, rather than the precise definition of the functions of the welfare state, something that remains a problem for economic theory, the sole point that interests us is that however those functions might be defined, they are *technical* in character, i.e. they contain a further conceptualization and differentiation of a manifold of means-end relations.

Rationality and Ontology

Nevertheless, this also presents us with a specific difficulty. Indeed, we seem to be faced with a paradox the terms of which can be outlined as follows: 1) In exhibiting the technical conception of the state, one has also given account of its peculiar rationality. Technique speaks of the thoroughgoing articulation of means and ends; in describing those relations, and the manner in which they are concretely articulated, the economic rationality of the welfare state has been explained. 2) In pushing further a

reflection on this rationality, we cannot abandon the findings of our preliminary survey without immediately forfeiting the descriptive claim guiding our enquiry. On the one hand, then, one already appears to have grasped the essential in noting that allocation, distribution, and stabilization are a means to an end, technique; on the other hand, when carrying further an investigation into the economic rationality of the welfare state, we cannot dispense with these 'functions' as the privileged theme of reflection.

The formulation of this paradox is, in a sense, already the blueprint for a solution. Clearly, we must relinquish the properly economic level of analysis, which focuses on the differentiation and interconnection of functions. That is to say, of interest is not what *distinguishes* allocation from distribution, or the latter from stabilization, but rather their *sameness*, that which repeats itself in each of these economic modes of activity. Yet, *prima facie*, what unites these is the formal means-end relation: technique. Consequently, an enquiry into the foundations of the welfare state that builds on the economic 'functions' we have isolated only is possible on condition that the means-end relation does not exhaust the rational significance of economic technique. Accepting as far as it goes the 'correctness' of their interpretation as a means to an end, it should be possible to deepen our investigation into allocation, distribution, and stabilization, deriving from these the materials for another, more radical and encompassing, interpretation of the technical rationality embodied in the welfare state. But in what direction is such a 'radicalization' thinkable? In what follows, I will assume that *modern rationality, technique in particular, is an historically concrete interpretation of the human relation to reality*, though this thesis itself can only be substantiated and made more comprehensible in the course of the subsequent exposition. In other words, the further reflection on the rationality of the welfare state will take the form of an *ontological* enquiry. This has a two-fold implication in view of the economic 'functions' of the welfare state: 1) if a sufficiently thoroughgoing investigation into allocation, distribution, and stabilization should be capable of uncovering the concept of reality that is the presupposition of modern technique, 2) the means-end relation they unfold only acquires concretion by its grounding in this concept of reality.

§2. Keynes's Theory and Practice of Full Employment

Economically speaking, one does not exaggerate when asserting that the *General Theory*, published by John Maynard Keynes in 1936, is the theoretical touchstone enabling the passage from the liberal to the welfare state. Its function is two-fold, destructive and constructive. For the one, the incisive critique of the postulates of 'classical economics'—which stretches, in Keynes's usage of the expression, from Ricardo and his

predecessors up to Marshall, Edgeworth, and Pigou—exposes as untenable the theoretical foundations of the liberal state. These postulates concern the determinants of the demand and supply of labor, hence the determinants of employment. The gist of the classical theory is that, with the exception of frictional and voluntary unemployment³, the economy is at all times in a state of full employment. The absolute level of employment can only be increased through reductions in either frictional or voluntary unemployment, increases in the productivity of labor, or reductions in real wages. The destructive import of Keynes's theory was to point out the existence of a third category of unemployment—*involuntary* unemployment, which is then shown to be the *normal* state of the economy. Consequently, Keynes can say that “the postulates of the classical theory are applicable to a special case only and not to the general case... Moreover, the characteristics of the special case assumed by the classical theory happen not to be those of the economic society in which we actually live, with the result that its teaching is misleading and disastrous if we attempt to apply it to the facts of experience.”⁴

That involuntary unemployment is a *fact of experience*, i.e. the principal characteristic of the ‘actual’ or real economic system, provides the incitation to the second, constructive, moment of the *General Theory*: the elaboration of the main determinants of what Keynes terms the ‘principle of effective demand’. Its three components, the propensity to consume, the concept of interest as the measure of liquidity preference, and the definition of the marginal efficiency of capital, proved decisive for the economics of the welfare state. Again from the perspective of economic theory, there is a *qualitative*, not merely quantitative, transformation leading from the liberal to the welfare state. A recent sociological analysis reinforces this preliminary assessment in the following terms: “During forty years the extension of the welfare state has unfolded under the auspices of the ‘Keynesian equation’. [The equation] is founded on the principle, established by Keynes, of the global correspondence between the imperative of economic growth and the demands of greater social justice in the framework of an economically and socially active state.”⁵ By and large, the two terms of the equation are the ‘stabilization’ and ‘distributive’ functions. Inasmuch as it provides their theoretical basis, one can expect to discover in Keynes's masterwork the elements defining the technical status of stabilization, distribution, and, by implication, allocation.

3. Respectively, unemployment caused by delays in the adjustment between demand and supply of labor in different sectors of the economy, and unemployment deliberately chosen in view of the low wages being offered by employers.

4. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, in 25 volumes, vol. VII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pg. 3

5. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La crise de l'État-providence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992), pg. 49.

Rationality and the Revisions of Economic Theory

A caveat is in order here. For our analysis is not economic, that is to say, it does not concern itself with examining the meaning of the theoretical transformations leading over from classical to Keynesian economics. This is a problem for an 'economic history' of the welfare state. The purpose animating our investigation is to make clear the concept of *rationality* underlying welfare economics, in particular the inclusion of technique in modern rationality in general. For the same reason, whether or not the Keynesian achievements are surpassed by new economic developments, hence whether or not the economic model of society presented in the *General Theory* is modified or overturned by subsequent theories, remains a strictly *economic* issue, and leaves undisturbed the kind of reflection to be carried through hereafter, namely, evincing the concept of technical rationality as such. However radical the incisions introduced by Keynes into the *corpus* of classical economics, or however deep-going the revisions practiced by later theorists on Keynes's own thinking, none of this concerns us in the forthcoming.

In effect, the question remains open whether the concept of rationality is also transformed in each revision of economic theory and technique, or whether, to the contrary, a single concept of rationality makes possible, and even fuels, the great intellectual transformations and accomplishments of modern economics. In this sense, whilst a careful consideration of the *General Theory* is of the greatest consequence for our immediate interest, namely, an exploration into the concept of rationality embodied in the welfare state, the welfare state does not necessarily deplete the possible historical forms this rationality can adopt. It is in view of uncovering this more radical concept of rationality, a concept that is *also* present in the welfare state, without the latter necessarily exhausting its scope, that Keynes's *General Theory* is of interest to us.

Two Trivialities

As a point of departure for further enquiry, one does well in taking notice of the guiding problem of the *General Theory*: "the ultimate object of our analysis is to discover what determines the volume of employment."⁶ What sort of a problem is this? A problem about *means*. In establishing what determines the volume of employment, one also establishes the means whereby full employment can be secured. The *General Theory*'s most original contributions to economics—the propensity to consume, the concept of interest as the measure of liquidity

6. *General Theory*, pg. 89.

preference, and the redefinition of the marginal efficiency of capital to include the state of long term expectation—take place within the self-evidence of the means-end relation. Full employment is the given end in respect of which the theoretical question only concerns the means thereto. The impetus leading to Keynes's own contribution rests on the incapacity of classical economics to account for a condition of less than full employment, hence to posit it as the proper goal of economic policy. By introducing the concept of 'involuntary unemployment', a concept incompatible with the postulates of classical economics, Keynes identifies a possible, even the principal, end of economic policy; only then does the 'means' question become urgent. Given that full employment is not a situation automatically attained by the economic system, under what conditions can it be brought about? That this is a *technical* question, i.e. a question concerning a means to an end, is so obviously the case that it at no moment is a problem for the *General Theory*. In Keynes's technical interrogating, the concept of technique is not itself at issue; to the contrary, *only insofar as technique remains unquestioned can the technical question of involuntary unemployment be at all formulated and resolved.*

This self-evidence leads to another. In the Preface to his book, Keynes advises the reader that the work's "main purpose is to deal with difficult questions of theory, and only in the second place with the applications of this theory to practice." (pg. xxi) It is as much the case that theory is 'applied' in practice as that practice is applied theory. But what does practice mean here? What is practice in a 'theory and practice of full employment'? In light of the foregoing, a preliminary answer suggests itself to us: technique. The practice imaginable within the *General Theory* is the concrete implementation of the means necessary to secure a given end, full employment. Practice is what comes 'after' theory; that which, following it in time, constitutes its peculiar fulfillment. For the former means nothing other than intervention in the economic system with the instruments devised by the latter to attain a certain end. The distinction between theory and practice is one and the same as that of theory and technique; *practice is technical*. Nonetheless, it would seem the opposite is also the case: *technique is practical*. For it is precisely the concrete implementation of means in view of achieving a given end that Keynes qualifies as practice. But this creates an additional problem, and for which no explicit answer is forthcoming in the *General Theory*: what does practice mean, such that it can be assimilated to the means-end relation? If technique is the means to an end, what is practice such that technique can be 'practical'?

In searching for a response, we can begin by returning to Keynes's prefatory remark: practice is applied theory. What is the concept of 'theory' implied in a 'General Theory'? Chapter 18, 'The General Theory Re-stated', is unambiguous in this respect. For the entire book rests on the

following set of methodological decisions: (1) Society can be viewed as an economic *system*, i.e. a particular nexus of coordinated social behavior; (2) the coordination of behavior is established by reference to the principle of causality, i.e. human action can be taken to possess a certain causal lawfulness of its own; (3) On the basis of these causal connections, the analytic task of theory consists in separating, describing, and interrelating three groups of elements present in the economic system: given factors, independent variables, dependent variables. The dependent variables—the volume of employment and the national income—are determined by the first two sets of elements. But whereas given factors are such simply because not considered or taken into account in view of the effects and consequences of changes in them (e.g. the state of technology), independent variables are those “factors whose changes *mainly* determine our *quaesitum*” (pg. 247), such as the marginal efficiency of capital. Theory, then, tells us what changes can be expected in the levels of employment and income by introducing changes into the independent variables, namely, the propensity to consume, the schedule of the marginal efficiency of capital, and the rate of interest.

It becomes clearer what ‘applied theory’ must mean. For if theory identifies the causal interdependencies determining changes of the economic system, applied theory or practice is the instrumental intervention that changes reality. *Practice changes reality, in casu* the economic system. Reciprocally, the transformation of reality defines practice as such. From the perspective of the *General Theory*, this finding is entirely trivial in character. For what could be more obvious than that technical intervention aims at changing a state of unemployment into one of stable full employment? And yet, in all its self-evidence, it makes clear the significance of the reciprocity between technique and practice: 1) given an end—full employment, economic technique is the implementation of the means apposite to the attainment of that goal; 2) contrariwise, economic practice changes a ‘fact of experience’—involuntary unemployment—into a situation of full employment.

The second triviality supporting the entire edifice of Keynes’s book is at hand: *technique = practice*. We can go yet a step further, and conjecture that *this triviality is the presupposition of the welfare state itself*. In each of the economic ‘functions’ of allocation, distribution, stabilization, not only does governmental activity coordinate means in view of further ends, but this activity transforms social or natural reality in a determinate manner. It is as much the case that the welfare state changes reality as that the changing of reality belongs to the *concept* of the state, in effect defines it as *technical*.

Nonetheless, it would seem as if one must stop short at this point. For what else can one say about the rationality of the welfare state, other than to point to the technical conception of reason which lies at its base? In

turn, an essential characterization of the latter seems to be exhausted in noting that (1) technique is a means to an end, and (2) that technique changes reality. All further analysis of technique as a 'means' resolves itself into a question of economic theory, of the knowledge and instruments available for the realization of the envisaged end; if, then, one wishes to press further towards an understanding of the concept of rationality implied in economic technique, a single route seems open to us: what does 'change' mean in the assertion 'Technique changes reality'?

Change

At least in respect of the *General Theory*, one wants to write off this question as either specious or abstract. It belongs to the essence of economics that that which defines its own claim to rationality—the technical transformation of reality—is not the object of explicit reflection within economic theory itself. This is not a question of 'sloppiness', an incidental forgetfulness or omission on the part of the theoretician. For, in a certain sense, it is of course possible to furnish an economic 'definition' of change. When pressed, the economist answers that, trivially, change is the quantitative variation of a given element of the system, measured over a certain lapse of time. Change is a numerical variation of a magnitude. Here, the 'triviality' of the definition announces what requires no explanation in economics, what is economically uninteresting because taken for granted in advance; but it also indicates what *cannot* be the object of theoretical discussion, the point on this side of which theory comes to a halt. An economic theory that is not based on measurable quantitative change and on functional dependencies of quantifiable variables and constants, simply is not theory at all. The quantitative concept of change cannot itself be the object of reflection in economic theory because it defines the presupposition on the basis of which any and all possible theoretical reflection can begin.

For this reason, Keynes's quarrel with classical economics does not regard the latter's *quantitative* determination of change, but the quantitative *indeterminacy* of its basic concepts. Far from disturbing what was already the unquestioned presupposition of his predecessors, Keynes's critique unmasks the inconsistency of the classical theory of employment with its own fundamental methodological decision concerning the exclusion or reduction of all qualitative change to quantifiable variables, i.e. with the criterion of *exactness* required by economic theory. Hence, Keynes can write off concepts such as the 'stock of real capital' or the 'general price level', arguing that they are "unsuitable as material for the differential calculus. Our precision would be a mock precision if we try to use such partly vague and non-quantitative concepts as the basis of a quantitative

analysis.” (pg. 40) In turn, the exactness required of quantitative analyses of change is tied up with another methodological constraint constitutive for economic theory, namely, the interpretation of social relations as an interconnected whole of causally determined relations. Indeed, the basic concepts of the classical theory of employment “have no relevance to the causal sequence of economic events, which are clear-cut and determinate...” (pg. 39) *All* economically relevant change takes place according to causalities which can be mathematically formulated in the manner of functional dependencies, and which are available for empirical measurement and verification. This proposition is normative, not descriptive; it indicates what ‘counts’ as change for economic theory.

In replacement of the classical concepts, Keynes stipulates new units of quantity (money-value and employment), stipulations that become the basis for the interconnection between the prediction of change by means of differential calculus, on the one hand, and the empirical statistical measurement of change in the relevant variables and constants of the economic system, on the other. That society possesses the structure of a universal causality, and that this structure finds immediate expression in mathematical formulas, is not the outcome of an ‘inductive process’ that begins from what the social world shows us of itself, but the presupposition that precedes and orients the induction of particular economic causalities. The concept of an economic system in general does nothing other than provide a framework anticipating *how the experienceable must be experienced*, namely, as causally determined according to functional dependencies (mathematical formulas). It provides, as it were, a ‘picture’ of ‘society in general’ which, to be sure, still needs to be filled out with the functional dependencies making up its concrete interconnectedness and explaining all possible change. The way is thereby cleared for the ongoing process of hypothesis and verification constitutive for economic theory.

Consequently, returning to our initial question, ‘change’ is an *economic* concept in the sense of an antecedent stipulation concerning how change is defined; to attempt to elicit the concept of change implied in the technical transformation of reality other than by reference to the concept of an economic system is, as indicated, either specious or abstract. But once again we seem to have reached a dead end. For if the concept of technique as a ‘means’ resolved itself into a question of economic theory, such also seems to be the case in respect of ‘change’.

§3. Modern Economic Theory and the ‘Mathematization’ of Society

This rejoinder is unexceptionable from the perspective of modern economics. But it conceals an implication of the greatest import. ‘Technique changes reality’; to gain further insight into the concept of technique, we have considered this formulation by questioning what concept of change it implies. But the foregoing analyses call for a shift of perspectives. The concept of change is not independent of, and can only be clarified by reference to, the concept of reality. If technique *changes* reality, what concept of *reality* is therewith implied?

The set of methodological decisions and constraints preceding and guiding all theoretical enquiry, both Keynesian and classical, can be compressed into a singular formula: society is an economic system. *A peculiar interpretation of reality precedes and conditions the possibility of an economic (quantitative) concept of change, namely, the thematization of society as an economic system.* The economic concept of change is paired to a determinate concept of social reality. If we return, at this point, to the citations drawn from the first chapter of Keynes’s masterpiece, their significance comes under a new light. “I have called this book the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, placing the emphasis on the prefix general.” (pg. 3) This, the opening line of the book, serves notice that the postulates of classical economics are applicable to a special, rather than the general case, “the situation which it assumes being a limiting point of the possible positions of equilibrium.” (pg. 3) Of *what*, however, is the situation examined by classical theory merely a special case? Evidently, of the economic system. Keynes contends that the classical postulates explain the conditions of employment, interest, and money for only one of the several possible equilibrium conditions of the economic system: “... the characteristics of the special case assumed by the classical theory happen not to be those of the economic society in which we actually live...” (pg. 3) The semantic shift is almost imperceptible or even invisible to the economist: society *is* a system, i.e. a plexus of causally determined behavior. Reversing the direction of the observation, the meaning of Keynes’s assertion is that we actually *live* in an economic system, that the system is *real*.

Such is the assumption common to classical and Keynesian economics; the generality the latter polemically claims for itself over against the former takes place on the ground of this more fundamental agreement. First and foremost, economic theory is a theory of society in the sense of a decision on what constitutes the reality of society for the purposes of analysis. Only on the basis of this prior decision can the thoroughgoing mathematization of the social world take place. Differential calculus is not first mustered into economic theory to then be able to conceptualize the interconnections and transformations of the economic system; to the

contrary, only there where society has been taken up in the manner of a system can mathematics make its incursion in economic theory.

Mathematical Objectivation

The semantic shift whereby the economic system is taken to be the real itself brings into sharp focus a process at the core of economic theory parallel to that exposed by Edmund Husserl in respect of the modern natural sciences. The new idea of a mathematical natural science, according to Husserl, is accompanied, as early as Galileo, by “the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable—our everyday life-world.”⁷ In a manner comparable to what has its beginnings in Galileo’s physics, modern economic theory *objectifies* society into a mathematical manifold, which is then taken to be one and the same with the concrete social compartments and relations encountered in experiential actuality. For Keynes, no less than for Galileo and his successors in respect of prescientifically intuited nature, “the methodology of the objectifying determinations of idealities through the constructions which create ‘mathematical existence’” substitutes the ideal world of the economic system for the immediately given social world (pg. 49). In the self-evidence of the expression “the economic system in which we actually live”, what Husserl called the “sedimentation” of meaning, its fixation and reification in the constructions effected by the idealizing activity of modern science, has already come to pass.

Two far-ranging tasks suggests themselves to an enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state that wished to make its own this central insight of the *Crisis*. The first would essay reconstructing the *method* whereby economic theory objectifies society into a mathematical manifold, that is to say, it would describe the constructive processes whereby a pre-economic experience of the social world, with the fullness of the practical and motivational contexts of human comportment in everyday life, is transformed into ‘pure’ economic behavior, where individual human action is taken up as an ‘instance’ or ‘exemplar’ of a strict and universal causality inherent to social relations in general. In particular, it would be necessary to identify and describe the specificity of the idealizing accomplishments of modern economics in contrast with the natural sciences’ two-fold idealization of the shapes and sensible plena factually encountered in the natural world.

7. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984), pgs. 48-49.

In any case, Husserl's investigations shed new light on the concept of *rationality*. Indeed, method, i.e. the 'art' or set of 'technical' rules guiding the transformations of meaning leading over from the actually experienced social world to the objectified economic system, can itself be described as the rationality constitutive for welfare economics. In turn, this concept of rationality—the rules guiding the transformation of life-world meanings into a reified and self-enclosed construct—can be generalized beyond the strictly *mathematical* objectivation of economics. Isn't the economic 'mathematization' of society intimately bound up with the 'juridification' of the social life-world? To work out this insight, it would be necessary, first, to abstract from the obvious differences distinguishing 'mathematization' from 'juridification', shedding light on the common process of objectivation taking place in both economic theory and law. In this perspective, one could see in the *more geometrico* motif a thought-pattern more fundamental than either 'mathematization' or 'juridification', and which lies at the base of objectivation, both legal and economic.⁸ Working out from *more geometrico* thinking, it would be possible to then go ahead and describe legal rationality (in the sense of rationality defined hitherto), and to establish how the methodical achievements of economic theory and technique are coordinated with the semantic transformations introduced by modern law into social life. Albeit sketchy and programmatic, these remarks serve to delineate the vast subject matter of an enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state that would seek inspiration in Husserl's last great work.

Economic Theory as the Reduction of Meaning

But, again in parallel to the movement of thinking carried out in the *Crisis*, this first task prepares, and finds fulfillment in a second, properly critical endeavor. "To the essence of all method belongs the tendency to superficialize itself in accord with technization." (pg. 48) Modern science covers up the original establishment of its own meaning-structures and methods, it excludes from the domain of theoretical activity a reflection on the motivations and thinking which first led to the mathematization of the

8. Under the general title of 'Cartesianism in Law', Jan M. Broekman has argued that the *more geometrico* thought-pattern is constitutive for contemporary Western law. The Cartesian injunction of analyzing complex problems into its simple elements presupposes that "...the original problem does not change, but merely becomes more accessible through such analysis and reduction. At the background lies the more encompassing conviction that everything in the cosmos is made up of elements that can be isolated and investigated. If one knows these elements, as well as the lawfulness of their relations, then one knows everything... Hence, scientific theory's basic idea of thinking in elementary structures, generally known as the *more geometrico* thinking, is dominant." *Recht en antropologie* (Brussel: E. Story-Scientia, 1991), pgs. 92-93.

natural world. Economic theory makes evident a parallel process of 'superficialization', wherein the ideal economic system, which is its methodic achievement, substitutes for the real world, the life-world. This is not a merely 'theoretical' delusion, destitute of practical consequences for every-day life. For, in the superficialization of meaning occurring in welfare economics, "all the truths of pre- and extrascientific life which have to do with its factual being are deprived of value." (pg. 54) The social world to which 'pure' economic theory is *applied* contains nothing other than the transformed meaning and meaning-structures it has itself constructed. Therefore, the substitution of the social life-world by the mathematical manifold of the economic system reaches its definitive accomplishment in practice, i.e. 'applied' theory. As is the case for applied physics in respect of nature, the application of economic theory does not reconstitute what has been drawn from the social world; *meaning-transformations are accompanied by meaning-reductions*.⁹ Consequently, unmasking the semantic reification and sedimentation taking place in economic theory and practice, and dissolving the naïveté of the latter by leading the 'objectively true' meaning-world of the economic system back to its roots in the everyday semantics of the pre-economic life-world, becomes the principal task of a philosophical critique of economic rationality in the welfare state. More generally, exposing objectified meaning as the outcome of meaning-transformation processes, i.e. as the achievement of a rational process of objectivation built on everyday thinking and experiencing, even becomes the exemplary function of a philosophical critique of the welfare state in general.

Constitution and the Constituted

This summary exposition of the lines of investigation suggested by the *Crisis* does not function as a preliminary prospectus or exposé of the domains to be explored in our further enquiry into the concept of rationality embodied in the welfare state. To the contrary, this conspectus obeys a negative or exclusive motivation. In what comes, neither a preparatory description of the rationality of welfare economics and law (with the meaning of the term 'rationality' indicated heretofore), nor its fulfillment in a critique of the reifications and semantic reductions taking place in the 'mathematization' and 'juridification' of the social world by the welfare state, will be the object of further consideration. For the problem must be raised at this point whether such an approach doesn't

9. Within the framework of a theory of discourse purged of the philosophy of subjectivity deployed in transcendental phenomenology, Jan M. Broekman has exposed the reductions and transformations of meaning inherent to the legal discourse. See *Recht en antropologie*, especially pgs. 142-145 and 235-266.

stop too soon in its elaboration of the concept of rationality. Indeed, I aim to show that unmasking the ideological hypostatizations and reifications that conceal the productive character of man's relation to reality *presupposes*, rather than rejects, modern rationality.

In a certain sense, of course, that the set of rules governing the transformation and reduction of life-world meanings does not furnish an ultimate or definitive characterization of rationality, was already the insight orienting the working out of a transcendental phenomenology in the *Crisis*. In effect, if the objectifying achievements of scientific method are led back to their ground in the self-evidences of the life-world, the aim of the *Crisis* is to discover in the life-world, together with its self-evidences, "the construct of a universal, ultimately functioning subjectivity." (pg. 113) Therewith, a specific relation between reality and rationality makes itself heard: *reality (the life-world) is the constituted of a constituting activity*. How Husserl unfolds the vast field of investigations opened up by this insight does not concern us here. The sole point of interest is that, in Husserl's eyes, scientific objectivation (economic objectivation included) becomes a special case of a more basic characterization, even the most basic characterization possible, of rationality, namely, *constitution*. The exhibition and interconnection of the structural components of constitution under the general headings 'ego-cogito-cogitatum' becomes the guiding motive of a *transcendental* phenomenology. Conversely, in laying bare the most general and elemental structures of intentionality, transcendental phenomenology provides a radical grounding for the objectifying achievements of scientific rationality.

The Need to Further Clarify the Concept of Reality Presupposed in Economic Technique

Husserl's move is instructive, but in a manner and a direction entirely different to the course of his own thinking. If we had earlier asked whether the characterization of rationality as the transformation and reduction of life-world meanings falls short of its task, this is *not* to abandon economic rationality in favor of an analysis of the structure of intentionality. What I mean by this can be made somewhat clearer, even if only in an anticipatory manner, by referring anew to the relation between change and reality in economic technique. *Does the concept of an 'economic system' exhaust the concept of reality implied in the technical transformation of society? Or is it itself made possible, and even required, by a more elemental interpretation of the reality of the social world? Is the mathematization of society, or even the more geometrico thought-pattern in general, the most basic presupposition concerning the relation between rationality and reality in the welfare state? Or, to the contrary, is it already*

a secondary, derivative implication of this relation? The materials for a response to this question must be searched for directly in the *General Theory*, instead of in the *Crisis*. And rather than leading over to an elucidation of the structures of constitution, the question would be whether the phenomenological interpretation of reality as the constituted of a constituting activity raises to philosophical conceptuality the innermost meaning of rationality *already* at work in economic technique. In other words, *the exemplary significance of the cogito principle for our own questioning would consist in its capacity to make clear the relation between rationality and reality governing economic technique in the welfare state*. To be sure, when couched in these general terms, the announcement of a more radical perspective on the concept of economic technique remains an unfounded, merely dogmatic assertion. Consequently, to vouchsafe its claims, the line of approach worked out more fully hereafter requires additional consideration of Keynes's *General Theory*, and this *on the work's own terms*, that is to say, in view of uncovering the ultimate presuppositions motivating the mathematization of society by economic theory. In addressing this problem, the way is cleared, I hope to show, for access to the concept of modern rationality as such and in general.

§4. A Fact: 'The World as It Is or Has Been'

Chapter 18 of the *General Theory*, to which cursory reference has already been made, plays a decisive role in the work's architecture. The preceding chapters have successively introduced and expounded Keynes's key theoretical innovations concerning the principle of effective demand: the propensity to consume, the marginal efficacy of capital, the theories of interest and money. Chapter 18 brings these findings together into a general model of the economic system; as its title indicates, it *re-states* the general theory. What had hitherto been a preliminary and fragmented development finally obtains its integrated and conclusive form. Having summarized the general theory in §§1 and 2, Keynes passes to consider the 'actual' economic system. He remarks the following: "it is an outstanding characteristic of the economic system in which we live that, whilst it is subject to severe fluctuations in respect of output and employment, it is not violently unstable. Indeed it seems capable of remaining in a chronic condition of sub-normal activity for a considerable period without any marked tendency either towards recovery or towards complete collapse. Moreover, the evidence indicates that full, or even approximately full, employment is of rare and short-lived occurrence."¹⁰ A peculiar semantic

10. *General Theory*, pgs. 249-250.

shift seems to be involved here. If, heretofore, it has been our contention that the General Theory thematizes social reality in the manner of an economic system, the citation prepares a contrast between the extant economic system and a possible state of the economic system, that is, between a condition of involuntary unemployment and one of stable full employment. On the one hand, we have the 'actual' economic system, characterized by its cyclical behavior, in which a period of contraction is followed by an expansionary movement, perhaps peaking in a short period of full employment before lapsing, once again, into contraction and unemployment. On the other hand, another 'possible' state of the economic system is envisaged, one in which a condition of stable full employment is maintained. What is the *sense* of this distinction between the 'actual' and the 'possible'? What, in particular, is the *real* status of these terms?

'Facticity'

For the theoretician, the closing sentence of Chapter 18 has the ring of a 'conclusion', a conclusion, moreover, that formulates in a non-economic flourish the hard core of the preceding economic analyses on the determinants of effective demand. As such, the sentence *adds* nothing to what the economist already knows. Referring to stable unemployment, the passage reads as follows: "The unimpeded rule of the above conditions is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle which cannot be changed." (pg. 254) But we ask: why does the remark add nothing to what the economist already knows? Is it because, as the economist thinks, the sentence is the 'non-economic conclusion' of an economic theory? Or could it be that the observation puts into words the most self-evident of *presuppositions*, a presupposition which, itself nothing economic, goes in advance of and governs the very possibility of economic theory? Far from shutting out the first possibility, the second makes room for it because, what appears to the economist as a 'conclusion', is, in fact, the unreflected fundament of economic theory in the modern era. This fundament is nothing other than a concept of reality. The *General Theory*, I aim to show, presupposes and reproduces a specific ontology. Whence a general hypothesis: if Keynes's masterpiece is decisive for an enquiry into the rational foundations of welfare economics, it is because it situates the latter in the domain of an ontological enquiry. First and foremost, modern rationality has an ontological import. The closing sentence to Chapter 18 of the *General Theory* provides us with the opportunity of carrying through a first survey in this field. Let us consider the passage in greater detail.

"The unimpeded rule of the above conditions is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle

which cannot be changed.” Clearly, the assertion’s center of gravity is the contrast between a ‘fact’ and ‘necessity’. In ordinary usage, a fact denotes the quality of being actual, either something that has actual existence or an actual occurrence. Here, actuality means reality. A fact designates what is true or existent, the real. It would appear, then, that the ‘actual’ economic system is the extant system precisely in the sense of the real. As the formula notes, the ‘factual’ corresponds to ‘the world as it is or has been’. In general, what has or has had effective existence stands in contrast with what is mere possibility, namely, the inactuality or inexistence of a state of stable full employment. But how does it stand with the *reality* of the existent economic system in the *General Theory*? Is the concept of reality Keynes employs oriented according to the Aristotelian distinction between actuality and potentiality?

It is here where the second term of the formula—necessity—presses itself on us. The necessary denotes the compulsory, the mandatory or the compelling which cannot be eluded. While a fact of observation, “the unimpeded rule” of the conditions pertinent to a state of stable unemployment is “not a necessary principle.” In light of the entire development of the book, what Keynes is saying seems to be clear enough: the level of employment is a dependent variable, amenable to variation by operation on the independent variables of the economic system; to this extent, unemployment is not a ‘necessary’ state of affairs of the economy. But although Keynes *also* says this, it is not what he says most essentially. For the kernel of the concluding sentence of Chapter 18 is a definition: *a fact is what possesses no necessary character of its own*. If by ‘facticity’ one means the state or quality of being a fact, then the essential feature of the actual economic system is its *facticity*, but this in a particular manner, namely, that which is not compelling for human being. Positively, the factual demarcates the domain of the *contingent*, i.e. the accidental or that which is true only under existent conditions.

What concept of reality does this definition of facticity entail? Now, the factual is, in a certain way, the ‘real’, namely, that which *is*, the *existent*. In this sense, the actual economic system is the ‘real’ system: “the world as it is or has been.” But what is the peculiar reality of the world as it is or has been? Keynes’s definition levels down, diminishes as it were, the reality of the existent: the factual is ‘merely’ what is. What is or has been is ‘but’ a “fact of experience.” (pg. 250) Conversely, experience ‘only’ yields facts. In what manner is the peculiar reality ascribed to the factual already heralded by the conditionals, ‘merely’, ‘but’, ‘only’? In this, that the concept of facticity testifies to a certain *detachment* operated in respect of experience. *The existent, as it presents itself in experience, forfeits, as it were, its persuasive power*. In the categorization of the existent as a fact, a peculiar *distantiation* has already taken place. Now, distantiation or detachment no longer speaks, or speaks only, of the reality accruing to the

existent; it regards a determinate *human orientation* towards the real. The facticity of economic reality discloses itself as such to economic theory and technique; theory and technique embody a possible manner of relating to the existent. But how, more concretely, could one characterize this mode of orientation?

Critique and Negativity in the General Theory

The opening paragraph of the foregoing section indicated that the 'positive' contribution of the *General Theory* to economic theory, namely, the principle of effective demand, was preceded and prepared by a critique of classical economics. This observation is unobjectionable as it stands. Yet it does not suffice to make clear the essential sense and direction of the critique deployed in Keynes's work. Indeed, if 'critique' is, first and foremost, a distancing oneself from something, such that only in that detachment can evaluation take place, then the essentially critical function of the *General Theory* consists in its reduction of the actual to a fact. But with this one has not yet exhausted the specificity of the critique it unfolds. For the critical import of economic theory is bound up with its thoroughgoing *negativity*: in disclosing "actual experience" (pg. 254) as a fact, theory negates the existent as compulsory or necessary. *Negation, here, means the opposition that, suspending the binding character of the existent (state of the economic system), levels it down to the status of a given.* Against classical economics, the destructive import of Keynes's book comes down to the elemental assertion that the simple existence of a state of affairs cannot be the principle for its *justification*, that is to say, cannot be what makes it compelling. A general question emerges here, and which must remain provisionally unanswered: is this orientation towards the existent, which we call 'critique', something specifically *economic*? Or, to the contrary, could it be the case that, because critique is constitutive for modern rationality in general, the theory and practice of full employment in the welfare state is also critical of reality?

In any event, we can now provide a partial response to our initial question concerning the ontological statute of the actual economic system: *the reality proper to the actual or existent is its givenness.* For this reason, the reduction of the actual to a fact is not a 'skepticism'. In effect, the distantiation or detachment effected in the *General Theory* does not simply change the sign of the existent, banishing it into the realm of the unreal, of what is merely a mirage or an illusion. The loss of the persuasive hold of the existent on the theoretician does not automatically lead over to suspicion or distrust regarding its reliability. To the contrary, typical for the actual economic system is its stability, the dependability of its qualities and conditions. But this reliability, that would resolve itself into the

continued existence of a state of unemployment in the absence of technical intervention, does not vouchsafe the persuasiveness of experience either. The conjunction of its reliability *and* non-binding character conveys the specificity of the process whereby theory discloses the existent as a fact. Together, these features define the 'givenness' of the actual, its peculiar reality. Keynes's definition states that the existent *is* in the manner of a given.

Reality: The Realized of a Realizing

Nonetheless, our exploration remains incomplete. For if the concept of reality at work in the *General Theory* cannot be lead back to the distinction between the actual and the potential, what is the real in a strong sense, there where the existent has been levelled down to a given? No direct answer to this question can be expected from the theoretician; his interest are economic phenomena, not ontology. But would we not then have to canvass these phenomena to discover the traces of the ontological presuppositions governing the economist's theoretical analyses? In a passage cited earlier, Keynes notes that, during the oscillations of the trade cycle, "full, or even approximately full, employment is of rare and short-lived occurrence." When the result of the trade cycle, the difference between full and unemployment is merely *quantitative*, for both states are, to use Keynes's expression, facts of experience, contingencies. Contrawise, there is a *qualitative* difference in the reality accruing to full employment, when the outcome of human planning and control, as compared to full employment, when the peak of a boom in the trade cycle. In the former, planning and control cannot be understood as the restitution of an 'original' or 'natural' state from which the economic system would have strayed. Instead, the real, in the strong sense, denotes the terminus of a 'realizing process'. Literally, the real is the *real-ized*, reality a *real-ization*. Otherwise stated, the real—full employment as the outcome of the intervention of monetary or fiscal instruments in the economic system—is a *factum*, in the sense of something made or produced. The relation of the realized to facticity becomes evident: levelled down to a 'given', i.e. to what is both reliable and non-mandatory, the actual or existent can then function as the *condition* of a realizing process. "The world as it is or has been" becomes the incitation for realizing the possible, the world as it can be. If, speaking in Husserl's manner, we say that technique 'constitutes' reality, we mean by this that *reality is the realized of a realizing process operating on a 'given'*. I read the *General Theory* as the extended economic development of this concept of reality. Consequently, the real is a 'new world' in a strict sense, for its reality depends on an human element of control and planning irreducible to the contingency of the given

economic system; stable full employment enjoys, as it were, a 'surplus' of reality.

Change as Real-ization

But we have not yet exhausted the richness of the closing sentence of Chapter 18. Let us examine it afresh: "The unimpeded rule of the above conditions is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle *which cannot be changed*" (my italics). In the foregoing section it was asserted that, from the perspective of economic theory, any attempt to elicit the concept of change other than by reference to the concept of an economic system, was either specious or abstract. The possibility of an econometric quantification of change in terms of money and labor units is bound up with the prior decision to interpret society as a plexus of behavior subject to a causal lawfulness of its own, in short, an economic system. In this sense, the numerical concept of change is paired to an economic interpretation of reality. This is correct. But it does not mean that an economic system is something purely 'economic', nor is the concept of change purely 'numerical'. In effect, 'facticity' is not itself an economic concept. *Although the economic transformation of reality relies on the levelling down of the 'real' to a fact, a given that possesses no mandatory character of its own, this levelling down is not economic in nature.* It is not the decision to interpret society as an economic system that then leads to the discovery of the latter's facticity; to the contrary, the disclosure of society as facticity first makes possible its interpretation as an economic system.

In parallel fashion, 'change' is not merely a numerical variation in money or labor units. From the standpoint of the ontology at work in the *General Theory*, change designates the process that, operating on a given, realizes a situation deriving its proper reality from the intervention of human planning and control. We can now return to our initial question concerning the rational status of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in the welfare state. Indeed, one has not yet touched on the essential in noting that these are 'technical', or that technique concerns the deployment of means in view of an end. Keynes's book makes visible that each of those general functions, hence technique itself, rests on the presupposition that *to change is to realize*. Allocation, distribution and stabilization root in a concept of reality according to which reality is the realized of a realizing activity operating on a given. Such, ultimately, is the concept of 'practice' Keynes contrasts with theory, and to which the latter is subservient.

But this can be pressed still further. For the concept of change has a necessary reference to time. Quantitatively, of course, the variations of money or labor are measured over a determinate time-unit, be it a month, a

quarter, or a year. From this perspective, also time functions as an homogenous unit, where each temporal interval is identical to the other. Time, for the theorist, is the neutral medium in which economic change takes place. Nevertheless, one may question whether this 'economic' interpretation of time is fundamental, or whether its very possibility is conditioned by a *pre-economic* concept of temporality, a concept bound up with the interpretation of change as realization. In effect, Keynes's closing remark intimates a certain fracture in time. Not merely does "the world as it is or has been", the present and the past, stand in stark contrast to what the world as it can be—the future, but the future acquires a peculiar *priority* over the present. It is as if the present were not merely what precedes the future, but that the presentness of the present is determined in a peculiar manner by its reference to the future. A certain ambiguity becomes apparent: the world as it is, the actual world, not merely designates the existent, but also the present. The general question would be this, I believe: what is the presentness of the present, when the existent has been levelled down to a fact? I wish to suggest that, temporally considered, the 'actuality' of "the world in which we actually live" is its *provisionality*. By this is not meant either the transient or the ephemereal, what cannot resist indefinitely the wear of time, nor that the world would cease to be, that is, that the world itself were contingent. The enduring stability of a condition of unemployment speaks against both alternatives. In effect, we experience the provisionality of the world as that which, awaiting definitive human regulation, is destined to be transformed. *The suspension of the persuasive hold of the existent on mankind is rooted in a specific interpretation and experience of time.* For this reason, the absence of change, the incapacity to transform 'the world as it is' into 'the world as it can be', primarily entails a loss of temporal orientation. The 'lack of options', of a 'way out', goes paired with the awareness of a present that has esconced itself definitively, and which repeats, rather than transforms, an oppressive past.

CHAPTER 2. THE MODERNITY OF ECONOMIC TECHNIQUE IN THE WELFARE STATE

The foregoing chapter sought to clarify the concept of technique presupposed in John Maynard Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in view of the general problem concerning the relation between the economic foundations of the welfare state and Enlightenment. At issue in our questioning was *neither* a 'philosophy of economics' as a basis for the welfare state, *nor* a 'naïve ontology' as being philosophically involved in the concept of the welfare state by way of its economy, but a first stage in a process of thinking that aims at exhibiting the relation between welfare and Enlightenment. A first stage of analysis led to the concept of a system as the interpretation of social reality governing the deployment of instrumental rationality in welfare economics. That society can be viewed as a plexus of causal behavior is the condition of possibility for the 'theory and practice of full employment'. Subsequently, however, it was shown that the reduction of society to an economic system takes place on the ground of a more basic concept of reality, such that the disclosure of society as 'facticity' first makes possible its interpretation as a mathematically quantifiable and predictable interconnection of causal behavior. In effect, the economic concept of technique is grounded in an ontology according to which the real is the realized of a realizing process that operates on a given.

Now, although the presupposition governing *economic* technique, the question arises whether this ontology is determinant for technique *in general*. Are the presuppositions we have uncovered restricted to the conditions of possibility of economic technique or, to the contrary, is their functioning in the economics of the welfare state already a restriction of their more encompassing scope? In effect, one may conjecture that, because the presupposition of technique *as such*, the ontology taken for granted in the *General Theory* also holds for economic technique in particular. In this sense, then, the concept of reality at work in Keynes's masterpiece would be more general than the *General Theory*. But wherein lies its greater 'generality'? What, in other words, is that more encompassing domain in respect of which economic technique is a specific development? The following thesis can be anticipated: the ontology we have analyzed is constitutive for *modern* technique.

With this, of course, the problem concerning the *historicity* of technique is pushed into the foreground. The discovery and inspection of the self-evident presuppositions of the *General Theory* confirms that, on its own, the means-end relation is abstract. Technique has a history which cannot be narrated as a continuum defined by a purely quantitative increase in the stock of instruments and knowledge. In the sense I envisage it,

'historicity' concerns technique's ontological import, the historically variable concepts of reality which it unfolds. Building on the foregoing chapter, I will now introduce a shift of perspective. Its aim is to lay bare the properly historical character of the welfare state, and this in a particular sense, namely, the *epochal* concept of rationality in the absence of which allocation, distribution, and stabilization are unimaginable. By doing so, a first step is taken in the direction of adumbrating the concept of reality proper to modern rationality as such and in general. *Only thus will it be possible for us to conceptualize, in its full breadth, the relation between welfare and Enlightenment.*

In short, a two-fold amplification of the scope of our analysis is required if we are later to succeed in showing why the welfare state is a figure of Enlightenment. On the one hand, it is necessary to generalize the concept of technique we have developed hitherto, showing that, no less than for the technical transformation of social reality, the ontology at the heart of Keynes's *General Theory* is also constitutive for the technical transformation of the *natural* world. Although this stage does not yield further insight into the *concept* of technique, it shows that the *scope* of the latter is broader than that of welfare economics proper. A second stage, to the contrary, examines this general concept of technique in its *modern* character. Here, it will be necessary to consider afresh the *General Theory*, concretely evidencing how and why allocation, distribution, and stabilization are conditioned in their very possibility by the epochal presuppositions of technique in the welfare state.

The chapter develops this problem-field in seven phases. Drawing on, and modifying, Heidegger's phenomenology of technique, §§5 and 6 generalize the ontology of welfare economics, arguing that it holds for the concept of modern technique in general, and not merely for its economic specification. Subsequently, §7 concentrates on elaborating the modernity of this concept of reality, comparing it with the concept of reality implied in Aristotle's reflections on *techne*. The 'realizing' of technical change in the *General Theory* is shown to be irreducible to the fundamental ontological determination of technical change as a 'coming to be' in the *Metaphysics*. On the basis of this contrast, §8 focuses on the concept of technique as a 'making', arguing that two entirely different *mimetic relations* to reality are implied in *techne* and modern technique. The ontological presuppositions of the modern concept of technique outlined in Keynes's masterwork are further clarified, in §9, by reference to the modal distinction between existence and possibility. Here, the *dynamis - energeia* distinction at the base of *techne* serves as a contrast. Bringing together the previous sections, §10 returns to the economic functions of the welfare state, as sketched out initially in §1, providing a general formulation of the concept of rationality they embody. This concept of rationality—setting-a-given-in-order—is what Kant called *synthesis*, the 'I think' principle. The cogito, I suggest, is the endpoint of an enquiry into the economic foundations of the welfare state. Finally, §11 offers a summary of the argument developed in Chapters

1 and 2, indicating further lines of research with regard to the relation between the rational foundations of the welfare state and Enlightenment.

§5. 'Enframing'

The exposition unfolded in this and the following section argues that the concept of reality presupposed in economic technique is also constitutive for the technical transformation of the natural world. This idea will be developed in the manner of a short 'phenomenology of technique', that takes its point of departure in Martin Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technique" (1953). This essay is of interest to our own endeavor for several reasons. Firstly, it takes up the concept of technique in the framework of an enquiry into its ontological presuppositions, in particular the manner in which it discloses nature. A comparable reading of Keynes's *General Theory* has been developed in the foregoing chapter, namely, the manner in which economic technique discloses society. Furthermore, Heidegger views those presuppositions as determining the peculiar 'modernity' of modern technique. These two interpretative guidelines, if not his interpretation of technique itself, run parallel to our own. Lastly, as we shall later see, Heidegger's critical development of the question concerning technique is closely bound up with a *genealogy* of modern rationality, an issue which shall also occupy our attention at some length. In effect, it suggests that a genealogy of the welfare state can be taken up in terms of a genealogy of the concept of rationality it presupposes. Now, in view of the generalization of the concept of technique, my interest in resorting to Heidegger is not simply that of taking over his own phenomenological explorations, but of *transforming* them, showing how, in confrontation with Keynes, the very categories he employs enable a comprehension of modern technique different from his own.

Ways of Revealing

The insufficiency of its "anthropological" or instrumental interpretation, according to which technique is a means to an end and a human activity, is, in Heidegger's view, the motivation guiding all *essential* questioning on the topic: "Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing."¹ In seeking to make clear what separates modern from earlier forms of technique, it does not suffice to point to the emergence of

1. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), pg. 294. I have modified the translation of *Bestand*, preferring 'inventory' to the expression 'standing-reserve'.

the exact modern sciences and their 'technical' application. When one compares the hydroelectric plant damming the river, and the kind of knowledge which makes possible its construction, with a primitive watermill or the handicraft of the artisan, a knowledge and productive activity for which the Greeks reserved the word *techne*, the decisive consists in characterizing the 'way of revealing' which goes in advance of, and discloses, the ontic in each case. Both the hydroelectric plant and the watermill fall under the anthropological characterization of technique as the procurement and employment of means in view of an end. In both, a 'making' and a 'made' are at stake; but the sense of the activity and of the product is in each case entirely different. *Techne*, in Heidegger's opinion, belongs to *poiesis*, production, in the manner of a 'bringing forth'. Withal, not only *techne* is poetic; also *physis* is productive, and even in the highest sense. For, as Aristotle had noted, to the realm of *physis* belongs what has the principle of its coming to be in itself. In contrast therewith, *techne* concerns those things which have the principle of their production in something else, in the artisan or the artist. But what kind of relation holds between the product and the producer, between the handiwork and its artisan? The understanding of 'means' and of the 'human doing' going into *techne* leads back to the four causes of the metaphysical tradition. In this way, the silver chalice has its material cause in the silver from which it is made; its formal cause in the form or figure into which the silver is forged; its final cause in the ceremonial service for the sake of which it is produced; and its efficient cause in the silversmith. The 'way of revealing' governing *techne* is a 'bringing forth' in the manner of a poetic production.

When pausing to examine this account of *techne* at greater length, one is at loss for an explicit answer as to why it could hold for the primitive watermill, yet not for the modern hydroelectric power plant. Abstracting from the latter's greater complexity, isn't each of these causes *also* present in the power station? And how could reference to the four causes of the metaphysical tradition yield insight into the ontological presuppositions either of *techne* or of modern technique? Even if only negatively, in what manner does *poiesis*, the understanding of human activity as 'poetic production', render perspicuous the economic concept of technique in the *General Theory*? The reader's perplexity increases when noting that Heidegger's subsequent account of modern technique abandons all reference to causes, to enter the domain of description proper. We can leave these questions open for the moment, returning to address them shortly.

Inventory and Challenging

In contrast with *poiesis*, the ‘making’ of modern technique is governed by a way of revealing Heidegger calls *Ge-stell*, enframing: “in enframing that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real as an inventory (*Bestand*).” (pg. 302) The essence of modern technique consists in disclosing nature as a supply, as a stock or reserve continuously at man’s disposition. “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it an inventory. The word expresses here something more, and something more essential, than mere ‘stock’.” (pg. 298) An inventory, the dictionary tells us, is a list of goods on hand. The connection between ‘goods’ and ‘on hand’ is internal: the latter refers the assemblage of objects to something other than itself and to which their value is subordinated: good for... In a word, an inventory is what presents itself in the mode of *availability*. The actual unfolding of the means-end relation comes second, not merely in a chronological sense, but in that instrumentality presupposes the disclosure of something in the manner of its ‘availability for...’

Now, being an inventory is not a quality something possesses of itself; it depends far more on the attitude with which it is approached. A painting can lose its quality of a work of art to become an investment or a piece in a collection put up for auction. Contrariwise, something can be extricated from the means-end relation to which it is subservient. In a specific sense, of course, inventories are not a ‘modern’ invention; at all times, grain or water or heating materials have been stockpiled in prevision of hard times. There, also, the means-end relation is present. What separates these cases in an essential manner from modern technique is that the latter approaches nature *in general and as such* in the manner of an inventory. Moreover, although Heidegger’s analyses are circumscribed to nature, the thesis goes further: *everywhere* modern technique ‘frames’ reality as an inventory. *Bestand* is an all-inclusive concept. A ‘stock’ is an ontic category; ‘inventory’, in Heidegger’s usage, is ontological: it describes how the real *as real* appears to modern mankind. This ontological, rather than ontic, conception of inventory explicates the specificity, the essence of modern technique. Only on the ground of its ontological function, moreover, can the massive quantitative, hence purely ontic, augmentation of instrumental rationality in modernity be rendered comprehensible.

Bestand is a way of revealing inasmuch as it discloses nature in general as pure availability; technique reveals the mountain as a ‘coal region’, the river as a ‘supplier of water-power’, wind as a ‘source of energy’. But what is the essence of this revealing as a *revealing*? What orientation towards reality, hence what understanding of man and his standing in

reality, is evidenced in the process whereby technique opens up nature as pure availability? This question leads over to the second of the components of modern technique. In the gaze of the engineer that anticipates in the rushing mountain torrent the site for an hydroelectric power plant to be used for lighting a distant city, technique *challenges* nature. “The revealing that rules in modern technique is a challenging (*Herausforderung*) which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such.” (pg. 296) Challenging challenges in a two-fold manner: it ‘throws open’ and ‘sets forth’, and it ‘orders further’, an ordering wherein the opened up as available is placed at the service of something else. If it is true that in its abstract, ‘anthropological’ formulation, technique is a means to an end as well as a human doing, the meaning these have in modernity only becomes clear by reference to the ‘way of revealing’ called *Ge-stell*: *Modern technique is the challenging that opens up nature as pure availability for further ordering*. In turn, ‘challenging’ makes visible the interpretation of human being that reaches fulfillment in modern technique. For, in challenging, human being is oriented towards the world in the manner of a “lord of the earth”, such that it seems as though “everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct (*ein Gemächte* [sic] *des Menschen*).” (pg. 308)

§6. Resemanticizing *Ge-stell*: A Short Phenomenology of Technique

Precisely at this point, we match up with Keynes and the theory of welfare economics. For wasn't the real, interpreted as a ‘realized’ or *factum*, the ontological presupposition of economic technique in the welfare state? Is, then, a book such as the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* only possible within the way of revealing called *Ge-stell*? Does the ‘theory and practice of full employment’ actualize, in the domain of social reality, the challenging whereby modern technique reduces nature to an inventory available for further ordering? But if one does not simply accept in advance the negative valuation of modern technique implied in *Ge-stell*, what meaning can be assigned to challenging and inventory? In contrasting the *General Theory* with “The Question Concerning Technology”, a second possibility emerges, namely, that the *sense* of challenging and availability, as the categories giving account of man’s technical relation to nature, can be reformulated by reference to the concept of reality governing economic technique in the welfare state. In addressing this question, we pass over to the second stage of our exposition, i.e. resemanticizing Heidegger’s phenomenology of technique.

Facticity, Rather than Inventory

“The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order, now appears different from how it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and maintain... But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which *sets upon* nature. It sets upon it in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry.” (pg. 296) If one follows up this characterization of challenging and inventory to its roots, a second interpretation of technique seems possible. The heart of the problem consists in understanding the sense of the transformation of the ‘setting-in-order’ that goes from the earlier cultivation of the field to the mechanized food industry, with its greenhouses, pesticides, and, more recently, genetic engineering. “The work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field. In sowing grain it places seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase.” (pg. 296) Here, setting-in-order means leaving to the grain its own growing power and tending to its flourishing. In modern agriculture, the greenhouses no longer rely on the seasons, yielding, instead, ‘year-round’ harvests; pesticides combat the insects which attack the vulnerable crops; genetic engineering modifies the characteristics of plants, increasing, for instance, the protein-content of corn. By means of its greenhouses, pesticides, and genetic engineering, the modern food-industry responds to the challenging which opens up nature as an inventory. But, in view of these examples, what concretely does it mean to say that nature is an ‘inventory’? What is the distinctive feature setting it off from the tilling of the soil by the peasant?

An inventory, it has been said, is what presents itself in the manner of *availability*. Now, the ‘available’ is ‘disposable’ in the sense of what can be arranged. In turn, to arrange is to regulate, to determine the principle whereby things are ordered. The availability of nature, then, can be taken to mean its orderability. Nonetheless, in a certain sense, also the care of the peasant over his crop is a ‘setting-in-order’. But whereas here it means to “place the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth”, the mechanized food-industry discloses natural reality as availability in the manner of what is orderable *as such*. Not merely that the set in order by it can be otherwise than ‘as it is’, but the presupposition that nature ‘as it is’, *is* in the manner of orderability, determines modern agriculture in its entirety. But what does it mean to say here that nature ‘as it is’ falls together with its thoroughgoing orderability? This, namely, that the procurement and employment of a greenhouse is a ‘setting-in-order’ which no longer is limited by the seasons. But what kind of an ordering is this? One that suspends the binding character of the natural cycles wherein harvests take place. ‘As it is’, i.e. seasonally determined, nature is no longer mandatory

in view of cultivation. In contrast with the labor of the peasant, for whom nature determines the opportunity for sowing and harvesting, and who watches over the growth of his crop, the non-binding character of nature, its orderability, is the presupposition of the technique specific to the mechanized agriculture of modernity. The interpretation of nature as a 'fact' precedes, and conditions the possibility of, the greenhouse, the pesticide, and genetic engineering. Modern technique discloses nature as availability in the sense of its *facticity*. The passage to a 'mechanized food-industry' is only thinkable there where the natural world is revealed in the manner of a 'given' for human activity.

The closing sentence of Chapter 18 of the *General Theory*, we have seen, encloses a definition: a fact is what possesses no compelling character of its own. The theory and practice of full employment rests on the presupposition that the actual economic system, "the world as it is or has been", is a 'given', not a necessary state of affairs. The question was raised at the outset of this section whether its scope was limited to the domain of welfare economics. The foregoing analysis suggests that, *no less than for social reality, the facticity of nature is the essence of the 'revealing' at work in modern technique*. Because the presupposition of modern technique in general, it *also* holds for economic technique in the welfare state.

Facticity in the place of 'inventory'; this thesis summarizes the first step in a resemantization of Heidegger's phenomenology of technique. Now, inventory finds its place in *Ge-stell*, the challenging wherein the existent is revealed as available for further ordering. We must now turn to the second of the components of 'enframing'. What, in view of the semantic transformation operated on 'inventory', is the significance of 'challenging'?

Critique

Challenging challenges in a two-fold manner. It unlocks and exposes, such that the unlocked and exposed is opened up in the manner of an inventory. Yet, on the other hand, because it belongs to the essence of an inventory to be on call for something other than itself, challenging orders nature, placing it at the service of something. The distinction between unlocking and exposing (as an inventory), and setting-in-order comes second; it analyzes into its component parts the more original unity of the revealing called challenging. We ask: what is the sense of the internal connection between these two aspects of challenging?

To challenge means, amongst others, to question the validity of what presents itself to us. In this way, for example, somebody is challenged concerning his legal qualifications. The proprietor is challenged to give account of his ownership. Challenging has here the meaning of a summons

to an explanation; it requires that something give reason of itself. At the core of challenging lies the loss of the persuasive hold of what presents itself, *as it presents itself*, to whom poses the challenge. In challenging, the challenger takes distance from the challenged. What sort of a detachment is this? One where what presents itself is 'bracketed'. But what does it mean to 'bracket' here? To call into question in such a manner that the thing *as it is* becomes the object of questioning. When challenging the title of proprietorship, for example, the challenged is levelled down to the fact *that* the person presents him or herself as an owner, without credence being lent to the ownership as such. In that levelling down, the factual appears as what can be otherwise, e.g. not an owner. In this sense, the essence of challenging is its *negativity*: it denies or suspends what goes of itself, demoting it to the status of a fact, of what can be other than as it is. Only derivatively, on the basis of this fundamental experience of distantiation, can challenging then take up the disparate forms of provocation, confrontation, disputation, etc. What does this excursus into semantics indicate about the mode of revealing at work in modern technique?

Unlocking and Exposing

In its first aspect, Heidegger tells us, challenging 'unlocks' and 'exposes' nature as an inventory. The sails of the old windmill "do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind's blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it. In contrast, a tract of land is challenged in the hauling out of coal and ore. The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit." (pg. 296) What, from the perspective opened up by the semantic transformation of inventory into facticity, is the essence of 'unlocking' and 'exposing'? This, that the 'expediting' whereby coal is extracted, stored, transported, transformed, etc. cannot be abstracted from the modern presupposition that the 'natural' means whereby warmth and heat are produced have no obligatory or limiting value for humankind. In the strip-mining of coal, with its scarring of the wooded mountainside, but also in the gradual deployment of alternative energy sources, such as solar energy, which are not adverse to the environment, the essential negativity of modern technique comes to bear: it suspends the compelling character of natural reality for human being, unlocking and exposing it as a fact. In the same way, with the advent of the greenhouse, the seasonal cycles, which had earlier determined the limits within which the cultivation and harvest of crops took place, lose their persuasive hold over man. Indeed, the year-round cultivation of vegetables that the greenhouse makes possible attests to a peculiar detachment or distantiation that has taken

place, whereby the compelling character of the seasons is negated and levelled down to the quality of a fact. We call this 'distancing-that-negates', which is the essence of 'unlocking' and 'exposing', critique. *That modern technique challenges means, in the first instance, that it is critical of nature.* We return, therewith, to Keynes's *General Theory* and its critical orientation towards the actual economic system. Far from being anything specifically economic, only because the 'distancing-that-negates' is constitutive for modern technique in general, is economic technique in the welfare state also critical. Conversely, economic technique challenges in that, negating the necessity of a condition of stable unemployment, the economic system is opened up as available for transformation into a situation of full employment.

Expediting

"This setting-upon that challenges the energies of nature is an expediting, and in two ways. It expedites in that it unlocks and exposes. Yet that expediting is itself directed from the beginning toward furthering something else..." (pg. 297) We complete our resemantization of Heidegger's phenomenology of technique with an exploration into the second aspect of challenging, namely, "further ordering." What does 'setting-in-order' mean, there where challenging unlocks and exposes nature as orderability? Now, as we have seen, at the core of modern technique is a levelling down of the reality of nature, which, rather than having been relegated to the domain of the unreal or illusory, is disclosed as a fact. Our question can be reformulated as follows: what is the ontological status of 'ordering' in modern technique?

Announcements such as these are not uncommon in everyday life: 'It is now a reality that all homes in the country have an installed telephone line'. Or again: 'It is now a reality that medicine can cure or control a certain disease.' When listening to them, one pays no notice to their first part, directing attention only to the piece of news which they introduce. For the listener does not pause to reflect on 'reality', but on the *real*—the newly installed telephone lines, the cure for the sickness, etc. For this reason, the same could be said in a less long-winded manner: 'there now exists a cure...' or 'there are telephone lines...' To be sure, incredulity or rejection, no less than surprise or indifference, must be included among the possible reactions to the announcements. Yet a certain, entirely decisive distinction must be made in this respect. *That* the cure is now a reality can, for example, be doubted or denied; but beyond discussion in such doubt or denial is what *counts* as real, i.e. the concept of reality invoked by the announcement. In effect, each of these situations is real in the same sense as the lighted city, fed by a distant hydroelectric power plant, or the

produce of the greenhouse. In each, the real is a *human product*, the result of a technical transformation of nature. For modern technique, that the real, *as real*, is human-made, is no less decisive than is its determination as a product. In the cure for the sickness, the airplane, the digital telephone switching-system, the computer, or the regulated economic system of the welfare state, man recognizes himself in the product of his 'setting-in-order'. But also in each of these, the 'setting-in-order' whereby technique transforms nature or society takes place within the presupposition of the latter's transformability. By its very triviality, the concept of reality implied in these cases yields insight into the ontological status constitutive for the 'setting-in-order' of modern technique. In effect, there where nature has been levelled down to the status of a fact, the real appears as the realized of a realizing process that operates on a given. The technical ordering that transforms nature *real-izes*, i.e. brings something into existence.

In this specific sense, then, *production* is the essential determination of modern technique in general. In all its ontic domains, natural as well as social, modern technique is a 'making' in the manner of a realizing. Retrospectively, this interpretation of technique, with the ontological productivity it recognizes in human doing, makes visible a feature of the 'functions' of the welfare state that remains concealed in their abstract representation as means-end relations: *allocation, distribution, and stabilization are so many modes of the making constitutive for technique in modernity.*

§7. Change and the Determination of *Techné* and Modern Technique as a 'Making'

In reconstructing the concept of rationality at work in the welfare state, we have resorted to an analysis of the book which laid the groundplan for welfare economics, Keynes's *General Theory*. Confronting this text with *Die Frage nach der Technik* allowed of resemanticizing Heidegger's phenomenology of technique, thereby radicalizing our initial insight concerning the concept of reality implied in economic technique, extending its scope to the domain of modern technique in general. In ascertaining the sense of the relation between this ontology and economic technique, emphasis must be laid on the noun, not on the adjective; because constitutive for modern *technique* as such, it also holds for the *economic* technique of the welfare state in particular.

In this way, a perspective is gained for the concept of modern technique that, in a certain sense, brings it into the proximities of what the Greeks called *techné*. In effect, both are essentially characterized as modes of *bringing something into being*. That is to say, both receive their

fundamental ontological determination in the manner of a *making*. Referring to *techne*, a concept the scope of which is considerably broader than the modern usage of the term 'art', Aristotle says the following: "Of things that come to be some come to be by nature, some by art, some spontaneously."² All possible differentiation of the 'realizing activity' prevalent in modern technique and the 'coming to be' taken for granted in *techne* rests on the ground of the fundamental characterization of the one and the other as a 'bringing into being'.

For the moment, differentiation, rather than identity, is of interest to us, and this in view of a deeper-going understanding of the peculiar modernity inherent to the welfare state. For the differences between modern technique and *techne* are only derivatively disparities of ontic domains and 'degrees of complexity'. That the concept of technique available to Aristotle could never have found application in terms of the manipulation of an economic system, or that it remains foreign to the complex mathematical formulas and interrelations between institutions required for the implementation of means-end relations in the welfare state, is not yet to have shown what distinguishes *techne* from modern technique in an essential manner. Differences such as these are subordinated to, and made possible by, a more radical differentiation rooted in the very interpretation of 'bringing into being'. Again, while the life of the *polis* certainly knew of 'taxation' and the '(re)distribution' of its proceeds, activities which, at face value, would be 'the same' as what the welfare state does more than two milenia later, it remains the case that neither of these activities could fall under the meaning assigned by the Greeks to the term *techne*. This is not merely an omission that could have been 'set straight' if the Greeks had further pursued the possibilities inherent in this concept. While a certain comprehension of the specific reality or being of things is already presupposed in the identification of art and nature as principles for the becoming of things, a fundamentally different understanding of reality goes from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to the theoretical grounding of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in Keynes's *General Theory*. *The relation of the made to the making constitutive for modern technique is irreducible to that of techne*. Heidegger: "This producing that brings forth, e.g. erecting a statue in the temple precinct, and the ordering that challenges... are... fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing..."³ The kernel of Heidegger's thesis concerning the incommensurability of *poiesis* and *Ge-stell* regards a transformation in the concept of production going from art to modern technique. In comparing the 'way of revealing' governing modern technique with that of *techne*, Heidegger has characterized the 'coming to be', which the latter shares with *physis*, as a

2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1032a12-13, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol. 2.

3. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", *op. cit.*, pg. 302.

Hervorbringen, a producing in the sense of a bringing forth.

Therefore, our interpretation of modern technique, that takes its cue from the concept of reality that reaches expression in the *General Theory*, appears to coincide with the outcome of Heidegger's own analyses. For if the real is a human product, i.e. the realized of a realizing activity, doesn't the illusion prevail, as asserted in "The Question Concerning Technology", that everything everywhere exists only inasmuch as it is a human construct? "This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself." (pg. 308) In opposition to *Ge-stell*, contends Heidegger, it is impossible to understand the 'bringing forth' in *techne* as a human making.

That an hiatus separates *techne* from modern technique is certain. But what it can mean to assert that the real is a human product, such that man encounters himself in the products of his activity, and what, from this vantage point, it could mean to claim that the made in *techne* is *not* a human product, in the strong sense claimed by modern technique, are questions that as yet remain open. It must be underlined that the interpretation of *techne* as a mode of *Hervorbringen* remains vague and inadequately determined by reference to Aristotle's own thinking. In particular, the Aristotelian conception of poetic activity as a 'making', and the question concerning the nature of its contribution to the reality of the poetic production, remains obscure in Heidegger's account. What, then, does it mean that things 'come to be' by *techne*? What are its ontological presuppositions, how do these differ from the 'realizing activity' of modern technique, and how does this contrast serve to better illuminate the essence of modern rationality in general?

Techne: Substantial Change

Heidegger himself takes an initial step in the direction of an answer to this problem by referring to the four principles that, according to Aristotle, must be present such that a thing can come into being, namely, the material, the formal, the final, and the efficient causes. And, in effect, if one returns to the cited passage of Book VII of the *Metaphysics*, it continues with this sentence: "Everything that comes to be comes to be by the agency of something and from something and comes to be something...." Causally speaking, that from which a thing comes to be is its matter; what it becomes, its form and the end of the becoming; the agency, the cause whereby "that from which the change or the freedom of change first begins." (1013a29-30) *Techne* and *physis* fall under this last sense of the term cause. That things come to be 'by' nature and 'by' art means, from this perspective, that these are the principle of the beginning of change, the former internal, the latter external, to the thing itself.

Precisely this reference to change is lost from sight in Heidegger's reinterpretation of the fourth cause.⁴ The significance of this characterization of what Medieval philosophy later called the *causa efficiens* becomes clearer when confronted with the immediately succeeding sentence of the passage from Book VII of the *Metaphysics*: "... the something which I say it comes to be may be found in any category; it may come to be either a 'this' or of some quantity or of some quality or somewhere." (1032a13-15) Substantiality, quantity, quality, and place comprise the four-fold classification of change (*metabole*). Therewith, the extremely broad meaning of 'coming to be' obtains its fundamental conceptual specification as *change*, and this in any one of the four senses indicated above. At the same time, the material, formal, final, and efficient causes that go together in all 'coming to be', designate the four moments into which any process of change can be analyzed. In identifying and describing how things *change*, one describes how they *become* something.

Hence, the Aristotelian manner of posing and resolving the question concerning the essence of art finds its place within the framework of a far more general problem, namely, the scientific description of a world that everywhere manifests itself as a world in change, as a coherent totality of gradual transitions and transformations taking place over time. Indeed, the things of the world of experience show themselves to us either as having gone through a developmental process, or as currently changing, or as capable of undergoing transformations in the future. 'Change' becomes the guiding concept of the questioning gaze that aspires to an exhaustive and systematic description of the genesis and individuality of the things encountered in the diverse empirical domains of 'coming to be', such as the astronomical, the animal, the biological, and the poetic. But whereas the "special sciences"—physics—occupy themselves with the description of the different ontic domains of a changing perceptual world, a general *theory of change*, valid for all possible ontic domains, has to acquire a central position in an investigation into "being as being"—metaphysics. In this context, the four-fold resolution of change into changes of substance, of quantity, of quality, and of place, introduces a first and indispensable principle for the classification and ordering of the astonishing variety of genetic processes, both natural and poetic, with which the special sciences are confronted.

Now, although quantity, quality, and place concern changes of a thing's accidents, 'coming to be' in an ontologically strong sense regards the generation of a substance, an individual thing, or as Aristotle says

4. "The silversmith is co-responsible as that from whence the sacred vessel's bringing-forth and subsistence take and retain their first departure. The three previously mentioned ways of being responsible owe thanks to the pondering of the silversmith for the 'that' and the 'how' of their coming into appearance..." "The Question Concerning Technology", *op. cit.*, pgs. 291-292.

elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*, a ‘this such’. “Things are said to come to be in different ways. In some cases we do not use the expression ‘come to be’, but ‘come to be so-and-so’. Only substances are said to come to be without qualification.”⁵ Whereas accidental change concerns *what* the thing is, substantial change regards *that* something becomes or exists. The change whereby an accident displaces another presupposes the permanence of a substance, the reality of which remains unaffected in all possible changes of its accidents; when, on the other hand, a bed is made from wood, a change takes place which gives rise to a new being or substance—the bed. Only the second sense of the term, then, has a grounding significance for ontology; here, an investigation into ‘change’ acquires a central position in the more general investigation into the beingness of beings, that is, an explication of their reality-character. This latter sense of the term ‘change’ is what Aristotle has in mind when indicating that, together with *physis*, *techne* is a principle whereby things come to be. In referring to this ontologically fundamental meaning of change, Aristotle also employs the expression ‘production’, distinguishing natural production from ‘making’, a term he reserves for *techne*.⁶ Consequently, the interpretation of *techne* as a making, as *poiesis*, is *determined in advance* by the concept of substantial change. Moreover, not only is the essence of ‘making’ bound up with the concept of substantial change, but the latter is *common* to art and nature. That is to say, the ontologically fundamental meaning of change determines the sense of the relation between making and the made in the same manner as between nature and the products of nature.

Technique: A Realizing Activity

If we return, at this point, to the *General Theory* and its paradigmatic character for modern technique, a certain reciprocity underpinning and orienting the totality of its theoretical analyses comes again to our attention: *it is as much the case that modern technique changes reality, as that the changing of reality belongs to the concept of modern technique*. But what is ‘change’? If one keeps in mind Aristotle’s four-fold classification when turning to the economic concept of change taken for granted in the *General Theory*, one is initially tempted to view the latter as a ‘restriction’ of the *Metaphysics*. Of the three original types of accidental change, only quantitative change would now come into consideration. But this ‘restrictive’ interpretation of what goes from Aristotle to Keynes already proceeds too quickly. The concept of change made possible by the

5. Aristotle, *Physics*, 190a31-33, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1.

6. *Metaphysics*, 1032a27-30.

mathematization of nature and society is *in principle* incommensurable with the doctrine of accidental change. The cognizability of accidental change relies on the possibility of identifying two contraries that exhaustively map out the limits within which accidents displace one another in the perceptual world. The mathematical manifold of modern science is inherently inimical to this finite conception of change; the anticipation of the experienceable as a mathematical manifold implies change along a potentially infinite numerical range.

But changes of accident, whether topical, quantitative, or qualitative, remain subordinated to substantial change, change whereby something not only becomes 'so-and-so', but comes to be 'without qualification'. This fundamental meaning of change determines the ontological significance of *physis* and *techne*. How does it stand with modern technique? The closing sentence of Chapter 18 of the *General Theory*, at the center of our foregoing explorations, brings the fundamental *technical* meaning of the concept of change into view: "The unimpeded rule of [a stable condition of unemployment] is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle which cannot be changed." The facticity of the natural and social world, the non-binding character of the reality surrounding man, becomes the incitation to its technical transformation. Therewith, an ontological determination is gained for the concept of change, namely, 'realization'. *To change is to realize, to bring into being*. This ontological determination of change in modern technique is not at odds with its quantitative 'definition'; to the contrary, it functions as the latter's presupposition. The transformation of a state of unemployment into one of full employment is not merely a quantitative variation introduced in the economic system by means of fiscal or monetary instruments, but an original production wherein the realized derives its reality from a realizing activity.

Consequently, we find ourselves, once again, at the point of departure of this section, namely, the identity and differentiation regarding the 'coming to be' of *techne* and the 'realizing activity' of modern technique. Nevertheless, the reference to Aristotle allows us to take a step forward in the elucidation of that identity and differentiation. For the one, although the central banks and fiscal agencies, the mathematical models and formulas of welfare economics are utterly alien to Aristotle's descriptions of the art whereby a sculptor makes a statue from bronze, both *techne* and modern technique are a bringing into being, *itself further determined as a changing*. But the opposite consideration also holds true, namely, that the difference between *techne* and modern technique is the outcome of *essentially divergent interpretations of the concept of change responsible for the 'bringing into being'*. In its significance for the history of Western ontology, the concept of change is not univocal, and even possesses an *epochal* character.

§8. *Mimesis*

Our interrogating aims at further clarifying the essence of modern technique, characterized heretofore as a 'realizing activity', by contrasting it with the 'coming to be' of *techne*. In following up Aristotle's manner of posing the question concerning *techne*, we were led to a general theory of change wherein both art and nature obtain their essential determination as modes of production. The question concerning the 'thingness' of poetic productions, their specific reality as the made of a making, can only be answered by reference to the ontologically fundamental sense of the concept of change. Consequently, pushing through the analysis of the latter to its most elemental metaphysical components should be capable of 1) yielding the key to the interpretation of *techne* as a 'making', and 2) giving account of the incommensurability of *techne* and modern technique.

Mimesis: 'Making' as Reproduction

On Generation and Corruption II, 9 delivers, together with *Physics* I, 7, the general lineaments of Aristotle's theory of change. Before proceeding to a more detailed explanation of each principle, the first of these texts briefly summarizes the number and nature of the principles of all coming to be in the following terms: "there is *one* in the sense of matter, and a *second* in the sense of form; and, in addition, the *third* must be present as well. For the two are not sufficient to bring things into being..." (335a29-31) That matter and form are insufficient on their own is already the implication of the proper domain of generation and corruption, namely, "that which can be and not be." Indeed, although it is characteristic of matter to undergo change, *that* it undergoes change, hence that something comes to be (or passes away), depends on a different cause, namely, nature or art. Nonetheless, this proviso makes clear that the *concept* of substantial change is not established by reference to either nature or art, but by reference to *matter and form*. The cited chapter of the *Physics* makes this abundantly clear: "substances... and anything that can be said to be without qualification, come to be from some underlying thing..." (190b1-2) Art and nature are structurally the same insofar as the substrate that changes or is changed—matter—is conceived in relation to the end of the changing, itself conceptualized as form and reality. As "the matter and the formless before receiving form to anything which has form, so is the underlying nature to substance, i.e. the 'this' or existent." (191a10-12) The relation between matter and form yields the ultimate metaphysical elements giving account of the ontologically grounding meaning of change. Coming to be 'without qualification' consists in the forming of matter, *the determination of a determinable*; the outcome of the process is, in the broadest possible

sense of the word, a *thing*, a 'this such'.

These considerations contribute to clarifying the meaning of 'making' apposite to *techne*, as well as its contribution to the reality of the poetic production. *Poiesis*, bringing forth in the manner of a coming to be, encompasses, according to Heidegger, *techne* and *physis*. Essentially considered, nature and art are the same, that is, in both something comes into existence. But whereas those things that exist by nature have the principle by which they come to be within themselves, the products of art have their origin "in the maker and not in the thing made."⁷ What, then, does making mean, such that *techne* can be assimilated to *physis*? Subsequent to the elaboration of the four causes of things, Book II of the *Physics* includes the following passage: "surely as in action, so as in nature; and as in nature, so it is in each action if nothing interferes... Thus if a house, e.g., had been a thing made by nature, it would have been made in the same way as it is now by art; and if things made by nature were made not only by nature but also by art, they would come to be in the same way as by nature."⁸ At least two aspects of this text are of interest to us, the first of which is the interchangeability of natural and human 'making' for the effects of the comparison between art and nature. Therewith, and this is the second point, there is no reason to give making, when considered as a human activity, any special ontological status because, from the point of view of the real or existent, i.e. the outcome of the coming to be, *techne* and *physis* are the same. In a certain sense, then, Heidegger is correct when noting that in *poiesis*, that which is brought forward into existence is not a human product, inasmuch as the activity of the artist is responsible for neither the form nor the end of the product. In its 'thingness', the thing owes nothing to the poetic production. 'Making' is necessary such *that* a thing can at all come to be; but *what* the thing is, and this in the ontological sense of the specific reality of the real, resolves itself into the substantial unity of form and matter. In this restricted sense, 'to make' is to arrange what the artist or artisan already finds at hand and conditions his activity: the material, the form, and the end.

A Tautology

It becomes more understandable what 'substantial change' signifies in the context of 'coming to be': "art in some cases completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and in others imitates nature."⁹ The interconvertibility of *techne* and *physis* determines 'making' as *re-production*; 'substantial change' is *mimesis* interpreted as the repetition

7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a12, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2.

8. Aristotle, *Physics*, 199a10.

9. Aristotle, *Physics*, 199a15.

of the existent world.¹⁰ Otherwise expressed, their fungibility makes visible that there is no *distance* between man and the world in which he lives, that human activity is essentially *tautologous*. Conversely, the technical reduction of the social and natural world to the status of a fact in the modern era is one and the same with the distance man introduces between himself and the reality surrounding him. This holds no less for the actual economic system in the theory and practice of full employment in the welfare state, than it does for the gaze of the engineer who discovers in the chemical properties of a certain element the condition propitious for the efficient storage of energy by solar cells. Aristotle's formula—"as in action, so in nature; and as in nature, so it is in each action..."—neither holds, nor can hold for modern technique, where the loss of reality's overwhelming persuasive hold over man suspends the reproductive understanding of human doing.

In light of the foregoing considerations, a different interpretation can be assigned to the contrast between *techne* and modern technique compared to that suggested by Heidegger. Where its 'primary source' or 'mover' (*causa efficiens*), man cannot recognize himself in the brought forth; *only there where human activity has been endowed with an ontological productivity of its own, can man recognize himself in the product of his exertions*. Metaphysically speaking, the ontological productivity of human doing is expressed by saying that the maker is the *causa formalis* of the product, which cause finds in a *causa materialis*, a material, the condition for its productive activity. What Keynes called the facticity of "the world as it is or has been" is expressed, in the language of metaphysics, in terms of its materiality, its *determinability*; the 'making' constitutive for modern technique takes over the significance of 'forming', *determination*. Not the means-end relation, but *the determination of a determinable*, yields the essential characterization of allocation, distribution, and stabilization as the privileged modes of technical 'making' in the welfare state. Here once again, as was the case with the author of the *Metaphysics*, the reality-character of the real obtains philosophical conceptualization in the unity of form and matter. But to understand this unity in its authentically *modern* significance, within which the essence of technique already moves, the author of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, not Aristotle, is the indispensable point of reference. Which transformations were required in the history of Occident, such that production could come to be interpreted as formal, instead of efficient causality, need not concern us for the moment. It suffices to note that the means-end relation in modern technique is subordinated to a 'making' interpreted as a principle of formal

10. On the history of the concept of *mimesis*, see the essay by Hans Blumenberg, "Nachahmung der Natur. Zur Vorgeschichte der Idee des schöpferischen Menschen", in *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1986), pgs. 55-103, which inspires in manifold ways the reflections contained in this chapter.

causation. In the hydroelectric power station, the computer, or the regulated economic system of the welfare state, the interpretation of the real as a human product means one and the same thing as the recognition of a primordial ontological power in human doing. For in each of these cases, modernity understands that the realized of the realizing activity we call technique can be conceived in terms neither of completing what nature cannot, of itself, bring to its end, nor of its reproduction, but as an original production.

Mimesis: 'Making' as Production

A final reflection on *mimesis* may serve to close this section. For if it is thanks to the being-constituting power of human activity that man can first recognize himself in the products of his activity, aren't we once again faced with a mimetic relation? Doesn't modern technique release a mimetic relation between producer and produced, wherein *reality is the image of man*, and this in the two-fold sense that 1) man 'images' reality, and 2) man is 'imaged' in reality? It would seem, then, that a 'self-image' and an 'image of the world' are co-constitutive for *mimesis* in modern technique. If such is the case, the technical relation between producer and product is tautological: man \equiv man. But what is the sense of this identity? And in what manner could it be the incitation to a deeper reflection on the concept of *mimesis*?

In regard to the first of these questions, I will content myself with indicating that two conditions are constitutive for the tautology. 1) Negatively, there where reality is the realized of a realizing activity, no identity is possible in the absence of the given on which the activity operates. That is to say, identity necessarily goes paired with *difference*. But precisely because human being and reality are identical *and* different, each term of the pair conceals a danger. On the one hand, in 'difference' lies the ultimate danger that man could lose himself, such that no longer recognizing himself in the product of his activity means one and the same thing as forfeiting his primordial ontological productivity. This, most fundamentally, is the critique Keynes directs against classical economics with its conformism to, and apology of, "the world as it is." As we shall later see, it is also the kernel of the critique of fetishism inaugurating *Das Kapital*. On the other hand, in 'identity' lies the danger that man could encounter only himself; that reality, both social and natural, could become a 'mirror' which draws back and becomes invisible in the very movement by which it reflects man to himself. 2) Positively, and because no realizing activity is possible in the absence of a given which it 'sets-in-order', the mimetic relation between the realizing and the realized is a *formal* identity, that is, the identity between a product and its principle of formal causality.

Otherwise expressed, the identity constitutive for modern technique—man \equiv man—is not analytically true; it is a *synthetic tautology*. This means that only indirectly, by way of the detour through nature and society, can man come to recognize himself for what he is. But this also means that *what* man is, is embodied in the product of his activities. A relation to self is necessarily mediated by the relation to the other.

Passing to the second question, how could this identity give rise to a more radical comprehension of *mimesis* than that afforded by its characterization as the duplication of a pre-given reality? It is possible to advance an hypothesis, although its concrete development exceeds the scope of our present investigation. In effect, could we not see in both the ‘coming to be’ of *techne* and the ‘realizing activity’ deployed in modern technique different figures of the more comprehensive ontological structure of *mimesis*? It would then be possible to say, with Jan Broekman, that “*Mimesis (Darstellung)* not only describes, but *is* the relation of Western man to reality.”¹¹

§9. Modern Technique and the Relation Between the Existent and the Possible

We are engaged in an attempt to exhibit the concept of rationality embodied in the welfare state by reference to the contrast between *techne* and modern technique. No less than the hydroelectric power plant, the computer, or the greenhouses and genetic engineering of mechanized agriculture, the rubrics under which the economist classifies the means-end relations deployed in the welfare state obey a concept of rationality irreducible to that implied in *techne*, and which Heidegger characterized as a ‘bringing forth’, an *Hervorbringen*. At issue, however, is understanding this contrast by reference to Aristotle’s *own* thinking, by way of a reflection that uncovers the ultimate presuppositions guiding his description of art. In following up his determination of *techne* as a ‘making’ by which things ‘come to be without qualification’, the concept of substantial change has been brought to the fore. On the other hand, allocation, distribution, and stabilization concretely illustrate the concept of technical ‘making’ in the modern era. Each is an economic mode of the ‘bringing into being’ governing modern technique in general. If one seeks

11. Jan M. Broekman, “*Darstellung und Diskurs*” in *Zur Phänomenologie des philosophischen Textes*, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Orth, Phänomenologische Forschungen (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Albert, 1982), vol. 12, pg. 77. See further, H. Feldmann and J. M. Broekman, *Darstellung und Sinn. Zur Bedeutung der Mimesis in Kunstphilosophie und Psychiatrie* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1990), and J.M. Broekman, H. Feldmann, and Ph. Van Haute, *Ziektebeelden* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peters, 1993), especially pgs. 100-119.

to further clarify the specificity of modern technique as a 'realizing activity', by contrasting it with the 'coming to be' of *techne*, the investigation must lead to clarifying the *sense* of the difference between one and the other concepts of change. The foregoing section takes a first step in that direction by contrasting the concepts of poetic and technical production in the framework of the four causes of metaphysical tradition. Would it be possible to carry further this initial insight concerning the relation between form and matter? If so, the materials for a solution to this problem of *differentiation* should already be concealed in the two fragments which have disclosed the *identity* of *techne* and technique as a 'bringing into being':

(1) *Aristotle*: "Of things that come to be some come to be by nature, some by art, some spontaneously. Now everything that comes to be comes to be by the agency of something and from something and comes to be something... either a 'this' or of some quantity or of some quality or somewhere" (*Metaphysics*, 1032a12-15);

(2) *Keynes*: "The unimpeded rule of [a stable condition of unemployment] is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle which cannot be changed." (*General Theory*, pg. 254)

In other words, the question we pose to these texts can be formulated as follows: what concepts give account of change in its fundamental ontological interpretation as a 'coming to be' (*techne*) and as a 'realizing activity' (modern technique)?

Dynamis - Energeia

In examining the first of these, we limit ourselves to substantial change; paraphrasing the *Metaphysics*, what comes to be by *techne* and *physis*, comes to be *from* something and comes to be a 'this'. These two aspects, (1) the commencement stage of change—that whence something becomes, and (2) the end point of the becoming—a 'this such' or substance, are the essential moments determining the ontological significance of change. Aristotle designates them with the terms *dynamis* and *energeia*, possibility (potentiality) and reality (actuality). "... Since things are said to be in two ways, everything changes from that which is potentially to that which is actually... all things come to be out of that which is, but is potentially, and is not actually."¹² A new concept is thereby introduced in view of an understanding of the essence of *techne*, *possibility*, and in such a manner that substantial change consists in the passage from possibility to reality. What is not real or actual from the point of view of the terminus of

12. *Metaphysics*, 1069b14ff.

substantial change, e.g. bronze with respect to the finished statue, is the possible in the sense of *possible-being*. Hence, *dynamis* and *energeia* are relational concepts that not only serve to explicate change, but denote the two moments constitutive for being itself: possible-being and actual-being. That something comes to be 'by' *techne* means, then, that art is the cause that initiates *the actualization of the possible*. Precisely because constitutive as such for 'coming to be without qualification', these two moments are common to art and nature, an identity Aristotle explicitly notes in respect of possibility. "All things that come to be either by nature or by art have matter; for each of them is capable both of being and of not being, and this capacity (*dynamis*) is the matter in each." (1032a20-22)

'Production', interpreted as the process of change that has a substance as its end point, is determined, in its most basic features, by the *sense* of the relation between *dynamis* and *energeia*. Now, inasmuch as production encompasses both natural and poetic production, it follows that in clarifying the sense of this relation one also exhibits the essence of *techne* as a *making*. On closer consideration, three implications of consequence for our later analyses of the concept of modern technique come into view here: 1) With respect to the process of change, the concept of possibility denotes the *not-yet-real* or *not-yet-actualized*. For this reason, viewed as a temporal relation, the actual or real comes *after* the possible, and as the terminus of an actualization process. 2) Closely bound up with this first implication comes a second: *energeia*, not *dynamis*, is the *ontologically primary* term of the relation. In effect, whereas possibility is only intelligible with respect to the end point of the becoming insofar as all possibility denotes a 'possible this such', the 'this such' is intelligible in itself. One cannot sufficiently stress the importance of the style of questioning within which *dynamis* becomes thematic: the concept of possibility is the outcome of a *regressive* enquiry leading from what actually is or exists to what must be presupposed for its coming to be. The ontological priority of the real means that the interpretation of change as the actualization of the possible must, and can only be, understood in terms of the becoming of what presents itself to us in the perceptual world as already actual or existent. 3) The relation between possibility and reality is *unidirectional*. The positions of possibility and reality are not interchangeable because the possible is defined as possible by its directedness towards the actual. Insofar as coming to be 'without qualification', substantial change, designates the actualization of a possibility, the relation between *dynamis* and *energeia* excludes in principle the opposite direction of change, namely, the actual as the point of departure for the enactment of the possible. These three features, possibility as the not-yet-actualized, the ontological priority of the actual over the possible, and the unidirectionality of the process of change, are the distinctive features of production in general, and technical making in particular.

The Existent and the Possible

From this general examination of *dynamis* and *energeia*, we now turn to consider how the equivalent modal concepts, existence and possibility, are treated in Keynes's text. The interpretation of modern technique as a 'realizing activity' is rooted in the technical disclosure of the social and natural world as a non-binding reality, as a reality that, in its facticity, is available for transformation. The cited passage from Chapter 18 of the *General Theory* contains, as has been noted, a definition: a 'fact' is an existent state of affairs that stands in contrast to necessity. The 'facticity' of the factual consists in the non-necessary character of a given reality. But this definition of facticity is none other than the meaning modern modal logic has given to *contingency*, a concept it contrasts with *possibility*, i.e. the modality corresponding to the non-existent which can attain reality. If, once again, we look at this passage, a condition of stable full employment appears as the terminus of a realizing process insofar as it belongs to the domain of the possible over against the contingent reality of "the world as it is or has been." Hence, yet a third identity emerges between *techne* and modern technique. No less than was the case for *dynamis* and *energeia* in respect of poetic production, the ontological significance of modern technique as a 'bringing into being' is also conceptualized in terms of *the relation between the actual and the possible*.

But this identity bears within itself the key to the dissimilitude between the one and the other. The kernel variance is situated in the interpretation of existence, demoted, as it were, from its status as 'actual-being' in Aristotle to 'contingent-being' in Keynes. Possible-being is no longer comprehensible exclusively by reference to 'actual-being', but to the actual as non-necessary. Therewith, the concept of possibility employed in the *General Theory* presupposes a logico-ontological distinction in existence (necessary-being and contingent-being) that was foreign to the ontological conceptualization of *dynamis*. We need not concern ourselves, for the moment, with the historical conditions that prepare this transformed modalization of being. For our immediate purposes, it suffices to point out that, as a consequence of the introduction of contingency in its modern sense, the *meaning* of the relation between possibility and actuality, hence the meaning of modern technique as a *making* or *production*, is at odds with that governing *techne*, and this for each of the three distinctive features annotated for 'substantial change'.

In effect, allocation, distribution, and stabilization are only imaginable in the presence of the following presuppositions: 1) The possible appears as the *not-yet-realized*, but with a temporal priority inverse to that of *dynamis* and *energeia*. 'The world as it is or has been', the domain of a contingent reality, stands in opposition to the *future* as the domain of the possible. Rather than a retrospective relation between reality and possibility, the

interpretation of the actual as facticity reverses the direction of the relation, situating possibility *ahead* of actuality, i.e. defines the possible as the 'not-yet-realized'. The technical relation between actuality and possibility in the modern era nurtures a specific experience of temporality, wherein present orientation in the actual world is determined by its reference to the 'horizontality' of possibility, itself experienced as prospectivity. 2) A no less fundamental inversion takes place in respect of the ontologically prior term of the relation. *In its relation to possibility, the existent has forfeited its ontological primacy; levelled down to the status of a fact, it now functions as the condition for the realization of the possible.* The style of theoretical questioning unfolded in the *General Theory* is *progressive rather than regressive in its motivation*; the analyses of causal relations within the 'a priori' of a mathematical manifold (the economic system) aims at discovering 'a way out' from the given reality, characterized by protracted and severe unemployment. 3) Lastly, and as is clear from the foregoing, the *direction* of the relation is reversed. Interpreted as a realizing activity, the technical transformation of nature and society in the modern era concerns the passage leading over from the actual to the possible. The following thesis can be advanced: the set of problems addressed in the *General Theory* derive their status as *economic* problems from an entirely trivial presupposition concerning the sense of the relation between possibility and actuality. In effect, Keynes's theoretical question—What are the determinant variables of employment?—derives its meaning as an economic question from the presupposition that the possible is the realizable, *in casu* a state of stable full employment.

Not The Best Of All Possible Worlds

A comment at the end of Chapter 3 of the *General Theory*, 'The Principle of Effective Demand', further exposes what is taken for granted in Keynes's questioning. After the classical theory of employment has been canvassed, and its conceptual deficiencies exposed, the book proceeds to furnish the reader with an initial overview of the innovations to be developed. The third chapter is divided into three sections, of which only sections I and II are of substantive interest for the economic theoretician. The first briefly introduces the aggregate supply and demand functions, whereas the second section fleshes out these functions more fully, enumerating and describing their determinants. By contrast, section III, which pauses to look back on the classical doctrine from the vantage point afforded by this initial overview of the principle of effective demand, appears to the economist as a rhetorical flourish: "The celebrated *optimism* of traditional economic theory, which has led to economists being looked upon as *Candides*, who, having left this world for the cultivation of their

gardens, teach that all is best in the best of all possible worlds provided we let well alone, is also to be traced, I think, to their having neglected to take account of the drag on prosperity which can be exercised by an insufficiency of effective demand.”¹³ Excepting the reference to the concept of effective demand, the theoretician views the entire passage as ‘uneconomic’, as the humoristic employment of a literary device for contrasting the practical implications of the *General Theory* with the lack of practical import of classical economics. For, reformulated in the terminology of economic theory, that we don’t live in the best of all possible worlds means no more than that classical economics incorrectly views full employment as the continuous state of the actual economic system. Against this ‘optimism’, the exposure of the theoretical flaws in classical economics immediately leads over to the problem of how it might be possible to transform a condition of unemployment into one of stable full employment.

Not the denial of classical optimism, but the ontological implications of this denial, are of importance for an enquiry into the concept of modern technique and the rational foundations of the welfare state. That we do not live in the best of worlds leaves untouched and even reinforces the presupposition that we live in *one* of the possible worlds.¹⁴ August Faust has noted that Aristotle’s deviation from the Platonic doctrine of Ideas first cleared the ground for a systematic philosophical exploration of the internal connection between the concepts of change and possibility, inasmuch as the *eidōs* loses its transcendent and autonomous reality to become an immanent component of the objects of the perceptual world.¹⁵ Only when those concepts are linked to the process of development of individual things in the world of experience, does the significance of the intelligible for the sensible becomes understandable to Aristotle.

Decisive for our own purposes, however, is the *finitude* of the possible in its Aristotelian systematization, a finitude that receives its metaphysical seal in the ontological primacy of actuality. In this way, Aristotle raises to philosophical concepts what was the unquestioned assumption of antiquity in general, namely, that, as it presents itself, the world exhausts the eidetic possibilities of being. An entirely different presupposition is betrayed by Keynes’s reference to *Candide* (and indirectly, of course, to Leibniz): the *actual* world, ‘the world as it is or has been’, is contrasted with a plurality of worlds, and more concretely, with a plurality of *possible* worlds: ‘the world as it can be’. That *other* worlds are possible (which is not equivalent to the ‘otherworldly’ in a theological sense) means that *this* world is a fact. Therewith, the ‘literary’ reference to *Candide* makes visible the elemental

13. *General Theory*, pg. 33.

14. Compare with Blumenberg, “*Nachamung der Natur*”, *op. cit.*, pg. 89.

15. August Faust, *Der Möglichkeitsgedanke*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1931), vol. 1, pgs. 67-78.

logic at the heart of the *General Theory*, and without which its mathematical formulas and economic models are unimaginable: *from 'the best of all possible worlds', the actual economic system is levelled down to 'the world as it is', and this in view of the realization of 'the world as it can be', a 'better world'*. This elemental logic is at the core of the modes of the 'making' the economist calls allocation, distribution, and stabilization. The process whereby the natural and social existent surrounding man loses its persuasive hold over him is bound up with the awareness that we live in only one of the possible worlds. One can call this *the basic experience* of the modern era. Its ramifications are manifold; it makes comprehensible, amongst others, the *critical* import of modern technique. For critique, the distancing-that-negates-the-binding-character-of-the-existent, already moves on the ground of the presupposition that the actual does not exhaust the realm of the possible.

§10. Setting-a-Given-in-Order

We enter the final and decisive stage of our reflection on the *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, the work which laid the theoretical foundations for welfare economics. Its overall purpose is to summarize the wide-ranging reflections contained in this and the foregoing chapter by formulating the concept of rationality presupposed by the functions of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in a manner that exhibits their properly *modern* character, and not merely their instrumentality.

From Disorder to Setting-in-Order

Keynes's 'literary' reference to *Candide* has been discussed earlier with the purpose of casting light on the concepts of existence and possibility. A second implication of Keynes's remark introduces this final reflection on the modern determination of rationality as production. That we don't live in the best of all possible worlds implies, as noted earlier, that we live in *one* of the possible worlds. But it also implies that the world in which we live is, in a certain sense, 'bad'. The technical transformation of the world finds its original motivation in the recognition that 'the world as it is' is a 'bad reality'. To be sure, neither 'good' nor 'bad' have here an immediately moral significance. Instead, they find their place in a theoretical framework. In effect, the actual world is 'bad' in an economic sense, namely, consistent with a condition of protracted, often severe, unemployment. An economic system that, when left to itself, displays a cyclical behavior oscillating between periods of growth and prosperity and

more or less prolonged recessionary periods characterized by extensive unemployment and poverty, calls forth the elemental rational reaction on the part of the economic theoretician: "Our final task might be to select those variables which can be deliberately controlled or managed by central authority in the kind of system in which we actually live."¹⁶ The denial that we live in the best of all possible worlds carries with it the denial of the proposition's corollary, namely, that we should 'let well alone'. There where the economy is experienced as a hazard capable of endangering individual and collective well-being and even survival, bringing this situation of insecurity under control becomes the rational imperative, and this for ordinary no less than for economic consciousness. Consequently, 'management' and 'control' are not merely accessory or peripheral features of modern technique, but the central aspects defining it as such, i.e. the traits deciding on its very claim to *rationality*. Allocating, distributing, and stabilizing, in this perspective, designate different modes of the controlling and managing whereby technique vouchsafes its rational status in the welfare state. The question immediately arises: how is this characterization connected to that of 'making'? What is the sense of control and management in the perspective of the interpretation of technique as *production*?

In drawing out the most basic concepts giving account of modern technique as a 'making', it became clear that the theoretical groundplan of the *General Theory* is one and the same with the elemental logic made visible by the rejection of classical optimism. In effect, from the best of all possible worlds, the actual economic system is levelled down to the status of a fact available for technical transformation in view of 'the world as it can be'. The relation between the actual and the possible reveals the ontological presupposition of technique: the possible, a stable state of full employment, appears as the realizable of a realizing activity. From another perspective, however, a stable condition of full employment is also envisaged as the outcome of control and planning by fiscal and monetary policies and institutions. Thus, further reflection on the significance of the theoretical groundplan of the *General Theory* should be capable of revealing the significance of 'control' for the essential determination of modern technique.

A first and decisive step in this direction consists in reinterpreting the sense of the Keynesian critique of classical optimism. Now, the latter can be summarized in the formula 'supply creates its own demand'. While accepting the classical postulate concerning the determinants of demand, Keynes's critique is addressed to the second component of the

16. *General Theory*, pg. 247.

equation—supply, disputing the assumption that labor as a whole can reduce its real wages on the basis of money bargains with employers.¹⁷ Exposing the untenability of the postulates on which the classical theory of employment is based, proves the *conditio sine qua non* for a renewed theoretical reflection on the determinants of employment and income. Not the flawed economics of the classical theory of employment, but the innermost *meaning* of Keynes's critique in view of the technical direction of the economic system, is of crucial importance for us. The rupture of the classical equation is tantamount, I suggest, to the destruction of the *orderliness* of the economic system as represented by classical theory, and whereby *disorder and chaos* are exposed as the system's original state. That the classical employment-theory only accounts for a special case of the equilibrium conditions of the economic system, entails that full employment is an *accidental* or *fortuitous* occurrence. The breaking up of the supposed orderliness of the world, an orderliness which it possesses of itself in the classical theory of employment, discloses 'the actual world' in its primordial *indifference to man and his needs*. The economic system "seems capable of remaining in a chronic condition of sub-normal activity for a considerable period without any marked tendency either towards recovery or towards complete collapse... an intermediate situation which is neither desperate nor satisfactory is our normal lot." (pgs. 249-250) Consciousness of the overwhelming fortuitousness of reality, the acute awareness that the laws of the actual world only record *that*, but not *why*, it is as it is; all this reaches paradigmatic expression in the theoretical demonstration that, abandoned to the working of its own laws, a condition of stable full employment is an ephemereal and entirely accidental state of the economic system.

Therewith, a second, hitherto concealed aspect of the concept of facticity comes to the fore, namely, its *irrationality* in the sense of the accidental or fortuitous, of a reality that does not find the ground or justification for its manner of being in itself. Only when this basic experience has been isolated and exhibited, can one begin to understand the vigor of the technical will to master reality in the modern era. The sheer indifference of the economic system to the human lot motivates the challenging gaze of the theoretician that demands that reason be given. One has only grasped the essential in the assertion that the facticity of the 'actual' world is the presupposition of modern technique, when facticity signifies the non-binding character of 'the world as it is' for human activity *and* its thoroughgoing fortuitousness. No equivalent experience of

17. "There may be *no* method available to labour as a whole whereby it can bring the wage-goods equivalent of the general level of money-wages into conformity with the marginal disutility of the current volume of employment... We shall endeavour to show that primarily it is certain other forces which determine the general level of real wages." *General Theory*, pg. 13.

chaos and indifference, as the originary condition of the actual world, precedes and motivates the setting-in-order of *techne*.¹⁸

Consequently, the further enquiry into the fundamental laws of aggregate economic behavior, and which Keynes discovers in the propensity to consume, the notion of interest as the measure of liquidity preference, and the marginal efficiency of capital, does not immediately restore order to the economic system. As shown by Keynes's theoretical analyses, these three components of the effective demand function, when left to their own working, lead to a stable condition of unemployment. The meaning of these 'psychological laws' devolves in the *orderability* of the world, not in its intrinsic order. The identification and quantification of causal relationships within a mathematical manifold discloses the existent as both disordered *and* orderable, as an inchoate material amenable to technical control by means of the appropriate fiscal and monetary policies. Technique does not 'return' to the economic system its original orderliness; to the contrary, at the heart of Keynes's theoretical endeavor is the recognition that order is an *achievement* that has its source in a human 'making'. Therewith, the concept of order peculiar to modernity comes into view. The loss of world-order implied in the basic experience of the contingency of reality entails that order can only be a *product*, the composite of two constituent elements: 1) facticity—the world as it is—and 2) an organizing activity in the sense of a setting-in-order. At the same time, the 'elemental logic' of the *General Theory*, and to which we have previously referred in the optic of the relation between the actual and the possible, takes over a new figure: *the destruction of world-order becomes the condition that first makes possible and demands the technical setting-in-order of the world*. This, ultimately, is the presupposition motivating the mathematization of society by economic theory. 'Control' and 'planning' first draw their significance for technique from the interpretation of rationality as a setting-in-order.

It is no coincidence that *the inaugural theoretical text of the welfare state repeats the instaurating gesture of modern rationality*; almost exactly three centuries earlier, the deliberately effected breaking up of the world's orderliness, by way of the hypothesis of the evil genius, first lays bare the cogito and clears the way for the task of bringing order into the world. And, in 1642, the reduction of the social world to the chaos of a 'state of nature' proved to be the condition necessary to its setting-in-order in the manner of a Commonwealth.¹⁹ For the *General Theory*, no less than for

18. See Hans Blumenberg, "Ordnungsschwund und Selbstbehauptung. Über Weltverstehen und Weltverhalten im Werden der technischen Epoche", in *Das Problem der Ordnung. Verhandlungen des VI deutschen Kongresses für Philosophie*, eds. H. Kuhn and F. Wiedmann (Meisenheim/Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1962), pgs. 37-57.

19. It becomes more understandable what it could mean that Hobbes' later, and better-known work, *Leviathan*, has, as its subtitle, "The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill."

the *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* and *De Cive*, rationalizing contingency is the elemental expression of human self-assertion.

The Cogito Principle

The questions of §1 now come under a new and decisive light. Using the economist's own categories, we had distinguished three general rubrics under which the activities of the welfare state could be grouped: allocation, distribution, stabilization. For the economist, the difference between, and not the sameness of, these different functions is of crucial importance. *What* ends are envisaged, and *which* means are available, is the sole problem-field of economics. But the very identification of the economic problem-field attests to the sameness reigning in its three-fold differentiation: the means-end relation. The state installs a new telephone switching system to respond to the increased flow of communications; the state funds institutions to pay welfare entitlements; the state lowers interest rates to boost investment and economic growth. Allocation, distribution, and stabilization are so many instances of technique; in the continuous deployment of means in view of further ends, they are 'the same'. But does the means-end relation reveal the most hidden meaning of these functions, or does it, by its very abstraction, cover up their essential sameness? Now technique is a mode of rationality. Could we say that these economic functions are 'the same' not merely because a means to an end, but because, putting aside their technical character, a single concept of *rationality* is their common presupposition? What are allocation, distribution, and stabilization when we place the means-end relation between brackets? A *setting-in-order*. Something of this essential determination of rationality is present in a second, more 'descriptive' expression for the welfare state: the 'regulatory state'. Regulation is not only, nor most fundamentally, a question of legal regulations. To the contrary, the plethora of laws enacted in the welfare state, hence the throughgoing 'juridification' of the social life-world it brings about, is itself the manifestation of a more essential meaning of regulating, namely, *ordering*. Allocation, distribution, and stabilization, no less than the enactment of legal regulations, are its manifestations.

But what kind of a 'setting-in-order' is this? In what manner are these economic functions irreducible to the 'setting-in-order' governing *techne*? The ordering ruling in allocation, distribution, and stabilization presupposes the *facticity* of the social and natural world, its contingent or non-binding character. Each of these economic functions finds its condition of possibility in the presupposition of the elemental manipulability of the social and natural world, its 'givenness' for a realizing activity. One grasps the 'sameness' of these functions by saying that each is a *setting-a-*

given-in-order. And yet, we have also said they are ‘the same’ inasmuch as they are technical, i.e. insofar as the means-end relation is present in each. Not because a means to an end is modern technique a setting-a-given-order; the opposite is the case: *only as a working out of this more fundamental characterization of rationality does the means-end relation receive its essential configuration in modern technique*.

How are we to understand this concept of rationality? If one harks back to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one remembers that Kant designated the process of ‘setting-a-given-in-order’ with the word *synthesis*. ‘Transcendental philosophy’, with the meaning Kant impressed on this expression, has as its central task the exhibition of the structure of reason, understood as a synthetic activity. But the synthesis of a manifold is nothing other than the cogito: the ‘I think’ principle. *Setting-a-given-in-order and the cogito mean one and the same thing: the rational principle of the modern era*. It is as much the case that an enquiry into the economic foundations of the welfare state leads back to the concept of rationality that first attains its accomplished, if not final, philosophical expression in the transcendental philosophy of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, as that the synthetic activity we call the cogito prepares, and renders intelligible, what was to come some two centuries later under the economic rubrics of allocation, distribution, and stabilization.

§11. A Conspectus

The task of this concluding section is to review the principal stages of the argument unfolded in the course of the forgoing two chapters, and to determine what orientation it suggests for further reflection on the rational foundations of the welfare state.

Summary of the Argument

Keynes’s work brings to completion what was already the pre-supposition of liberal economics, namely, that the state is the institutional referent of means-end relations. Technique determines the boundaries of the imaginable for an economic theory of the state. Although a first-class theoretical achievement is necessary such that ‘allocation’ (the sole function ascribed by classical economics to the state) could be complemented with ‘distribution’ and ‘stabilization’ (the functions introduced by Keynesian economics), the *compatibility* of these functions is conditioned by one and the same understanding of rationality: technique, the means-end relation. But how would it be possible to push further an enquiry into the technical conception of rationality in the welfare state that

is neither sociological nor economic in character? Husserl's investigations into the origin of the modern sciences, and their concomitant mathematization of nature, suggest a first alternative. Inspired in the analyses of the objectifying accomplishments of mathematical science, it would be possible to interpret economic rationality, within which technique finds its place, as the ongoing transformation, reification, and reduction of everyday-life meanings. Describing these processes of semantic transformation, and unmasking the reifications and reductions of meaning they entail, would delineate the task of a philosophical critique of the welfare state.

The invitation to follow the thought-paths of Husserl's *Crisis* has been declined. In effect, it would stop too soon in its elaboration of the concept of *economic* rationality, such that the fundamental meaning of rationality in the welfare state escapes it. Instead, attention was again directed to the concept of technique, and this in the *General Theory's* own terms, in view of exhibiting the ultimate presuppositions motivating the economic mathematization of society. This line of approach immediately led over to an *ontological* consideration of economic technique. Having isolated 'facticity' as the mode in which the latter discloses existent society, reality was shown to be a realization, the achievement of a realizing activity operating on a given.

The present chapter has submitted this concept of reality to a two fold analysis. On the one hand, §§5 and 6 have shown that the ontology taken for granted in the *General Theory* is the presupposition of modern technique in general. In discussion with Heidegger's phenomenology of technique, here, for the first time, the epochal concept of modernity comes into view, and this as determined by a specific *rationality*, i.e. a specific understanding of the human relation to reality. This relation has been characterized as *productive*. Not because technique is a 'making' in the form of a 'bringing into being' is modern rationality productive; to the contrary, first on the ground of the ontological productivity of human doing in the modern era does technique, including the economic technique of the welfare state, receive its essential determination as a 'making'.

On the other hand, §§7, 8, and 9 attempt to bring into relief the sense of this productivity contrastively, by confronting modern technique with the concept of 'making' implied in Aristotle's description of *techne*. In particular, the reference to the four causes of the metaphysical tradition allowed us to bring into focus a seemingly innocuous shift, but one of the greatest importance for an understanding the basic transformation leading from *techne* to modern technique. In effect, whereas Aristotle had conceptualized the art of the artisan/artist as a 'first beginning of change' (efficient causality), the realizing activity of modern technique deploys a *formal* causality. This shift reflects itself in two entirely different understandings of the *mimetic* relation to reality enacted in technical

'making', namely, reproductive or productive. Subsequently, working back from the ontologically fundamental meaning of change implied in 'coming to be' (*techne*) and 'realizing' (modern technique), a different understanding of the concepts of, and relation between, possibility and existence has come to light. If, then, the means-end relation is insufficient to explain the concept of rationality proper to allocation, distribution, and stabilization, this is because the manifold of instrumental relations deployed in the welfare state ultimately rests on a set of historically determinate presuppositions concerning *how* man relates to reality and, together with this, how the two basic modal concepts 'existence' and 'possibility' are related to each other.

But what is the status of this concept of reality? What understanding does it yield of the concept of rationality implied in the *General Theory*? I have argued, in §10, that the experience of chaos and indifference, as the originary condition with which the given world discovers itself to the economic theoretician, precedes and motivates the technical setting-in-order of the economic system. The two-fold pattern of destruction and construction enacted in the *General Theory* not only repeats the gesture of the *Meditations of First Philosophy*, but *is* the cogito principle itself: synthesis, setting-a-given-in-order.

The Further Orientation of Our Enquiry

The general introduction to this book announced an enquiry into the economic foundations of the welfare state from two perspectives. These are given by the two ways in which one can understand the copula 'and' in the title 'Welfare and Enlightenment'. On the one hand, it can signify an *identity*. In this sense, the welfare state, from the point of view of its economic foundations, is already a concrete figure of Enlightenment. The task of this first interpretation is *descriptive* in character. On the other hand, it is necessary to ask whether the welfare state can simply be equated with Enlightenment or whether it might be a *restriction* of the latter's more original rational possibilities. It would seem that a *tension* between welfare and Enlightenment is at least as basic as the assumption of an identity. Here, Enlightenment no longer functions descriptively, but *prescriptively*. The economic foundations of the welfare state are taken up in the perspective of the organization of society they embody—capitalism—to then be brought into question and criticized as irrational. In this second sense, then, Enlightenment is the norm of an historical process.

The exploration carried out in the foregoing two chapters yields the first, properly descriptive moment of the relation between the title's two terms. If Enlightenment is modern rationality as such and in general, the

discovery of the cogito principle as the foundation of the technical conception of the state proper to welfare economics confirms the assertion that the welfare state is already a concrete embodiment of Enlightenment. We must now pass over to its second, prescriptive moment. The materials for a thoroughgoing critique have been laid out in the foregoing exposition. Isn't the welfare state a restriction of Enlightenment insofar as it threatens to obliterate the basic distinction between technique and practice? The prevalence of economic technique in the welfare state tends to place out of bounds the political discussion of the *ends* met by society. This question falls together with that of capitalism itself, conceived as a mode of social organization. For the practical question of social ends, far more than the technical decision on economic means, defines the emancipatory pretention of Enlightenment.

These issues, which are the core of the critique Jürgen Habermas has directed against advanced capitalism, are part of the subject-matter to be treated in Chapter 3. Only partially, however, because the basic question which arises concerns the radicality to which an Enlightened critique of the welfare state can aspire. This interrogation centers on the very distinction between the concept of technique we have seen operating in welfare economics, and the concept of political practice available to Enlightenment. To what concept of rationality does a critique of advanced capitalism appeal when it opposes practice to technique? Is it essentially different to that of modern technique? Concealed in these questions is the problem of the *limits* within which a tension between welfare and Enlightenment is possible.

CHAPTER 3. PRACTICE: ENLIGHTENMENT'S CRITIQUE OF ADVANCED CAPITALISM

Reviewing the situation of economic theory at the time at which the book was written, the Preface to the *General Theory* concedes that "the deep divergences of opinion between fellow economists... have for the time being almost destroyed the practical influence of economic theory, and will, until resolved, continue to do so." (pg. xxi) In the face of widespread unemployment, the classical remedies not only proved incapable of drawing the economy out of depression, but even compounded the difficulties. Rather than the implementation of economic measures, renewed theoretical activity is required: "there has been a fundamental misunderstanding of how in this respect the economy in which we live actually works." (pg. 13) For the economist, the explanatory and predictive power of theory is of paramount, even sole, importance. What matters is not the circumstance that, in advance of all specific theoretical questioning, society is rendered thematic in the manner of an economic system, but how concretely the system's dependent and independent variables relate to each other, and whether the theory fits actual economic phenomena. For the economist, ascertaining whether the *General Theory* is capable of explaining the actual phenomena of the economic system, hence its *practical* consequence, is of overriding interest. For who reflects on the *technical* and *theoretical* presuppositions of the welfare state, to the contrary, an internal connection makes itself visible between the interpretation of society as an economic system, on the one hand, and the trivial equation supporting the entire edifice of economics in the modern era, on the other, namely, "practice = applied theory." Or, to put it another way, the theoretical determination of functional relations in economically relevant behavior rests on the assumption that *practice* = *technique*.

Precisely this untoward assimilation of practice and technique is questionable in the highest degree: "There is no reason for assuming that a continuum of rationality exists extending from the capacity of technical control over objectified processes to the practical mastery of historical processes. The root of the irrationality of history is that we 'make' it, without, however, having been able until now to make it consciously."¹ From the standpoint of our own exploration, the thesis is clear: in the same stroke by which technique is held to be constitutive for the rationality of the welfare state, an opposition is being drawn with which its thoroughgoing irrationality can be unmasked. Simultaneously, the

1. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pg. 275-276.

opposition functions as a limit: *practice, not technique, is the mode of rationality constitutive for a democratic politics*. But it is the practical relation of mankind to history which is suppressed, and even effaced, by and in advanced capitalism. The economic interest of the working class—participating in the distribution of socially produced goods and in the reduction of working time—obtains satisfaction at the cost of abandoning to technical control the domain of politics. The move by which state-regulated capitalism effectively suspends social conflict in its acute manifestation as *class* conflict goes paired with the *privatization* of needs, namely, the securing of a welfare minimum, employment and stable income coupled to consumption-oriented behavior, free-time and career opportunities. That is to say, the ascendancy of technique is accompanied by a development wherein the interpretation of politics as an independent rational process has been emptied of meaning: the welfare of the welfare state is paid for by surrendering the individual's interest in gaining autonomy by participating in the decision-making processes concerning society as such. The specificity of the rationality embodied by the welfare state, and for which the *General Theory* has an exemplary significance, consists, one could say, in the far-going *technical usurpation* of a domain reserved heretofore to practice.

This chapter develops Habermas's critique of the restriction of reason to technique in advanced capitalism. Drawing on the category distinction between technique and practice, §12 outlines in greater detail the basic elements of the ideological function of technique in the welfare state. The radicality available to this critique depends, however, on a basic question: what is practice? It will be argued in §13 that Habermas's differentiation between means and ends, constitutive for the opposition between modern technique and practice, is only relative. More fundamental than this differentiation is the identity of a rational structure: setting-a-given-in-order. The two subsequent sections essay a *practical* specification of this general formulation of the concept of modern rationality. Firstly, §14 takes up practice from the point of view of the 'given' for an ordering activity, discussing the ontological status of advanced capitalism in Habermas's critique. Secondly, §15 conceptualizes practice as a setting-in-order, bringing into focus the utopian aspiration of the modern concept of practice. Finally, §16 summarizes the line of argument developed throughout Part I and provides a transition to the genealogical investigations to be developed immediately in Part II.

§12. The Critique of Technological Consciousness in Advanced Capitalism

The *General Theory* lays the economic groundplan for the distributive and stabilizing functions assumed by the welfare state, and which typify it over against the liberal state, restricted to the sole function of allocation. The

addition of these two new functions makes for a greatly increased activity of the state. But it does not essentially alter the form of social organization already present at the time of the liberal state, namely, capitalism. Keynes, for his part, not only explicitly recognized this in the course of his book, but presented it as an advantage of his theoretical achievement. It is the basic continuity going from liberal to advanced capitalism which receives attention in Habermas's critique of the ideological function taken over by technique in the welfare state. The burden of his argument will be that enhanced state interventionism in advanced capitalism, necessary to compensate for the crises of the free-market mechanism, benefits technical decision-making to the detriment of the practical consideration of social ends in a democratic politics.

From Liberal to Advanced Capitalism

Marx's analyses of liberal capitalism take their point of departure in the sharp distinction between state and civil society, together with its basic ideology of a 'just exchange'. Whereas traditional societies rely on shared traditions to legitimize an unequal distribution of social wealth and labor opportunities, capitalism displaces the source of legitimation to the mode of production itself. The market, in which propertyless individuals exchange their sole commodity, labor, for other commodities, creates the illusion of just, because equivalent, exchange relations. Consequently, the legitimation of social wealth distribution ceases to be a question of *political* relations, as in feudal societies, and takes on its properly capitalistic form of *productive* relations. This separation is reflected in the distinction between state and civil society, such that politics becomes a purely superstructural phenomenon dependent on the laws guiding the productive relations. Under these circumstances, Marx's critique of liberal capitalism finds its node in a critique of *political economy*, i.e. in a critique that unmasks the basic ideology of the equivalent exchange of commodities and exposes the basic contradictions inherent to the economic laws of capitalism.

In the aftermath of *Das Kapital*, suggests Habermas, the repeated economic crises of liberal capitalism create a novel response to a two-fold legitimation crisis. Firstly, inasmuch as the ideology of a just and equivalent exchange has lost its effectiveness, the depoliticized market mechanism can no longer legitimate the inequality of social wealth and of the distribution of socially produced goods. That is to say, legitimation becomes once again a *political* problem, and no longer falls together with the economic sphere of productive relations. Secondly, however, the introduction of a formal democracy and the dissolution of cultural traditions preclude a return to the direct political domination holding prior

to the capitalistic mode of production. The substitution program characteristic for the welfare state, whereby the state corrects and stabilizes the adverse effects of a self-regulated market, provides the new legitimation required to maintain capitalism. "This substitute program obliges the political system to maintain stabilizing conditions for an economy that guards against risks to growth and guarantees social security and the chance for individual upward mobility."²

Therewith, the social and historical significance of the three economic functions of the welfare state comes to stand under a new light. The new functions that typify it and set it apart from the liberal state coincide with the evolution of capitalism whereby *an active policy of conflict prevention becomes the central task of the state*. In this theoretical framework, allocation becomes economic shorthand for the measures designed to constitute, maintain and complement the prerequisites for the continued existence of the capitalist mode of production, e.g. a legal system endowed with the central institution of contractual freedom, protection of the market from destructive side effects, education, transportation, etc. Distribution and stabilization, on the other hand, designate the activities whereby the state reacts to the weaknesses of the economic forces by market-replacing measures, and compensates for the dysfunctions of the accumulation process of capital, such as money transfers to dependent workers. Consequently, Habermas argues that "the criteria of demarcation [between liberal and advanced capitalism] are not the extent and the technique of governmental activity, but its functions."³

The emergence of these conditions for state activity has a decisive consequence for politics: "Insofar as government action is directed toward the economic system's stability and growth, politics now takes on a peculiarly *negative character*. For it is oriented toward the elimination of dysfunctions and the avoidance of risks that threaten the system: not, in other words, toward the *realization of practical goals* but toward the *solution of technical problems*."⁴ The guarantee of a minimum level of welfare, linked to secure employment and a stable income, has not merely an economic, but even primarily a political significance, inasmuch as it becomes the essential means for securing the allegiance of the population to the private form of capital utilization, in a word, to capitalism as a form of social organization. Yet the allegiance which a successful welfare state succeeds in obtaining from the population coincides with the elimination of the practical content of politics.

2. Jürgen Habermas: "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'", in *Toward a Rational Society. Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. J.J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pg. 102.

3. *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), pgs. 54-55.

4. "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'", *op. cit.*, pgs. 102-103.

The Given and Variable Elements of the System

Keynes's observation that "we actually live in an economic system" already betrays the ideological illusion that is required for the depoliticization of the public sphere and the elimination of practical questioning. For, in the same movement by which the definition of society as an economic system opens up the latter to technical intervention, it excludes the possibility of public discussion about the basic organization of society and its goals. In effect, from a theoretical and technical point of view, an economic system, as a *system*, resolves itself into the distinction between given elements, on the one hand, and independent and dependent variables, on the other. By isolating and putting aside certain factors as the 'given' of the system, it becomes possible to set up causal relations between the independent and dependent variables, such that intervention in the former allows of attaining goals related to the latter. Keynes explains the methodological decision concerning the given elements in the following way: "This does not mean that we assume these [given] factors to be constant; but merely that, in this place and context, we are not considering or taking into account the effects and consequences of changes in them."⁵ A basic schema is at work here: *given* certain elements, other objectives are attainable, e.g. full-employment or low inflation. To assert that "we actually live in an economic system" means to automatically place out of bounds the given social structure of the system. Through this methodological decision, in the absence of which technical intervention in the system is impossible, economic theory effectively cuts out the system's 'given' from the domain of political discussion. But *the principal given factor of the economic theory of the welfare state is none other than the capital-labor organization of society itself*. By implication, a politics oriented towards the attainment of steady rates of growth, low unemployment, etc., excludes in principle a discussion on that form of social organization, inasmuch as the latter defines the objective parameter necessary for the attainment of the indicated goals. "As *such* the private form of capital utilization and a distribution mechanism for social rewards that guarantees the loyalty of the masses are removed from discussion."⁶

A Category Distinction

Thus, in spite of its sharp critique of the postulates of classical economics, Keynes's *General Theory* is effective in meeting the challenges posed by the economic crises of capitalism only insofar as it hypostatizes

5. Keynes, *General Theory*, pg. 245.

6. "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'", *op. cit.*, pg. 105.

the capitalist mode of production into a set of given parameters beyond the scope of political discussion and transformation. In this sense, it continues, by other means, the ideological function of political economy in liberal capitalism. Nonetheless, from the point of view of a *critical* theory of society, one that wishes to suspend the renewed fixation of capitalism into an 'objective and necessary' state of affairs, the identification and analysis of the economic laws of capitalism worked out by Marx now proves insufficient. Under transformed historical conditions, a critique of political economy spawns and finds its fulfillment in a critique of the ideological function taken over by science and technique in the welfare state. In turn, this renewed critique finds its touchstone in the assertion that technique and practice are *essentially* different, that is to say, cannot be led back to a single or common concept of rationality capable of guaranteeing a continuum between the two. In other words, the distinction is *categorical*. Over and against technological consciousness, the concept of practice admits of a preliminary, albeit purely negative formulation, namely, what is "outside the sphere of technical disposition."⁷ Positively expressed, its concept is bound up, in Habermas's opinion, with consensus and reflection. In contrast with advanced capitalism, a *rational* society would be one capable of opposing and coordinating different rationalities. For this form of social organization, it would no longer make sense to enquire about its rational fundament *in the singular*. From this perspective, the assimilation of politics and economics in the *General Theory* is an exercise in ideology: "The ideological nucleus of [technological] consciousness is the *elimination of the distinction between the practical and technical*..."⁸

The outcome of the transformations leading from liberal capitalism to the restriction of reason to technique in advanced capitalism is the renewed *self-reification* of man and society, and this in a strict sense. For economic rationality reduces the human relation to society to the kind of relation technique enacts in respect of nature. In effect, the core of the technocratic planning taking place both in the welfare state and in bureaucratic socialism consists in that "they want to bring society under control *in the same way* as nature by reconstructing it according to the pattern of self-regulated systems of purposive-rational action and adaptive behavior." (pg. 117) Habermas can be interpreted as suggesting that a single concept of rationality—technique—conditions the possibility of the welfare state, inasmuch as economics 'objectifies' society in one and the same way as nature is objectified by the natural sciences. The consolidation of the technical conception of the state in advanced capitalism responds to the

7. *Theory and Practice*, pg. 281.

8. "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'", *op. cit.*, pg. 113. See, also, "Technical Progress and the Social Life-World", *op. cit.*, pgs. 50-61, and "Über einige Bedingungen der Revolutionierung spätkapitalistischer Gesellschaften", republished in *Kultur und Kritik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), pgs. 70-86.

more fundamental process wherein economic theory comes to interpret “society as a nexus of behavioral modes.”⁹ This last observation lays out the essential in Habermas’s critique; the welfare state finds its ultimate condition of possibility in the objectification of social reality by economic theory, i.e. the disclosure of society as a plexus of behavioral relations, thereby made available for its technical disposition in purposive-rational action. By reducing practice to economic behavior possessed of its own lawfulness and constants, social relations are *reified*, deprived of their inherently practical orientation and made amenable to technical manipulation. On the horizon of this ongoing reductive process lies the danger that the sense of the distinction between technique and practice could be lost not only to economic, but also to everyday consciousness, such that reification can no longer be recognized for what it is.

§13. A Preliminary Formulation of the Modern Concept of Practice

Against the reduction of reason to technique in advanced capitalism, the task of a critique of ideology consists in retrieving the category distinction between technique and practice. The importance of this distinction for Habermas’s later thinking can hardly be overestimated. For, in the perspective of a general theory of rationality and rational action, technique and practice appear as “the fundamental distinction between *work* and *interaction*.”¹⁰ Whereas the category of work (purposive-rational action) encompasses what were later to be called instrumental and strategic action, interaction (communicative action) is oriented toward the open, unlimited and uncoerced discussion of the validity of socially binding norms. Whereas the latter takes place within the horizon of a socio-cultural life-world that provides the institutional framework necessary for interaction, purposive-rational action is institutionalized in the economic and state (political) subsystems. Over against the rationalization of subsystems of purposive-rational action, “... *rationalization at the level of the institutional framework can occur only in the medium of symbolic interaction itself, that is, through removing restrictions on communication.*” (pg. 118) It is by reference to this background problem that a “universal pragmatics”, more fully worked out in a general “theory of communicative action”, announces the renewed program for a critical theory of society.

Nevertheless, not the exuberant conceptual and terminological forest of a universal pragmatics, but the soil on which it grows, is of interest to our endeavor. Indeed, the distinction between communicative and purposive-

9. *Theory and Practice*, pg. 255.

10. “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology’”, *op. cit.*, pg. 91.

rational action finds its original motivation, in the author's own words, in "the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *techne*."¹¹ This remark is of the greatest interest for our enquiry. Because, in addressing the question concerning the concept of technique which lies at the base of the *General Theory*, the foregoing chapters have exposed the *epochal* transformation leading over from *techne* to modern technique. This epochal transformation only makes itself visible if one refuses to stay at the level of the means-end relation, incapable as it is of bringing to light the essential historicity of technique. Instead, all our effort has been dedicated to uncovering the historically determinate concept of reality presupposed in the economic means-end relations of the welfare state. In this perspective, both *techne* and modern technique are a 'bringing into being' in the manner of a 'making'; but this concept means something different in one and the other case. A fundamentally divergent understanding of the 'thingness' of things, of their specific reality or being, goes from *techne* in the *Metaphysics* to the theoretical grounding of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in the *General Theory*. When one turns to Habermas with this insight in hand, a basic question comes into the foreground: *would the concept of practice presupposed by a critique of technique in advanced capitalism stand far closer to what it criticizes than it does to praxis?* To what concept of rationality does a critique of ideology have recourse when it opposes practice to technique?

From the point of view of our overarching interest, namely, the relation between welfare and Enlightenment, this question is of considerable importance, and this for two reasons. Firstly, were it the case that technique and practice *are* on a rational continuum, a continuum that precedes and conditions the possibility of their differentiation, then we could conjecture that *radicalizing* the scope of the cogito principle, extending it to the politics and law of advanced capitalism, is the objective of a "universal pragmatics." Secondly, however, if the concept of practice we aim to uncover leaves undisturbed the basic concept of rationality already at work in welfare economics, then one is also pointing to the *limits*, albeit conceptual, within which social variations on Enlightenment still are imaginable, and not merely to the rationality of the welfare state from the point of view of its economic foundations.

From Technique to Practice

In short, Habermas's critique of technical ideology brings a crucial interrogation into focus: *what is practice?* A caveat is required at this

11. "Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Practice" (Introduction to the second edition), *Theory and Practice*, pg. 2.

point. The question, it will be noticed, does *not* read: What is practical discourse? This second interrogation is, of course, the nucleus of the theory of communicative action Habermas develops in his later works, and by means of which a 'paradigm shift' was supposed to have been secured for modernity's philosophical self-reflection. The shift, it seems to me, is not conclusive. The first, not the second question, is primary; practical discourse, in Habermas's employment of the expression, already presupposes a concept of practice, such that discourse can be qualified as 'practical'. Hence, my interest in Habermas's critique of the ideological function taken over by technique in the welfare state consists in elucidating the *modern* concept of practice as such and in general; its discursive specification in a theory of communicative action comes second, not merely chronologically but in the order of conceptual dependency. If modern technique is irreducible to *techne*, does and can the concept of practice marshalled against technological consciousness in advanced capitalism at all have recourse to the *Aristotelian* concept of *praxis*? Or does it itself already move on the ground of a transformed set of presuppositions and self-evidences irreducible to those governing the philosophical meditations of the author of the *Metaphysics* and the *Politics*?

It will be objected that, rather than its determination as Aristotelian, the *distinction* itself is of substantive importance. Yet none other than the *sense* of this distinction is at stake in the question 'What is practice?' For Habermas's strong claim is that practice is rationally *discontinuous* with technique. Nevertheless, clarifying the notion of rationality itself is the butt of our interrogation. What does *reason* mean in the expression 'practical reason', such that, in a second moment, it allows of being specified as *practical* over against instrumental or technical rationality? And, in view of the question concerning the relation between the foundations of the welfare state and Enlightenment, what concept of reason is the presupposition of the critique of the technical restriction of reason in capitalism?

Be it as it may, this style of questioning dictates a specific way of interpreting Habermas's critique of advanced capitalism. In a manner parallel to the reading of Keynes's *General Theory*, I shall essay uncovering the presuppositions guiding the text *Legitimation Crisis*, wherein Habermas presents an extensive analysis of the crisis tendencies of advanced capitalism. Indeed, the red thread of an enquiry into the rational foundations of the welfare state has been the thesis that modern rationality is bound up with an historically determinate concept of reality. The epochal character of that concept of reality defines, in my opinion, the rationality peculiar to modern technique. This insight casts the question 'What is practice?' in a new light; it anticipates an enquiry into ontology. This suggests that *the opposition between two rationalities—technique and practice—carries with it an implicit claim to an ontological discontinuity.*

Our task hereafter shall be to establish whether an internal connection can be found between rationality and ontology in the concept of practice. Habermas opposes to technique in his critique of advanced capitalism. A decisive consequence follows from this, and it admits of two equivalent formulations. Positively: a thorough justification of the cleavage requires exhibiting the disparate concepts of reality grounding these rationalities; negatively: the discovery of a single or common ontology at their base perforce sets technique and practice (and, by implication, purposive-rational and communicative action) on a rational continuum.

Means and Ends

Now, inasmuch as Habermas defines the concept of practice *differentially* or *contrastively*, the elaboration of its content is codetermined by the response given to the question: What is technique? Working back from this opposition to its common root, our immediate task consists in securing a preliminary characterization of the concept of rationality that, in all its self-evidence, is the presupposition of Habermas's reflections on practice.

The Introduction to the second edition of *Theory and Practice* provides a general answer to these two interrogations: "Technical questions are posed with a view to the rationally goal-directed organization of means and the rational selection of instrumental alternatives, once the goals (values and maxims) are given. Practical questions, on the other hand, are posed with a view to the acceptance or rejection of norms, especially norms for action, the claims to validity of which we can support or oppose with reasons." (pg.3) Perusal of later works by the author reveal that this distinction, as formulated hitherto, remains the compass point to which he hews unswervingly. The characterization of its first term moves within its traditional, unproblematic interpretation: technique is a means to an end. While it is possible to further distinguish between instrumental and strategic action, yet, in the essential, both are determined as a means to an end, as the realization of defined ends under given conditions. Insofar as Habermas's analysis of instrumental rationality follows the critical dictum of describing a given reality with its own concepts to negate it, further insight into technique regards not its concept, but the concept's *limitations*. The analysis of the problematic *consequences* of scientific-technical progress takes place within the presupposition of the unproblematic character of the *concept* of technique. Exposing the rational limitations of technique serves to negate the apparent necessity of the dominant role assigned to it in advanced capitalism, hence of capitalism itself as a form of social organization.

Technique, runs the definition, is a means to an end; what is practice?

The cited reference to the validity of the normative institutional framework (the social life-world) does not suffice to yield its more basic characterization. Indeed, practice possesses a *reflexive* structure in the sense of action immediately concerned with the determination of the *ends* of action. In opposition to technique, for which the ends are given in advance, it is those ends themselves which are the direct object of practice. Practical questions are questions about *ends*. This presupposition lies at the background of the preoccupation with the restriction of reason to technique in the welfare state: “progress of a rationalization limited in terms of empirical science to technical control is paid for with the corresponding growth of a mass of irrationality in the domain of practice itself... The price paid for economy in the selection of means is a decisionism set wholly free in the selection of the highest-level goals.”¹² The ideological function of science and technique in advanced capitalism consists in the systematic concealment of the distinction between questions about means and questions about ends. Yet the latter demarcate the proper problem-field of a democratic politics, which can even be defined, in its core meaning, as the “unrestricted communication about the goals of life activity and conduct.”¹³ The depoliticization of the public realm, which advanced capitalism couples to the ascendancy of technique, signifies relinquishing the possibility of a public discussion and consensus on the problem central to politics, namely, the ‘good life’. The claim to a category distinction between technique and practice—and with it, the distinction between the institutionalization of rational-purposive action in social subsystems, on the one hand, and the symbolic context for interaction provided by the social life-world, on the other—leads back to the structural difference between questions about means and about ends. The obliteration of this structural difference lies at the root of the thesis, advanced by Habermas in later works, concerning the ‘colonization of the life-world.’

A Practical Question

But no less than the definition of technique as a means to an end, on its own the problem of the ends of action remains abstract and incapable of revealing the *historicity* of the concept of practice, a historicity that is bound up with the set of presumptions and anticipations that determine the horizon within which the question about ends can be meaningfully formulated. Consequently, what is required is that we dig into the *manner* in which the practical question about ends is posed, and in a way that its ontological presuppositions can be uncovered. Such a question is the

12. *Theory and Practice*, pg. 265.

13. “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology’”, *op. cit.*, pg. 120.

kernel of the book *Legitimation Crisis*: “The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the possibilities of a ‘post-modern’ society—that is, a historically new principle of organization and not a different name for the surprising vigor of an aged capitalism.”¹⁴ The central sections of the book are consecrated to considering the different crises at work in advanced capitalism—economic, rational, legitimatory, and motivational—and wherein a post-modern society could be envisaged as the terminus of a historical process reconstructible according to a “logic of the life-world.”

Nonetheless, instead of plumbing these different modalities of crisis, a kind of analysis is required that succeeds in exhibiting the most basic concept of rationality implied in practice. The *practical question* itself, as worked out in the book, will draw our attention. Solely at issue is what *counts* as a practical question. Consequently, we need not concern ourselves, in the forthcoming, with either the sociological concepts deployed to answer this question, nor with the reasons for and against Habermas’s analyses. The theoretical framework devised to deal with the problem, which includes concepts such as “Steering Performances”, “Mass Loyalty”, “Fiscal Skim-offs”, “Subsystems”, “Substratum Categories”, etc. immediately forfeits its claim to our interest, such that what remains in view is nothing other than the practical question itself, both as a question and as practical. To be sure, this implies a certain impoverishment in our reading of Habermas, in the same way that our reading of the *General Theory* abstained from considering its economic concepts. At first glance this is disappointing, for it is just the level of social analysis on which Habermas moves which seems most interesting and concrete. But, as was the case for the concept of technique in welfare economics, taking this step is indispensable if one wants to lay bare the elemental concept of rationality concealed in the problem-formulation itself.

“The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the possibilities of a ‘post-modern’ society—that is, a historically new principle of organization and not a different name for the surprising vigor of an aged capitalism.” The “interest” to which Habermas refers is *practical*; in contrast with the technical conception of reason implied in allocation, distribution, and stabilization, the passage announces a questioning into ends, the ends served by society. But how is the problem of ends thematized? By reference to “principles of organization.” This returns us to §12 and the depoliticization of the public sphere. “The institutional framework of society is still distinct from the systems of purposive-rational action themselves. Its organization continues to be a problem of *practice*... not one of *technology*, no matter how scientifically guided.”¹⁵ Over against the

14. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 17.

private, non-generalizable ends served by capitalist and post-capitalist class societies, practice interests itself in a social organization principle that could incorporate universalizable ends: a “post-modern” society.

We shall return to consider the criterion of universalizability; at the moment, only the reference to organization principles need concern us. For the purposes of a sociological analysis, one in which the concept of practice is unproblematic and taken for granted, it suffices to define organizational principles as “highly abstract regulations that define ranges of possibility.” (pgs. 16-17) The thesis that all social formations are determined by a fundamental organization principle limiting the capacity of a society to change without losing its identity then becomes the methodological decision opening up the way for a “theory of social evolution” and within which the capitalist social formation finds its systematic framework. But with this one has not yet touched on what is decisive. For, what is an organization principle from the point of view of the *rational* determination of practice? Trivially, a principle of order. That practice possesses a reflexive structure means that it concerns itself with how society is ordered. Hence, the practical positing of purposes or, to put it another way, the setting of ends, consists in an *ordering*, namely, the ordering of society. Therein lies its peculiar rationality. What, then, is the essence of practice as a mode of rationality? A *setting-in-order*. Not because practice posits ends for itself is it, by implication, an ordering of society; to the contrary: *only by reference to the presupposition that reason is a setting-in-order can the cited passage first open up for itself the space in which to formulate the question concerning ends.*

But this insight still remains indeterminate and overly general, inadequate in view of grasping the peculiarity of the concept of practice that rules the manner of formulating the question we are considering. “The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the possibilities of a ‘post-modern’ society...” What kind of a setting-in-order is practice? A first foothold is secured if we reformulate this question as follows: *what* requires a practical ordering? Class societies in general, and advanced capitalism in particular, but this in an entirely specific optic. The practical interest in a novel organization principle of society takes its point of departure in an examination of the *crisis tendencies* prevalent in capitalism. What are crises? Indices of disorder. The bulk of the sociological analyses that follow the leading question of *Legitimation Crisis* aim at unmasking the internal contradictions of advanced capitalism, and this in view of setting in motion a practical organization of society. Practice draws its motivating impulse from the discovery of disorder as the primordial condition of the given society. Yet this initial indication of how society

15. “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology’”, *op. cit.*, pg. 104.

manifests itself to a practically motivated theoretical gaze requires completion in a second, cooriginal feature. In effect, the very possibility of setting-in-order what discloses itself as primordially chaotic is its orderability. "Advanced capitalism" expresses society in its elemental state of not-yet-ordered-orderability. Hence, a critical theory of society discloses advanced capitalism as *orderable disorder*, as the inchoate material for an ordering activity. We can now return to our initial interrogation. What is practice? A *setting-a-given-in-order*. In advance of the question concerning the possibility of a 'post-modern' society goes the assumption that synthesis is the essence of practice. The cogito principle, not the Aristotelian concept of *praxis*, is its indispensable referent. Only when, essentially considered, reason consists in a setting-a-given-in-order, does the practical interest in "the goal of a rational organization of society" (pg. 142) become meaningful. Indeed, the order introduced by practice is not merely the reproduction of the given (a "new title" for capitalism), but an original achievement (a "historically new principle") that owes its specific reality to the composition of (1) an ordering activity and (2) a given material.

Technique and Practice: A Rational Continuum

Practice sets-a-given-in-order. At the same time that the formula seizes the concept of rationality proper to practice, it lays bare the latter's epochal character, an epochicity that rests on the historically determinate concept of reality unfolded in modern practice. "The root of the irrationality of history is that we 'make' it, without, however, having being able until now to make it consciously..." As something that goes of itself, and that requires no further discussion or understanding, practice receives its essential determination as a 'making'. This unquestioned self-evidence is the ground on which any and all theoretical questioning into the concept of practical rationality begins. Certainly, practice is not a making in the immediate sense that this term can take over in modern technique, namely, a means to an end. But the means-end relation is not decisive for the determination of technique as a making; only when one views the latter as an *ontological* determination, as the implication of a specific concept of reality, has the essential been grasped. The practical question orienting *Legitimation Crisis* is the search for a 'historically' new principle of social organization. Not whether this principle can be found is important, but the concept of *history* which this question implies. What concept of reality must be presupposed such that practice receives its peculiar seal in the manner of a 'making'? Could it be the case that practice, no less than modern technique, is a making in the sense of a *realizing*, and that history, its 'product', is the *realized* of a realizing activity? If so, then the practice rescued by a

critique of the ideological function of science and technique in advanced capitalism is, essentially considered, *the same* as the butt of its critique, namely, allocation, distribution, and stabilization.

But what, in view of the foregoing, does it mean to make history? When discussing the ideological function acquired by science and technique, Habermas indicates that advanced capitalism requires the administration of the public sphere through the mass media “to buttress the concealment of the difference between progress in systems of purposive-rational action and emancipatory transformations of the institutional framework, between technical and practical problems...”¹⁶. To contrast the specificity of practice over against technical ‘progress’, the passage introduces a concept which has already occupied our attention at some length: transformation. Reformulated in terms of the leading question of *Legitimation Crisis*, practice transforms advanced capitalism into a classless society. The practical *making* of history is a *changing*.

Only when modern rationality is taken up in the context of an investigation into ontology does the following question acquire the necessary acuteness: what is it to ‘change’ the world practically? In comparing *techne* and modern technique, the concept of change has been shown to possess an epochal significance for the history of Western ontology. If, in both, change receives its basic determination as a ‘bringing into being’, nonetheless an entirely different interpretation of the human relation to reality goes from the one to the other. In a manner strictly homologous with technique, it is as much the case that modern practice changes the world, as that the changing of the world belongs to the concept of modern practice. To be sure, change does not mean here a numerical variation made possible by the economic mathematization of society; the practical transformation of society does not rely on the latter’s representation as a manifold of functional dependencies. Nevertheless, the different *ontic* orientations towards society implied in technical ‘objectification’ and practical ‘consensus-formation’ are grounded in an *ontological* identity, namely, the interpretation of change as a *realizing*. In this, technical allocation, distribution, and stabilization, on the one side, and the practical transformation of society through democratic ‘will-formation’, on the other, are the same. No less than a stable state of full employment, Habermas’s practical question presupposes that a ‘post-modern’ society is the made of a human making, a product that owes its specific reality to human activity.

“The root of the irrationality of history is that we ‘make’ it, without, however, having being able until now to make it consciously...” The modernity of the concept of practice taken for granted by Habermas, and its internal connection with *Enlightenment*, also comes into the foreground in

16. “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology’”, *op. cit.*, pg. 120.

the cited passage. The “until now” suggests the possibility of a rupture in history—namely, between an unconscious past and present, ‘the world as it is or has been’, and a conscious future, ‘the world as it can be,’—which assigns the future a priority status, a status it also possesses in modern technique. How is the rupture between an unconscious present (and past) and a conscious future to be interpreted? A much earlier voice makes itself heard at this point: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s understanding without the guidance from another.”¹⁷ Setting-a-given-in-order, namely, the practical transformation of advanced capitalism into a classless society, concretizes what Kant calls the emergence (*Ausgang*) from heteronomy into autonomy. Or, to anticipate the key concepts to be introduced in Chapter 5, the *transitive* conservation of reason leads over to its *intransitive* conservation, i.e. self-preservation. As such, Enlightenment is the presupposition that practical reason can *in principle* function autonomously, even when experience shows that it has hitherto not functioned in this way. Rather than the description of an actual historical process, the institution of a ‘post-modern’ society designates a *possible* movement of history, that is to say, the norm of a process.

A Classless Society

This brings us to Habermas’s problematic employment of the concept ‘post-modern.’ Two considerations are in order here. The first is that I do not hold his employment of this term to be representative for the attitude which understands itself as post-modern. But, for that matter, neither does Habermas himself. As he explicitly observes, ‘post-modern’ refers to a novel *historical* organization principle for society. In his employment of this expression, post-modernity coincides with *a classless society*, understood as a category of historical periodization. In the forthcoming, both to avoid confusion and to draw attention to what *is* important in Habermas’s reflections, I shall employ ‘classless’ instead of the expression ‘post-modern’ society.¹⁸ Secondly, and this is the point which concerns me, the institution of a classless society would mark the practical fulfillment of *modern* rationality. The object of the critique of ideological consciousness in advanced capitalism can be nothing other than to radicalize and bring to its practical completion the concept of rationality

17. Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” in *Perpetual Peace and other Essays on Politics, History and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), pg. 41.

18. Habermas is emphatic in this respect about advanced capitalism: “In the final analysis... *class structure* is the source of the legitimation deficit.” (*Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 73)

already at work in modern technique: setting-a-given-in-order. *The distinction between means and ends, technique and practice, comes second; both are rooted in a single concept of rationality, a specific interpretation of the human relation to reality, preceding and conditioning the possibility of their differentiation.*

In a certain sense, of course, this insight remains relatively innocuous for the project of a theory of communicative action, insofar as it can be understood to do no more than render explicit what are the latter's implicit assumptions. Once this moment of self-clarification has been accomplished, it can unperturbably continue on its course, for aren't the distinctions, more than the identities, philosophically productive? Regardless of their common ontology, would run the rejoinder of the critical theorist, the practical question of ends is irreducible to the technical problem of means. Certainly. Nonetheless, an additional, and acute, implication of the fundamental identity of technique and practice in modern rationality is conceivable: *would not the ultimate condition of possibility of the technical usurpation of the domain of practice have to be searched for in the determination of practice as a 'making'?* One could conjecture that only there where practice has come to be determined by reference to concepts that find their original home in the technical domain, can the conditions first be shaped for the restriction of reason to technique in the welfare state, and the drying up of the public domain indispensable to a democratic politics. Perhaps the quandry that lends our time its peculiar signature is that we would need to recover the significance of the distinction between *techné* and *praxis*, yet cannot accept the ontological presuppositions on which it rests.

A conclusive answer to this problem must remain at the horizon of our questioning. For the moment, it is necessary to work out more fully this preliminary characterization of political practice, concretely exhibiting the ontological self-evidences governing the leading question of *Legitimation Crisis*. Practice sets-a-given-in-order; not an arbitrary decision but the issue itself governs the direction our questioning must take. In effect, the further consideration of this concept of rationality resolves itself into an analysis of its two moments,—(1) the 'given' that is ordered and (2) the 'setting-in-order'—as the moments of *practical* rationality. In other words, the task at hand consists in reconstructing the question about *ends* from the point of view of the more general concept of modern rationality. To the elaboration of its two moments are consecrated, respectively, §14 and §15.

§14. The Ontological Status of Advanced Capitalism

Taking up the problem 'What is practice?' within the framework of an ontological enquiry has led to examining the manner in which practical

questions are posed. In contrast with technical questions about the means to achieving a given end, practical questions are immediately oriented towards ends. Beginning from this, the unproblematic characterization of the opposition between the technical and the practical, we endeavored in §13 to exhibit, in a first approximation, the internal connection between rationality and ontology underlying the modern concept of practice. On the one hand, it has received its rational determination as a setting-a-given-in-order. Only derivatively, by reference to this basic characterization, does the problem of ends come into view. On the other hand, practice appears as a 'making', and this in the ontological sense of a *realizing*, a 'bringing into being'.

Although they provide an initial and indispensable approximation to our topic, the reflections of §13 remain tentative and insufficiently elaborated. In particular, by uncovering the rational and ontological presuppositions that define practice as a mode of *modern* rationality, its *variance* with respect to technique has been effaced. As it stands, the generality of the formula 'setting-a-given-in-order' does not allow of distinguishing between practice and technique. This does not mean, however, that these terms could be used interchangeably. But it does suggest that their differentiation takes place on the basis of a more fundamental identity. The problem at hand is to specify 'setting-a-given-in-order' *practically*, resolving it into its two constituents. Whereas §15 shall determine *setting-in-order* as a practical activity, the present section examines the other element, namely, the *given* for an ordering activity. The decision concerning which of these two constituents must count as the point of departure for an understanding of the concept of practice is neither arbitrary or indifferent. In effect, the Enlightened concept of political practice unfolds a *two-step movement of destruction and construction* that, in *Legitimation Crisis*, manifests itself as the critical reduction of advanced capitalism to the status of facticity in view of its transformation into a classless society. Inasmuch as the constructivity of practice presupposes its destructive moment, our analysis must carry over from the 'given' to the 'setting-in-order'.

This problem-formulation is foreign to anyone who takes the modern concept of practice for granted, such that the relation between rationality and purposivity poses itself immediately in terms of the *universalizability* of the ends of action.¹⁹ But why and how universalizability could become the test of the rationality of ends, hence the meaning of the concept of rationality which is therewith presupposed, remains obscure and in need of clarification. Above all, the *ontological* perspective we have gained hitherto is lost from sight as soon as one passes over to a direct

19. "The discursively formed will may be called 'rational' because the formal properties of discourse and of the deliberative situation sufficiently guarantee that a consensus can arise only through appropriately interpreted, *generalizable* interests, by which I mean needs *that can be communicatively shared*." *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 108.

consideration of a 'pragmatics of contradiction', as Habermas proposes to do. The opposite consideration seems thinkable, namely, that only by pushing through to its end the ontological determination of practice as a setting-in-order does the criterion of universalizability become fully comprehensible.

The Natural and the Nature-like

What, then, is the ontological status of advanced capitalism? Pending the later discussion of fetishism, a perusal of the famous first chapter of *Das Kapital* yields the key to our question. As we shall see shortly, the parallel which Habermas draws between his critique of technical ideology in advanced capitalism and Marx's critique of political economy in liberal capitalism brings into relief a concept that runs like a red thread throughout *Das Kapital*, and which reappears, unblemished, in *Legitimation Crisis: Naturwüchsigkeit*, the 'nature-like'. Its contribution to the concept of rationality at work in *Das Kapital* can be outlined quite briefly. To begin with, the concept only enters the scene in the fourth, and decisive, section of the first chapter, where fetishism has been exposed in its basic features. Its late appearance is not coincidental, as only with the recognition of the fetishism of commodities can the capitalist mode of production, which presents itself as natural to its producers and economic theoreticians, be reduced to the merely 'nature-like'. If, for political economy, "the characters that stamp products as commodities... have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life", the task of a *critique* of political economy is to expose capitalism as a "nature-like system of the social division of labor."²⁰ Whereas the capitalist organization of society manifests itself in political economy as "definitive" (*endgültig*), as a "natural necessity", critique discloses capitalism as *naturwüchsig*. The levelling down of the 'natural' to the 'nature-like' brings into focus a radical transformation in the history of Western metaphysics. If Aristotle interpreted the natural thing as that which "has within itself a principle of motion and stationariness"²¹, *Naturwüchsigkeit* retains the meaning of *physis* only to invert its ontological significance: that which develops from itself (i.e. spontaneously) *without human regulation or control*. This epochal transformation in the concept of nature conditions the possibility of a critique of fetishism in *Das Kapital*: to the producers of commodities,

20. Karl Marx: *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, in 3 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), Vol. 1, pgs. 80, 78. I have altered the translation's rendering of *naturwüchsig* as "spontaneously springing up" to read 'nature-like'.

21. *Physics*, 192b13-14.

“their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule (*Kontrolle*) the producers instead of being ruled by them.” (pg. 79)

This highly condensed exposition clears the ground for understanding the destructive import of *Legitimation Crisis*. Referring to the democratic elite theories and technocratic systems theories of the twentieth century, Habermas notes that “these theories today have a function similar to that of the classical doctrine of political economy. In earlier phases of capitalist development, the latter doctrine suggested the ‘naturalness’ of the capitalist economic system.”²² In this, those theories make their own contribution to the more general ideological function of science and technique of consolidating the naturalness of advanced capitalism. A methodological observation by Keynes brings the meaning of naturalness to which Habermas refers into sharp focus: “We take as given the existing skill and quantity of available labour, the existing quality and quantity of available equipment..., as well as the *social structure* including the forces, other than our variables set forth below, which determine the distribution of the national income.”²³ Indeed, the very core of the ideological concealment of the distinction between questions about means and about ends, which accompanies the technical usurpation of the public domain earlier reserved to politics, consists in the fixation of the capitalist social organization principle into a ‘natural’ state of affairs, that is, an ahistorical essence. The Keynesian question about means—What are the determinants of full employment?—can only be meaningfully formulated and resolved by hypostatizing the labor-capital relation into a condition of society *as such*.

Whereas the ideologically guaranteed ‘naturalness’ of advanced capitalism consists in the self-evidence of an order that is unquestioned and unquestionable, the exposure of its crisis tendencies reveals a *deficit* of order, wherein existent society presents itself, for the one, as *unregulated* and, for the other, as *demanding regulation*. The unmasking of the anarchic, nature-like character of the existent social formation gives expression to the basic experience of a ‘bad reality’, a social world constituted in such a way that it remains indifferent to the needs of large sectors of its members. This, most fundamentally, is the significance of the thesis of the ‘basic contradiction’ inherent to capitalism in general, and which ramifies into economic-, rationality-, legitimation-, and motivation-crises in advanced capitalism in particular.

A response to our initial question is at hand. In its two-fold determination as a disordered orderability, the concept of *Naturwüchsigkeit* signals the ontological status of (advanced) capitalism: *facticity*. This insight sheds light on the concept of *critique* implied in a ‘critical theory of society.’ In effect, the facticity of the existent—advanced capitalism—

22. *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 37.

23. Keynes, *General Theory*, pg. 245 (my italics).

discloses itself as such *to* the critical gaze of the social theorist. In the process by which theory negates the naturalness of capitalism, exposing it as nature-like, a distancing has taken place which suspends the binding character of the existent and levels it down to the status of a fact. In turn, the existent social world's loss of persuasivity for the theoretician calls forth the *challenge* that reason be given. Ultimately, both a critique of political economy and a critical theory of society are critical inasmuch as they find their place within the general orientation towards the existent, the essence of which is a distancing-that-negates. The Enlightened concept of practice displays the negativity or destructivity which was already the essence of modern technique.

Ideology

In examining Habermas's critique of advanced capitalism, the term 'ideology' has hitherto been employed straightforwardly, without any effort being made to clarify its concept by reference to the function it exercises in practical rationality. The postponement of its systematic consideration is not the result of an oversight, but is dictated by the need to first clarify the concept of practice itself, in particular the significance of its preliminary, destructive moment. What has been said earlier about *mimesis* can now be brought to bear on the concept of ideology. Inasmuch as human being and history are identical *and* different, in difference lies concealed the danger that, no longer recognizing himself in the product of his activity, man would forfeit his primordial ontological productivity. Ultimately, *the concept of ideology derives its meaning for a critical theory of society from the awareness of self-loss as an essential possibility of the human relation to reality.* Only there where the real comes to be interpreted as the realized of a realizing activity operating on a given can the ideologically guaranteed 'naturalness' of society be the index of a self-loss in which mankind has given itself over to the product of its exertions. Anticipating the course of our subsequent exploration into the concepts of subjectivity and truth, the concept of ideology embodies the modern insight that *self-loss must be postulated as co-original with self-preservation.* A critique of ideology, for which the conceptual pair 'natural-nature-like' has an exemplary significance, must be understood as the effort to recover for mankind the primordial ontological productivity which at each moment it is in danger of surrendering. These reflections point to a further parallel between the *General Theory* and *Legitimation Crisis*. Indeed, Habermas repeats in respect of Keynes the very critique Keynes had addressed against classical economics, with its conformism to, and apology of, 'the world as it is.'

Norms: 'Mere Existence' and Validity

Nonetheless, we must press further in our analysis of the ontological status of advanced capitalism, transporting it into the very domain in which Habermas is strongest. It is necessary to make patent that also within the framework of communicative rationality, and even most acutely *there*, the facticity of advanced capitalism is the self-evident presupposition in the absence of which the practical question concerning the possibility of a classless society is unintelligible. If such were the case, it would seem that the claim to a 'paradigm-change' remains a parochial episode within the more general domain of modern rationality.

The heart of the matter is already announced in the title of Part III, Chapter 2, of *Legitimation Crisis*, namely, "The Relation of Practical Questions to Truth." At issue in the chapter is not the concept of *practice*, but how practical questions admit of *truth* claims. Consistent with the definition of practical questions inaugurating the introduction to the second edition of *Theory and Practice*, also here, as well as in later works, the problem poses itself in respect of the acceptance or rejection of norms, in particular, their claim to *validity*. Consequently, the concept of practice is indirectly determined by way of a reflection on the concept of validity. From the point of view of a theory of communicative action, inasmuch as social organization principles are *normatively* structured, the question concerning the ontological status of advanced capitalism is part and parcel of the general (practical) problem of the validity claims raised by norms. The conclusion of Habermas's analyses, centered in the idea of consensus, that is to say, a 'rationally motivated recognition of normative validity claims achieved through unlimited, cooperative, and uncoerced discourse', is well-known and need not concern us here. A single aspect of the appeal to a communicative rationality interests us, namely, the presuppositions on the basis of which practical discourse is *practical*.

These presuppositions are formulated in the polemic Habermas sustains with K.H. Itling's presentation of a non-cognitivist ethics. In discussing the difficulties inherent to this position, Habermas exposes his own assumptions with exceptional clarity. During the course of the argument, a simple but nonetheless decisive concept of validity is put forward: "a norm has a binding character—therein consists its validity claim."²⁴ A norm is valid when it is binding. Whence the central problem regarding practical questions: under what conditions does a norm possess a binding character? Itling's imperativistic ethics is grounded on the assumption that only *empirical motives*, such as inclinations, interests, or the fear of sanctions, can give account of its binding character. The rejection of this assumption calls forth a counter-assumption, a presupposition that is ultimate in the

24. *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 104.

strict sense. “If... there can be only empirical motives, one is as good as the other—each is justified by its mere existence.” (pg. 105) With this, the essential has been said. In the same movement by which it undertakes to exhibit the internal weaknesses of Itling’s non-cognitivist position, the observation serves as the touchstone for the program of a theory of practical discourse and rational consensus-formation.

But only this first step, not what follows, is essential. For, reformulated, the observation asserts that *mere existence is not binding*. If an empirical motive could be justified by its mere existence, then mere existence would be binding, i.e. valid. The existent does not find the ground for justification in its existence. To the contrary, existence requires justification; reason must be given. When closely considered, it becomes apparent that the proposition is a *definition*: the existent, as *existent*, is the non-mandatory, what possesses no compelling character of its own. Consequently, when Habermas rejects the endeavor to found the binding character of norms in empirical motives, arguing that the mere existence of such motives cannot justify them, he is not countering Itling with a *reason*, but with a tautology: *the empirical, by definition, is the non-binding, hence the non-valid*. In this sense, as mentioned, the presupposition is ultimate. That “empirical motives” cannot be what lends norms their binding character means that a fact is non-binding, contingent. One would not have understood the significance of this tautology if one were only (albeit correctly) to conclude that the critique of Itling’s imperativistic ethics does not meet the standards of “rationally motivated argumentation” which Habermas himself requires of practical (and theoretical) discourse. More importantly, it defines what *counts* as rationality, such that motivation and justification first becomes the manifestation of rational behavior.²⁵

Indeed, not the viability of the critique marshalled against Itling, but how the tautology at the base of communicative rationality illuminates the concept of practice, is relevant to our own questioning. In this respect, the import of the tautology is *ontological* in character. The reality accruing to the existent (in this case, the empirical motives of action) has been levelled down to the status of a fact deprived of necessity: ‘mere’ existence (*bloße Existenz*). One and the same process lies at the heart of modern technique. A full comprehension of what lies behind this critical reduction will have

25. The Kant reader will immediately recognize that Habermas’s polemic with Itling reproduces, in the essential, the discussion of the concept of the practically good (i.e. autonomy) developed in Chapter II of the *Grundlegung*, in particular the distinction between the objective and subjective causes determining the will: “the first indicates only dependence of the will on principles of reason by itself; the second its dependence on principles of reason at the service of inclination—that is to say, where reason merely supplies a practical rule for meeting the need of inclination.” Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H.J. Paton (London: Routledge, 1991), pg. 77 (BA 38). Speaking in Kant’s language, Habermas reproaches Itling that an imperativistic ethics conflates *taking an interest in action* with *acting from interest*.

to wait until §29, when the modern concept of critique has been adumbrated in the perspective of the concept of self-preservation. In any event, it is important to note that this presupposition, that gives account of the ontological status of the existent in modern rationality *as such*, also determines in advance the manner in which *practical* questions can be formulated and resolved. Therefore, when Habermas immediately follows up the cited definition with the assertion: “the only motives that can be distinguished from others are those for which we can adduce reasons (*Gründe*)” (pg. 105), he responds to the modern insight that *rationalizing contingency* is the elemental expression of human self-assertion.

The claim to effecting a change of paradigm in the philosophical self-interpretation of modernity, whereby “the focus of investigation... shifts from cognitive-instrumental rationality to communicative action”²⁶, unwittingly takes over the concepts of reality and rationality that are already constitutive for modern technique. Paraphrasing Keynes’s technical questioning in the *General Theory*, it also holds for the author of the *Theory of Communicative Action* that “the unimpeded rule of [the conditions ruling in advanced capitalism] is a fact of observation concerning the world as it is or has been, and not a necessary principle which cannot be changed.” The reappropriation of what was to have been superseded is not an ‘error’, a foolish lapse that could be corrected or done away with if brought to the attention of the social theoretician; the facticity of the existent social world is the presupposition in the absence of which a critical theory of society would be unimaginable. Only when ‘mere existence’ does not find in itself the ground of its justification, does the modern manner of posing the problem of ‘legitimacy’ make itself known. This insight prepares the passage for the following section. Because at stake in legitimacy is the issue of the *ends* met by society. The facticity of the existent social world devolves into the facticity of the ends which it effectively embodies; only their justification lends them legitimacy. *Nihil est sine ratione.*²⁷

§15. The Practical Setting-in-Order of Advanced Capitalism

Our leading question runs as follows: What is practice? A preliminary response has been outlined in §13: a setting-a-given-in-order. This characterization attempts to grasp and make clear the epochal character of practical rationality, its relation to an historically determinate concept of reality. Subsequently, §14 has isolated the first structural element of the concept of practice, namely, the ‘given’ for an ordering activity. In its initial,

26. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), Vol. I, pg. 392.

27. Compare with Martin Heidegger: *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1987).

destructive moment, Enlightened practice suspends the validity of the capitalist organization of society, disclosing it as disordered orderability, as a contingent fact with no binding character of its own. The second element of Enlightened practice must now draw our attention. Here, the constructive moment of modern rationality is envisaged. Leaving behind the critique of advanced capitalism, we turn to examine the assumptions guiding its practical transformation into a classless society. These assumptions are summarized under the general heading *setting-in-order*.

The Nature-like and the Orderly

When one returns to examine the first chapter of *Das Kapital*, it is clear that the nature-like serves two different, thought interrelated, functions. On the one hand, it is opposed to the natural (*natürlich*). But it stands in a second opposition as well. Whereas the first is retrospective, the second is anticipative: the critical reduction of reified capitalism to a disordered orderability already looks ahead to its contrary, namely, the “planned division” (*planmäßige Verteilung*) of labor. Again, whereas in capitalism “the process of production has the mastery over man”, the terminus of the practical transformation of society coincides with a situation in which production is “controlled by him.”²⁸ The same conceptual opposition comes to the foreground in Habermas’s analysis of advanced capitalism: “With capital accumulation, economic growth is institutionalized in an unplanned, nature-like way, so that no option for self-conscious control of this process exists.”²⁹ In terms of the leading question of *Legitimation Crisis*, a classless society embodies the planned and orderly, over against the chaotic development of advanced capitalism.

Consequently, *the two moments of modern rationality, destructive and constructive, obtain their practical specification in the sequence ‘Natürlichkeit-Naturwüchsigkeit-Planmäßigkeit’*. Moreover, and in contrast with Habermas’s contention that technique and practice are rationally discontinuous, the sequence betokens an ‘elemental logic’ exactly parallel to that observed in respect of economic technique in the *General Theory*. *The loss of social order becomes the condition that first makes possible and demands the practical setting-in-order of the world*. This initial insight into the structural identity of the setting-in-order ruling modern technique and political practice bears further examination. “The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the *possibilities* of a [classless] society...” The critical unmasking of the ideologically guaranteed naturalness of advanced

28. *Capital*, pg. 85.

29. *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 41. Again, the translation’s rendition of *naturwüchsig* as ‘natural-like’ has been slightly modified to read ‘nature-like’.

capitalism, and its disclosure as a non-binding, 'merely' existent social formation, first clears the ground for the consideration of a possible society. Hence, the leading question of *Legitimation Crisis* not only makes patent that the practical problem concerning a possible principle of social organization is one and the same with that of utopia, but conversely, and more importantly, that *the modern concept of utopia is determined by the concept of possibility presupposed in practice*. Now, the confrontation of the technical relation between the actual and the possible in Aristotle and Keynes proved decisive for an understanding of the disparate interpretations of the human relation to reality going from *techné* to modern technique. One may conjecture that the determination of history as the 'made' of a practical 'making' ultimately rests on a peculiar understanding of the concept of possibility.

How, then, does the relation between the actual and the possible enacted in the practical transformation of advanced capitalism into a classless society compare with the Aristotelian characterization of *energeia* and *dynamis*? Three aspects stand out: 1) In contrast with the ontological priority of *energeia* over *dynamis*, the actual—advanced capitalism—has been levelled down to the status of a 'fact' (*bloße Existenz*) which functions as the condition for the practical realization of the possible—a classless society. 2) Chronologically, the possible comes *after* the actual. The future is the privileged temporal domain of history, namely, the horizon of the not-yet-real-but-realizable orienting movement away from a bad present. 3) Again in opposition to the *energeia-dynamis* relation, the possible is the terminus of a realizing process that has its beginning in the actual. A logic of crisis and a logic of legitimation prove to be the constituents of a more encompassing logic, a logic of the possible, which mirrors the destructive and constructive moments of the *General Theory: the critical reduction of advanced capitalism to the world as it is or has been opens up the question concerning the world as it can be*.

In conclusion, setting-a-given-in-order is most clearly the common rational root of technique and practice there where these are cast into the sharpest of oppositions: "There is no reason for assuming that a continuum of rationality exists extending from the capacity of technical control over objectified processes to the practical mastery of historical processes..." The 'control' and 'management' constitutive for the technical essence of allocation, distribution, and stabilization in the welfare state find their correlate in the practical will to recover and exercise mastery over 'nature-like' social processes: "The life-process of society... does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan."³⁰ The sequence 'naturalness-the naturelike-orderliness', shared by

30. *Capital*, pg. 84.

Marx's critique of political economy, Habermas's critique of technical ideology, and Keynes's welfare economics, is all the more significant because *it concretely illustrates the three moments of the process of Enlightenment outlined by Kant: heteronomy-suspension of heteronomy (Ausgang)-autonomy.*

Mimesis

I will reserve for Chapter 9 a systematic consideration of the modern concept of utopia, which is determinant for Habermas's interpretation of a classless society. For the moment, I wish to get to the root of the concept of order implied in the setting-in-order of Enlightened political practice. Although the comparison between the beginning and end-terms of the process of Enlightenment—respectively, advanced capitalism prior to its critical reduction to a fact, and a classless society as the outcome of the former's practical transformation—suggests an opposition between the 'natural' and the 'orderly', it remains the case that the former is *also* an order, even if only apparent. What, then, is the difference between (advanced) capitalism and a classless society from the point of view of the concept of order?

In general, two aspects can be distinguished in an order: a rule, i.e. a structure or framework, and a plurality of different things or elements that can be arranged according to the former. In this broadest of senses, capitalism is no less an order than is a classless society, inasmuch as both contain a rule for the distribution of the production of a multiplicity of concrete producers in concrete productive relations. To be sure, the rule or measure—the 'organization principle' in Habermas's terminology—is different in the one and the other, but this does not yet mark the essential difference. In effect, the rule of capitalism is different from that of the feudal social formation, yet both are deemed 'natural' in contrast with the 'orderliness' of a classless society. The difference we are looking for becomes clearer if one bears in mind a comment by Marx: "the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour"³¹ The order *of* things is an order *in* things. But this insight only takes us part of the way in understanding the concept of order implied in the 'naturalness' of capitalism. An apparently insignificant choice of words delivers the key to what we are looking for. Whereas the cited translation uses the formula "presented to them", when referring to the relation between the producer and commodities, the original employs the term *zurückspiegelt*, i.e. *reflects* or *mirrors*. That is to say, (advanced)

31. *Capital*, pg. 77.

capitalism is 'natural' because, insofar as the rule ordering the division of labor is taken to lie in these things themselves, *human activity reflects the interrelation of things*. Reflection, here, has the meaning of imitation, *mimesis*. But what kind of *mimesis*? Again, the 'naturalness' of capitalism means that the "organization principle" (the ordering rule or schema) appears to its producers as an essence or form (*eidos*) inhering in society as such, as something given to them in advance, and for which they are not responsible. But this is the very core of Aristotle's characterization of *techne* by way of the four causes. To the Greek, as we have seen, the setting-in-order of *techne* gathers together the formal, the final, and the material causes the artisan/artist already finds at hand. And because he is not responsible for the formal (final) cause of the product, his poetic activity is *reproductive*. Ultimately, then, the 'naturalness' of advanced capitalism coincides with the presupposition that practice enacts a *reproductive* relation to reality.

"The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the possibilities of a 'post-modern' society—that is, a historically new principle of organization and not a different name for the surprising vigor of an aged capitalism." If we now examine the practical question of *Legitimation Crisis* from the point of view of the concept of *mimesis*, a decisive difference manifests itself with respect to 'naturalness'. The practical setting-in-order of society is *productive* ("a historically new principle of organization"), not *reproductive* ("a different name for capitalism"). On the one hand, the *terminus ad quem* of the realizing activity possesses a novel principle of social organization irreducible to that of advanced capitalism; in the language of metaphysics, practice is a principle of *formal causality*. Purposivity falls under the rubric of formal, instead of final, causality inasmuch as the positing of ends refers to the *form* of a classless society, its "principle of social organization." On the other hand, the practical setting-in-order of society finds its condition in a disordered orderability called, again in the language of metaphysics, a *material cause*, an undetermined determinability. In this way, a classless society embodies the concept of *order* constitutive for modern rationality, namely, the product composed of (1) a setting-in-order (form) and (2) a given material (matter). This concept of order does not first emerge as a result of a "logic of crisis" and a "logic of legitimation." To the contrary, it governs in advance the manner in which the practical question of *Legitimation Crisis* can at all be formulated and elaborated. *The modern concept of order falls together with the productive interpretation of mimesis.*

Let us examine a final question in view of clarifying the specificity of the concept of *mimesis* presupposed in the setting-in-order of Enlightened political practice. The unplanned and nature-like character of advanced capitalism entails that, in Habermas's words, "no option for self-conscious

control of this process exists.” The concept of self-consciousness also cropped up when, referring to man’s relation to history, Habermas contrasted an unconscious past and present with a conscious future. What does ‘self-consciousness’ mean here, and how is it related to productive *mimesis*?

A digression into the book which laid the philosophical foundations for modern science is of help at this point. For the specificity of the mimetic character of modern rationality in general, and of theory in particular, attains its clearest expression in what Kant has to say in the Introduction to the second edition of the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft* about the new concept of knowledge orienting modern physics: “reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own... while reason must seek in nature, not fictitiously ascribe to it, whatever as not being knowable through reason’s own resources has to be learnt, if learnt at all, only from nature, it must adopt as its guide, in so seeking, that which it has itself put into nature.”³² Inasmuch as man only seeks in nature what he himself has put into it, a certain tautology comes into view: man \equiv man. Nonetheless, in its indispensable recourse to experimentation, the concept of knowledge constitutive for modern science already moves on the ground of the insight that the mimetic relation to reality is *synthetic*, rather than analytic. The concept of a plan (*Entwurf*) which Kant employs, and whereby theory brings order into experience, is significant because also Marx and Habermas refer to a classless society as planned, *planmäßig*. Here again, the possibility of a practical setting-in-order rests on the assumption that, formally considered, society is a human achievement. Practically considered, *self-consciousness* is the tautology whereby man discovers in society what he has put into it, i.e. discovers *himself* in his practical product as its *form* or ordering principle. But because only achieved *through* the practical transformation of advanced capitalism, and *as* its transformation, self-consciousness is a synthetic tautology.

The Transcendentalia

A summary of the principal features of the concept of practice emerging from Habermas’s critique of technique in advanced capitalism concludes this section. At issue here is not merely ‘enumerating’ those features, but exhibiting both their interconnection and the grounding of their interconnectedness in the concept of rationality itself. To this effect, I draw on a much earlier tradition of thinking. Scholastic philosophy employed the expression *transcendentalia* in referring to certain properties of beings.

32. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Hong Kong: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1987), B.xiv.

To be sure, these are properties in a special manner, quite different to what is meant by 'blueness', for example, in the proposition 'the flower is blue'. The transcendental properties of a being do not add anything to it, nor are they different from it, such that a being could either possess or not possess them; they 'transcend' an individual being in the sense of expressing what belongs to a being *as being*. Furthermore, these properties are 'convertible' insofar as they express being in its entirety, considered either absolutely or relatively. In its basic Scholastic enumeration, the absolute transcendentals include *ens*, *res*, and *aliquid*. Unity, goodness, and truth, on the other hand, are the relative transcendentals: *bonum, verum et unum convertuntur*.

Now, the practical question orienting *Legitimation Crisis* is *practical* inasmuch as it deals with the problem of the good life; this reflexive orientation toward the good lends the issue of a classless society its properly *utopian* character. On the other hand, as we have seen, utopia appears in the question at hand as the made of a making. The made and the good fall together: *factum et bonum convertuntur*. The key chapter of Part III of *Legitimation Crisis* is titled "The Relation of Practical Questions to Truth." Here, the practical transformation of advanced capitalism in view of a classless society is taken up in the framework of a theory of practical discourse, and where the validity claim of norms is referred to a consensus-theory of truth. A classless society, from Habermas's viewpoint, is one in which consensus has been reached in conformity with the discursive conditions laid out for democratic will-formation by a theory of communicative action. Utopia and consensus: the good falls together with the true. *Bonum et verum convertuntur*. But there is more. In contrast with the basic contradiction at the core of advanced capitalism, a classless principle of organization is one to which everyone could adhere, that is, a society which meets the criterion of universalizability. In other words, it embodies a social organization principle that *all* and *each* can want, where all are in unison, at one rather than divided. The true and the one fall together: *verum et unum convertuntur*. But what is the essence of consensus conceived as non-contradiction? There where empirical motives can, *as empirical*, make no claim to validity, consensus appears as a product, the achievement of a discursively produced rational motivation of given (empirical) interests. The discursive production of unity guaranteed by the universalizability of interests, for the one, and the practical realization of a classless society, for the other, fall together: *unum et factum convertuntur*.

It will be noticed that the series of convertibilities begins and ends with *factum*, wherein are condensed the modern concepts of reality and rationality: the real is the made of a making, where *facere* is not merely reproduction, as in the traditional concept of *mimesis*, but production. *The priority of 'factum' over the relative transcendentals signifies that unity, goodness, and truth are predicates of the real inasmuch as the latter is the*

product of a producing activity, of reason. Reason activates goodness, unity, and truth through its activity, and as its activity, such that *unum, bonum et verum convertuntur*. Does this 'Scholastic' reformulation of the concept of practice developed by Habermas serve a merely decorative function? Aren't they an extraneous element, grafted more or less violently onto a post-metaphysical thinking, i.e., a concept of rationality that has left behind the metaphysics of the Middle Ages? Or, to the contrary, is the convertibility of unity, goodness, and truth an *essential* consequence of the productive concept of reason proper to modernity, and in which are reflected the continuities and discontinuities leading over from Christian philosophy to modern rationality?

§16. Transitional Considerations

This final section of the chapter has a transitional function. On the one hand, it looks back on the stages we have followed in elaborating the modern concepts of technique and practice. On the other, it looks forward to Part II of this book, anticipating the need to unfold a *genealogical* investigation of the concept of rationality at the base of welfare economics.

Recapitulation

At the center of our reflection on the rational foundations of the welfare state stand the economic functions of allocation, distribution, and stabilization. These, what one could even call the economic *categories* (in the Kantian sense) of the welfare state, collect such disparate phenomena as the payment of welfare entitlements, open-market operations by the central bank, taxing, the construction of airports, the installation of computer-controlled telephone systems, the legal regulation of insurance and banking institutions, etc. From the point of view of economic theory, what matters are the differences between these functions, not their inclusion within the comprehensive rubric of technique. Nevertheless, a fundamental investigation must move in the opposite direction, namely, one that gives account of their unity and the unity of the manifold phenomena they encompass. In a word, it radicalizes the question concerning the concept of rationality that comes to pass in the consolidation of technique in the welfare state.

At this juncture, a thesis was put forth which, progressively broadened in scope, has governed the further unfolding of our investigation: allocation, distribution, and stabilization presuppose an historically determinate interpretation of the human relation to reality. Uncovering the concept of reality at the core of these economic functions led over to

consideration of the text which laid the theoretical groundwork for the economics of the welfare state, the *General Theory*. What presents itself as a conclusive remark, but which actually anticipates and guides the entirety of Keynes's theoretical investigations, delivers the key to this concept of reality: the world as it is or has been is a fact of observation. Only with the technical disclosure of the existent world as a non-binding fact does one begin to understand the concept of reality at work in allocation, distribution, and stabilization, and which lends unity to the manifold phenomena they encompass: the real is the realized of a realizing activity operating on a given.

The generalization of this ontological interpretation of technique beyond the confines of economics, and its subsequent confrontation with the Aristotelian characterization of *techne*, made clear that both *techne* and modern technique receive their fundamental ontological determination as a 'bringing into being', itself further specified as a *changing* and as a *making*. Nonetheless, the relation between the made and the making is entirely different in one and the other. In the 'substantial change' effected in *techne*, *energeia* is ontologically prior to *dynamis* inasmuch as the possible is intelligible by reference to the end-point of the becoming, i.e. actuality. There where the concept of possibility is framed in terms of what must be presupposed for the (substantial) 'coming to be' of the actual or existent, art designates a *causa efficiens*, or as Aristotle says, a principle of change. In their specific reality, namely, the substantial unity of form and matter, the products of poetic productions owe nothing to *techne*. The essence of 'making' is reproduction. In contrast with the ontological priority of *energeia* over *dynamis*, a priority which receives its seal in the dictum "art imitates nature", the facticity of the existent world in modern technique presupposes that not all that is possible exists. Levelled down to the status of a non-binding fact, the existent becomes the condition necessary for the realization of the possible. Here, 'realizing' denotes the original ontological productivity of human doing; expressed in the four causes of the metaphysical tradition, the making enacted in allocation, distribution, and stabilization is a *causa formalis*.

Drawing attention to the drying up of the public realm of politics, and with it, the abandonment of the question regarding ends to the benefit of question on means, a critique of advanced capitalism aims at evidencing the thoroughgoing irrationality of a form of social organization that suppresses the distinction between technique and practice. Putting within brackets the assessment that practice has been sacrificed to technique, a more fundamental question requires elucidation: what is practice? In particular, does the concept of practice opposed to that of technique authorize the claim to their rational discontinuity?

That the kind of social organization in which technique is dominant possesses no binding character of its own, namely, merely represents the

actual over against the possible, is the presupposition guiding the critique of technological consciousness in advanced capitalism. By disclosing advanced capitalism as 'nature-like', *naturwüchsig*, a critical social theory undertakes to clear the way for a practical transformation of society. As such it does and can do nothing other than radicalize the concept of rationality that is already effectual in the welfare state: setting-a-given-in-order. Indeed, the same concept of reality guides the technical disclosure of nature and society as a fact of observation (Keynes) and the practical disclosure of advanced capitalism as *bloße Existenz* (Habermas). On a theoretical level, the announced paradigm-change, by which a theory of communicative rationality seeks to overcome the aporiae of instrumental rationality, leaves intact what is already the presupposition of modern technique, namely, the facticity of the existent social world. Only on the ground of this common presupposition does history acquire its fundamental ontological determination as a product which finds its *causa formalis* in a practical making.

A Genealogy of the Welfare State

We can conclude, then, that the cogito principle is *earlier* than the welfare state, not merely in the sense that it determines the concept of technique at the base of its economic functions, but as the concept of rationality to which a critique of ideology appeals when it opposes practice to technique. The cogito, in other words, is the limit in respect of which the tension between welfare and Enlightenment plays itself out. If Enlightenment makes room for forms of social organization other than that prevalent in the welfare state, and even urges these on as the telos of political practice in contemporary society, we may confidently surmise that the boundaries of the imaginable social transformations to which Enlightenment could lead are determined in advance by the cogito principle. What this might mean will be the object of extended discussion in Part III.

But first we must consider the cogito principle from another angle, namely, as what is earlier than the welfare state in the sense of *temporal precedence*. In reviewing Keynes's critique of classical economics, reference has already been made, albeit summarily, to the transition leading from the liberal to the welfare state. Although of great interest from the point of view of a social history of the welfare state, the discussion of the events that brought about the demise of the liberal state proves entirely inadequate in view of the foundational character of our study. Expressed in terms of the three economic functions of the welfare state, the genealogical question is not how and why allocation could come to be complemented with distribution and stabilization. More generally, it

does not suffice to understand the rational foundations of welfare economics by reference to capitalism. Instead, at issue is clarifying what changed perceptions of human being and of its relation to the social and natural world were necessary for the emergence of the *single* concept of rationality at the base of the three functions of economic technique in the welfare state, namely, setting-a-given-in-order. Inasmuch as this concept of rationality is none other than the cogito principle itself, the implication is that the *conditions of possibility of the appearance of the economic functions of the welfare state have to be searched for, ultimately, in the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity*. Only by reaching back as far as this epochal threshold, tracing the presuppositions of Keynes's *General Theory* back to their source in the inception of the cogito principle, can we assure ourselves that the economic theoretician's repetition, in 1936, of the inaugural gesture of modern rationality in the *Meditations* is no mere 'coincidence' or purely 'external resemblance', but the late manifestation and concretization of a historical process that first reached philosophical conceptualization in Descartes *ego cogito sum*.

On the other hand, our review of Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis* has discovered a process of destruction and construction exactly parallel to that enacted in the *General Theory*. Like Keynes before him, the loss of orderliness brought about by Habermas's critique of advanced capitalism is intended to be the condition that first makes possible and demands the practical setting-in-order of the social world. This implies that, no less than for economic technique in the welfare state, the conditions of possibility of the emergence of the modern concept of political practice have to be searched for in the inception of the cogito principle. *Enlightenment* itself, and not merely its concretization in the economic technique of the welfare state, requires a genealogy that makes clear the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity.

PART II:
TWO GENEALOGIES OF MODERN
RATIONALITY

CHAPTER 4. SECULARIZED SELF-CAUSATION

When the question is raised concerning the meaning of modernity's productive concept of power, one is reminded of a note that Nietzsche included in his explorations into the 'will to power': "All the beauty and sublimity we have bestowed upon real and imaginary things I will reclaim as the property and product of man: as his fairest apology. Man as poet, as thinker, as God, as love, as power: with what regal liberality he has lavished gifts upon things so as to impoverish himself and make himself feel wretched! His most unselfish act hitherto has been to admire and worship and to know how to conceal from himself that it was he who created what he admired."¹ In the perspective of Chapters 1 through 3, this fragment, especially its last sentence, is highly significant. The awareness of man's original ontological productivity allows Nietzsche to expose as a self-loss the process wherein, conferring an autonomous and 'pre-given' status on the world he encounters, man is estranged from the products of his own exertions, no longer recognizing himself in them as their producer. The resemblance of this critique with Marx's critique of fetishism or with Keynes's critique of liberal economics is too evident to require further elucidation. As we shall see in §29, it is also the kernel of what Kant calls the 'critical' objection against dogmatism. For the philosophers Kant, Marx, and Nietzsche, but also for Keynes the economist, the critique of dogmatism, of ontology in the traditional sense of a separate and pre-given reality to which man stands in a reproductive relation, is the pre-condition for recovering and exercising human power, the ontological productivity man is continuously in danger of surrendering. Nietzsche's 'will to power' finds its place within this broader framework—the concept of modern rationality itself.

But where does this concept of power come from? What are its historical sources? What is the provenance of the interpretation of man as ontologically productive, an interpretation that modernity deploys in its art no less than in its science, in technique as well as in practice? What, in short, is the origin of modern rationality? Martin Heidegger has taken the 'will to power' as the point of departure for a genealogy of modern rationality: "The era that we call modernity, and which Western history now begins to bring to completion, determines itself in that man becomes the measure and the center of all beings. Man is the subiectum or, speaking in modernity's words, that which lies at the ground of all objectivation and presentability. However sharply Nietzsche turns against Descartes—whose philosophy founded modern metaphysics, he only turns against Descartes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pg. 85.

because the latter does not yet conceive of man as a subiectum *sufficiently and decisively* enough. The representation of the subiectum as ego, I, thus the 'egoistic' interpretation of the subiectum, is not sufficiently subjectivistic for Nietzsche. Only in the Superman doctrine as the doctrine of the unconditioned priority of man over all beings does modern metaphysics attain the complete determination of its essence. Descartes celebrates his greatest triumph in this doctrine."² Against the traditional reading of Nietzsche as the great critic of subjectivity, Heidegger sees in the will to power the fulfillment of the movement of thinking that has its commencement in Descartes. Nonetheless, here and in what follows, neither the philosophical significance of the will to power, nor Nietzsche's relation to Descartes, can be considered. We must limit ourselves to the essential, to the cogito. Heidegger's thesis is perspicuous: at the base of the modern concept of power lies the cogito principle, itself intimately bound up with the emergence of the subject into history.

This insight is of exceptional importance for our own problem-set. I have defined modern rationality as a specific interpretation of the human relation to reality, seeing therein the point of departure for an enquiry into the economic foundations of the welfare state. If Chapters 1, 2 and 3 have concentrated on illuminating the concept of reality implied in the modern concepts of technique and practice, Heidegger's thesis brings the third element of our definition of modern rationality into the foreground, namely, the concept of human being. *The emergence of the concept of subjectivity is bound up with the historical process whereby man comes to stand in a productive relation to reality.* Not merely as a 'consequence' of the deployment of theory, technique, and practice, but in the prior understanding of what it is that constitutes these *as* theory, technique and practice—the ontological productivity of human activity—modern man is a subject. Together with the interpretation of rationality as a setting-a-given-in-order belongs the interpretation of man as a subject. Only now can both self-loss and self-empowerment come to be viewed as the possible deviations of his peculiar mode of being, deviations in regard of the more fundamental concept of subjectivity itself. And first on the basis of this novel self-interpretation of man is a book such as the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* possible.

But if one reads Heidegger's observation carefully, it becomes apparent that a different thesis is being put forward. In the reference to the subject's claim to *unconditionality*, Heidegger asserts that self-empowerment is not merely a possibility but the *essence* of subjectivity. The subject, in Heidegger's view, not only raises a claim to ontological productivity, but to *unconditioned* productivity. The irruption of the subject into history

2. Martin Heidegger, "Der europäische Nihilismus", in *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1939), Vol. II, pgs. 61-62.

would coincide with a claim to achieving and exercising total control over and domination of the world.

While sharing with Heidegger the conviction that the modern concept of power is rooted in the cogito principle, I dissent from his interpretation of the subject and of modern rationality. I shall argue at length that the ontological productivity modern man recognizes for himself is conditioned, rather than unconditioned, and does not necessitate, as Heidegger suggests, a teleology of unlimited world-control and domination. But this takes us too far, too fast; for the moment, let us follow the argument itself.

The totality of this chapter will be consecrated to more carefully considering the genealogy of modern rationality Heidegger has proposed, in its internal connection with a telos of unlimited world domination. A first section (§17) presents the explanatory framework wherein Heidegger accounts for the genesis of the cogito principle, namely, the secularization theorem. Subsequently, §§18, 19, and 20 evince how his interpretation of three key concepts—subjectivity, ‘thinking’ (*cogitare*) and security—is determined from beginning to end by the methodological requirements of secularization. Lastly, §21 connects these findings to the question concerning the metaphysical fundamentals of the welfare state. Only at the end of this documentation will it be possible to begin to assess whether self-empowerment is the necessary implication of the concept of subjectivity or only one of its possibilities.

§17. Modern Rationality: The Secularization of Salvation

In 1938 Heidegger delivered a lecture under the title “The Grounding of the Modern World-Image by Metaphysics”, the last of a series which had this general problem as its orienting theme. Only later was the title of the essay modified to read *Die Zeit des Weltbildes*—The Era of the World-Image. If, in isolation from the body of the text, the first title could still be construed by the reader in such a way that modernity would seem to possess its own world-image alongside that of either the Middle Ages or antiquity, the second title is more closely consonant with the central thesis of the lecture, namely that the advent of modernity goes together with the process whereby the world first becomes an image. Modernity, in Heidegger’s view, *is* the era of the world-image. On the other hand, the lecture’s initial title more closely reflected its architecture, as announced in its opening paragraph: “Metaphysics grounds an era insofar as she gives it the ground of its essential configuration through a determinate interpretation of the existent and through a determinate conception of truth. This ground thoroughly governs all the appearances that characterize an era. Conversely, the metaphysical ground thereof must become recognizable in a sufficient reflection on these appearances.”³ One could say that if metaphysics is the *ratio essendi* of an era’s principal manifestations, these manifestations, in

turn, are the *ratio cognoscendi* of its metaphysical fundament. The essay works out the circularity announced in this passage in two movements, to which a brief reference is necessary for our own aim:

(1) The first takes its point of departure in a reflection on modern science and reaches completion in the exhibition of its metaphysical ground. The essence of modern science, in Heidegger's view, is research.⁴ Research consists in the opening up of an ontic region, e.g. nature, in conformity with a plan or project (*Entwurf*). Research goes in advance of, pro-jects, the researched in a two-fold manner. For the one, it anticipates the way in which enquiry is to proceed in the newly opened up domain of enquiry. Only with this anticipative disclosure of a domain according to a project does the modern concept of method, and this as the *self-binding* of the researcher, find its place. On the other hand, research goes in advance of, pro-jects the researched, insofar as it prescribes the manner in which the opened up can manifest itself in its very being. In this way, for example, the natural sciences reveal nature as a closed interconnection of movements of spatio-temporal mass-points. With this anticipative design that stipulates the being of nature, science makes room for what it does not know; the modern experiment, i.e. the 'experimental' character of research, is its implication. Thus, that research pro-jects means that it *pre-sents*, and this in the sense of anticipating a design or image that fixes, *secures* the being of the researched for further research. The world becomes an image in the same process by which science becomes research. "Only when truth has been transformed into the certainty of presentation (*Vorstellung*), and only then, does science as research come into its own." (pg. 85)

(2) The immediately following sentence announces the outset of the second movement of thinking of the essay, in which a reflection on the cogito principle reveals the specificity of modern science: "Beginning with Descartes' metaphysics, the existent is determined as the objectivity of a presenting and truth as the certainty of presenting." (pg. 85) Whereas the center of gravity of the first movement is the image-character of the world for science by way of the latter's 'project of nature' (*Entwurf der Natur*), that of the second is the modern interpretation of man as a *subject*. *Cogito ergo sum*, the instaurating act of modern metaphysics, seals man's novel interpretation of himself as a *subjectum*, as the ground of being and truth. "When... man becomes the first and proper subjectum, this means that man becomes that being which grounds the being and truth of all beings. Man becomes the center of reference of beings as such and in general." (pg. 86) In the Cartesian determination of *cogitare* as a *repræsentatio* lies

3. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), pg. 73.

4. See further *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1987), pgs. 49-82, republished as "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics" in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, pgs. 243-282.

concealed both modernity's interpretation of rationality as a pre-senting, and modern man's relation to truth as the certainty of his presentations.

The Subject

This circular movement of thinking we have summarily outlined lends the main text of the lecture an air of completeness, a self-contained character of its own. Yet "The Era of the World-Image" includes an appendix composed of fifteen addenda to salient aspects of the main text. Although not delivered in the original lecture of 1938, their importance is considerable judging by their length and content; roughly as long as the main text, the commentaries set out in some detail topics that would later become the object of protracted development in other texts. Of these addenda, the longest and, in relation to the theme of the essay itself, certainly the most important, is the ninth. When one traces this addendum back to the reflections which motivated it in the principal text, one is not surprised to encounter the central assertion of the entire lecture, the assertion which brings together its two movements of thinking: "That the world becomes an image is one and the same process with that in which man becomes the subject among beings." (pg. 90) If the subject is the *ratio essendi* of the scientific world-image, the scientific world-image is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the subject. With this thesis, Heidegger believes he has grasped the essential feature of the modern age, where 'essential' means that which sets it apart from what precedes it and which constitutes modernity as a new era: the *Neu-zeit*. Addendum nine immediately follows and expands upon this thesis. But in what manner, and in which direction? Its initial sentence announces and accurately defines the topic to be dealt with in some six pages of text: "How could it at all come about that the existent is interpreted in the marked out manner of a subject, and consequently, that the subjective attains domination?" (pg. 104) This sentence bears further scrutiny.

To begin with, it is composed of two different assertions, namely, (1) that a particular existent—man—comes to interpret himself as a subject, and (2) that the subjective becomes dominant. Postponing for a moment further consideration of subjectivity, (1) reaffirms Heidegger's contention that modernity stages the transformation of mankind's self-interpretation into a subject. But one notices a certain ambiguity in (2): in what sense does subjectivity dominate? In the manner of the prevailing or predominant self-interpretation of mankind? Or in the manner of the dominant existent among existents, the being that submits all other beings to its dominion? Both. "Man's subjectivity reaches its highest point in the planetary imperialism of technically organized man, whence he settles down and establishes himself on the level of organized uniformity. This uniformity

becomes the most secure instrument for the complete, namely technical, domination of the world.” (pg. 109)

But a second detail draws our attention. As the ‘consequently’ serves to notify, the relation between (1) and (2) is not accidental or arbitrary: the first *entails* the second. The unencumbered exploitation of the world is not a fortuitous accretion, something that ‘happens’ to the subject, that marks a contingent fact in the historical development of modernity, and which could also not have occurred or that could be reversed in the future by the adequate ‘corrective’ measures: subjectivity is *eo ipse* world domination. From the perspective of our immediate interest, this is of some importance. If the concept of subjectivity leads back to the cogito principle, hence to modern *rationality*, world domination speaks of the *purposivity* unfolded by that rationality, i.e. unmasks its immanent teleology. Otherwise expressed, Heidegger’s central thesis is that the cogito principle encloses an historically determinate concept of rationality *and* a determinate purposivity as its necessary implication. In the essay titled “European Nihilism”, he restates this relation in a highly compact formula: “Presenting (*vor-stellen*) is a securing (*sicher-stellen*).”⁵ Whereas its first term encapsulates the modernity of the concept of rationality implied in the cogito principle, the second resumes its teleology of total world-control. Only here, it seems, does the issue of the modern will to control reality, which Chapters 1 - 3 have brought to the fore in the domains of technique and practice, acquire its place and historical significance. Allocation, distribution, and stabilization, in the *General Theory*, or the critique of fetishism in *Das Kapital*, would encounter their philosophical mirror in the will to power. Nietzsche, in the interpretation of modern philosophy expounded in the series of lectures spanning the period from 1936 to 1941, brings to completion the metaphysical movement that commences with Descartes’ cogito. In the will to power, the immanent purposivity of the cogito finally obtains its unvarnished philosophical expression: “If it is at all possible to speak about a purpose here, then this purpose is the purposelessness of mankind’s unconditioned domination of the world. The man of this domination is the Superman.”⁶ In the will to power would be reflected the basic orientation towards the world embodied in modern technique and practice.

But the opening sentence of the ninth addendum offers still another important aspect for consideration. Whereas the principal text is concerned with elaborating the *concept* of modern rationality, the addendum passes over into a consideration of its *inception*. In other words, from a *description* of modern rationality, one is led back to an account of its

5. “*Der europäische Nihilismus*”, pg. 152.

6. *Ibid*, pg. 125. Nonetheless, not Heidegger’s interpretation of the systematic significance of Nietzsche for modern metaphysics, but the original interpretation of Descartes worked out in the Nietzsche lectures, determines our own interest in the essay on European nihilism.

genesis: *why* does the subject emerge into history? The order of interrogation seems to be phenomenologically correct: the examination of its genealogical conditions follows the description of an essence. Yet the question goes further in its genealogical scope and intention. The question concerning the emergence of the subject cannot be extricated from that regarding its teleology of unconditioned control over the world: why, given the conditions of its irruption into history, does modern rationality *necessitate* an immanent purposivity of unconditioned self-empowerment over the social and natural world? The totality of addendum nine of "The Era of the World-Image" is devoted to sketching out the contours of a response to this problem.

In sum, the initial sentence of addendum nine does three things: it sets up an explicit relation between modern rationality and its immanent teleology; it outlines an interpretation for each of the relation's terms; it defines the relation as necessary in the form of an entailment. One hardly exaggerates in asserting that Heidegger's entire critique of the modern age turns on his interpretation of the meaning of this relation. Nonetheless, the observations contained in this addendum remain highly schematic in character. Only later, in the essays titled "European Nihilism" (1940) and "Metaphysics as the History of Being" (1941), are the anticipatory observations of *Die Zeit des Weltbildes* worked out in the framework of a large-scale genealogy of modern rationality. In preparation thereto, it is first necessary to more closely girdle the nature of Heidegger's genealogical question.

Secularization

The very question to which the ninth addendum is a response is motivated by the insight that, prior to Descartes, *each* being is a *sub-jectum*, i.e. what exists from and of itself as grounding, hence unifying and holding together, the permanent properties and variable situations of a being. The *cogito* principle introduces a radical transformation in the metaphysical tradition: "The priority of a marked out, because, from an essential viewpoint, unconditioned sub-jectum... emerges from the claim of man to a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis* (to a self-resting and unshakeable fundament of truth in the sense of certainty)." (pg. 104) That man is a subject in modernity means, then, that it is an *unconditioned* sub-jectum; and the unconditionality of human subjectivity reaches expression in European man's claim, first made good in the *cogito*, to being a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*, an absolute and unshakeable fundament of truth.

Consequently, the genealogical question resolves itself into explicating why and how this claim could come to be articulated. At issue is not the

history of the subject, a history that is nothing other than the history of modernity itself, but its *prehistory*, that which, having taken place earlier, lies behind the subject and determines it in its basic self-understanding beyond all knowing and willing. The prehistory of the subject, and from which it attempts to liberate itself by instaurating a new era, is theology. "The demand arises from that emancipation of man, wherein he liberates himself from the obligatoriness of Christian truth by revelation and Church doctrine to a self-positing self-legislation." (pg. 104) "Unknowingly", emancipation finds its *terminus a quo* in the revelatory truth of theology, to which man's certainty concerning the salvation of his soul had been subordinated; its *terminus ad quem* is an unconditioned self-certainty, understood here as a self-positing self-legislation. And another observation makes still clearer that 'emancipation' is the name for an historical process spanning a Christian outset and a modern end-point: "The emancipation *from* the revealed certainty of salvation had to be in itself an emancipation *to* a certainty in which man secures truth as the known of his own knowing." (pg. 105)

But what *kind* of historical process does emancipation stand for? In other words, how are the continuities and discontinuities, the identities and differences, between the Middle Ages and modernity to be cognized? 'From' and 'to': subjectivity, rationality, method, freedom, etc., are the elements of a conceptual network organized according to a specific key. An initial situation, characterized by the quest for the certainty of salvation (*Heilsgewißheit*), is 'taken over' by a second situation that unconsciously ("unknowingly") prolongs that quest in a new garb, namely, modernity's quest for self-certainty (*Selbstgewißheit*). The pattern is familiar: the genesis of modern subjectivity means one and the same thing as the *secularization* of the salvation story. In this, however disparate their philosophies, and however different the directions in which they developed the secularization theorem, Heidegger and Löwith are in unison.⁷ More sharply stated, inasmuch as emancipation is always emancipation from a Christian to a modern concept, wherein the *content* remains the same, sameness or continuity in apparent discontinuity is itself definitive for emancipation. *Emancipation is secularization, hence a pseudo-emancipation. Aufklärung, in Heidegger's interpretation, is the prolongation of Christianity by other means.*

7. Löwith's interest in secularization focuses primarily on making intelligible the Judeo-Christian roots of modern philosophies of history. "Philosophy of history originates with the Hebrew and Christian faith in a fulfillment and... it ends with the secularization of its eschatological pattern... We of today, concerned with the unity of universal history and with its progress toward an ultimate goal or at least toward a 'better world', are still in the line of prophetic and messianic monotheism; we are still Jews and Christians, however little we may think of ourselves in those terms..." Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), pgs. 2, 19.

The Methodological Stipulations of Secularization

Despite his attempt to subordinate secularization to the history of Western metaphysics, it remains the case that, rather than the beginning of the last phase of the long, largely unsuccessful campaign waged by 'Being' to attain remembrance, the *explanatory* burden of Heidegger's interpretation of the genesis of modern rationality rests entirely on a particular application of the secularization theorem: "... one can interpret individual manifestations of modernity as the 'secularization' of Christianity."⁸ Two general implications follow from this.

1) Firstly, as is the case for the secularization theorem in general, the Heideggerian account of the inception of modern rationality is forced to concede that the *Middle Ages*, not modernity, is the authentically new era, inasmuch as the latter merely prolongs the former in a new apparel.⁹ In any case, reliance on secularization for an account of the birth of modernity carries with it its own methodological constraints and prescriptions. At a minimum, Heidegger is in advance required to (1) set up a one-to-one conceptual correspondence, leading back each fundamental concept of modern rationality to its medieval predecessor, and (2) posit an identity between the content of the medieval concept and that of its modern counterpart. At the same time, this two-fold stipulation functions as a 'key' by which to decipher the 'hidden meaning' of modern philosophical texts, Descartes' *Meditations* in particular. As we shall see, Heidegger cleaves consistently to this pattern throughout his genealogical exposition.

2) Secondly, this methodological constraint is then projected onto modern history as an alleged 'necessity' or determinism governing its development: "Concealed in its origin, the necessity governs that man secure his salvation for himself in this or that way, with its Christian or another meaning." (pg. 423) This very formulation betrays what has been observed immediately heretofore concerning the secularization theorem's need to posit an 'identity of content' leading from a medieval concept to its modern counterpart. In effect, the same—salvation—can (and *must*) be

8. "*Der europäische Nihilismus*", pg. 146. This admission is immediately followed by a disclaimer of the secularization theorem's effective explanatory potential: "In what is decisive, talk of 'secularization' is a thoughtless deception... The new world of the new era has its proper historical ground there where each history searches for its essential fundament: in metaphysics." (pg. 147)

9. "The determination of Being as actualitas stretches, reckoned in epochs, throughout the entire Western history, straight through from Rome to the most recent modernity... Since then, all of Western history is in manifold senses Roman and no longer Greek." "*Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins*", *Nietzsche*, Vol. II, pg. 413. Heidegger approaches, therewith, Löwith's thesis according to which the decisive moment of Western history is the turning away from a cyclical temporal structure to the Judeo-Christian linear temporality. From this perspective, it is remarkable how little attention, comparatively speaking, Heidegger directs to Medieval philosophy.

achieved by different venues, i.e. in its directly Christian meaning, or indirectly, by way of a modern concept. Moreover, only by reference to this historical determinism implied in secularization, does Heidegger's thesis that subjectivity *necessitates* a teleology of self-empowerment become comprehensible in its argumentative basis.

Although it shall be discussed in greater detail in the course of Chapter 5, the presentation of Blumenberg's large-scale critique of secularization as a concept of historical explanation is of no interest to us at this stage of our analysis. Nor, for that matter, will any attempt be made to contrast Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem with those developed by Löwith, Weber, Tawney, etc. Instead of essaying a general pre-judgment on the respective merits of the secularization or reoccupation theorems, I am interested, for the moment, in establishing how the secularization theorem gives account of the relation Heidegger sets up between modern rationality and its inherent teleology. That relation, as we have seen, connects the modern understanding of reason as 'presentation' (*Vorstellung*) with unconditioned certainty (self-empowerment) as its teleological determination: "Presenting is a securing." Consequently, subordinate to the strictures noted above, the secularization theorem provides the explanatory framework wherein the genealogy of this relation can be addressed. In what will prove to be three variations on a single theme, the following sections attempt to concretely establish how secularization justifies Heidegger's interpretation of the internal connection between rationality and purposivity by operating a *theological fixation* of the modern concepts of subjectivity, presentation, and certainty.

§18. First Variation on the Secularization Theme: From *causa sui* to the Subject

An unexpected inversion follows from these preliminary considerations. I had indicated that the circularity governing the architecture of the main text of *Die Zeit des Weltbildes* seems to lend it a certain completeness of its own, a completeness that would justify relegating to addenda the notes that supplement or work out in greater detail the content of the lecture as delivered. The ninth addendum is subordinated to this hierarchical order. For whereas the main text of the lecture concerns itself with articulating the essence of the modern age—the concept of subjectivity—the ninth addendum passes over to a consideration of subjectivity's genealogy. The 'Why?' is subordinated to and follows in the wake of the 'What?' question. The order of exposition appears, thereby, to mirror the order of cognition.

Nonetheless, the brief reference to the methodological constraints that must be introduced, such that secularization can function as a category of

historical explanation, suggest another picture. In effect, if, as the secularization theorem requires, a one-to-one correspondence is stipulated between the decisive concepts of modern rationality and their correlates in medieval philosophy, a description of subjectivity is in fact limited to a single possibility: showing how it *reproduces*, albeit in a new garb, what went before it. The order of exposition belies the fact that *the order of cognition does not move from description to genealogy, but vice-versa*. If this is the case, then the self-contained character of the main text is merely apparent. My concern with illuminating this internal connection in Heidegger's essay has nothing to do with discussing 'where' the ninth addendum should have been placed. Its function is otherwise, namely, making clear that the interpretation of the concepts of modern rationality and its inherent teleology are dependent on a specific genealogical theory. One may surmise that a breakdown of secularization as an *explanatory* category would have its immediate implications for the interpretation of modern rationality and its entelechy. It will indeed be our task, in §22, to undermine Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem, showing where it falls short in its claim to explanation. Be it as it may, this section follows in greater detail the secularization process that was required, in Heidegger's opinion, for the emergence of the first of the three concepts to be explored, namely, subjectivity.

The Absolute and Unshakeable Fundament of Truth

Descartes' *Meditations*, we are told, is the philosophical locus of the transformation ushering in the modern age, namely, the change whereby the concept of subjectivity comes to acquire the peculiar interpretation of the priority of an 'unconditioned *sub-jectum*' in the sense of a self-positing and unshakeable fundament of truth. Heidegger's genealogical question, of course, is *why* modern philosophy could raise the claim to make of man an unconditioned subject. Our own task, to the contrary, is to show why Heidegger *had* to formulate the problem in this manner. My thesis is the following: in working out the implications of the secularization theorem, Heidegger ascribes to subjectivity the attributes pertaining to God in Christian philosophy. In a word, the 'unconditioned *sub-jectum*' is the secularized *causa sui*.

To understand why this had to be so, one must turn back to the epochal threshold leading from antiquity to the Middle Ages. At its core lies Christian philosophy's reception of the Greek concept of *energeia*, where 'reception' means deformation into *actualitas*: "When Being transforms itself into actualitas (reality), the existent (*das Seiende*) becomes the real, it is determined through activity in the sense of a causal production (*verursachende Machen*). The reality of human doing and godly creation

are explained working out from here.”¹⁰ The fundamental categories of this novel theological explanation of reality are causality (*causalitas*) and existence (*existentia*). For the one, a hiatus separates created beings from the Highest Being. Over and against created beings, “...the causal character of Being as reality exhibits itself with all clarity in that being which in the highest sense fulfills the essence of Being, since it is the being that can never not be.” (pg. 415) For the other, the concept of existence serves to consolidate and render acute the significance of the concept of causality for the *ens creatum*: “existence remains directed towards causality. *Out from* [Außerhalb von Verursachung in the sense of already outside or beyond causation] the latter certainly, but in any case only out from *it*, is the positing and setting up, the standing of ex-sistentia, what it is.” (pgs. 418-419) The *ens creatum*, the ex-sistent, is, ex-sists, but owes its reality to a cause other than itself, a cause in the highest sense because *self-causing*: *causa sui*.

With this, we reach a noteworthy crossroads in Heidegger’s interpretation: in effect, his interpretation of the medieval concept of *existentia* brings into focus the problem of *contingency*, thereby converging substantially with what Blumenberg has called ‘transitive conservation’, itself the decisive impetus for the inception of modern rationality. Also for Heidegger, the necessary condition for the birth of modernity becomes overcoming the impasse derived from the problem of contingency in late Scholastic philosophy. But his employment of the secularization theorem inhibits breaking out of the conceptual structure of medieval philosophy, inasmuch as it stipulates a priori the necessary repetition of the latter in the modern age by way of a one-to-one conceptual correspondence. Given that Heidegger in advance burdens modernity with taking over the “role of the unconditionally real, theologically considered...” (pg. 422) into its own conceptual framework, only one exit remains open: mankind must seize for itself the attributes and prerogatives enjoyed by Christian philosophy’s God. The ‘unconditioned sub-jectum’—a secularized *causa sui*—is the outcome of this epochal transformation. It demarcates, moreover, the measure of ‘novelty’ that can be allotted to the modern age. In effect, all that can remain open for discussion, when one has prescribed the identity between a theological concept and its modern counterpart, is *who* possesses the attribute of self-causation, whether God or man.

Careful attention shows that Heidegger’s positive account of subjectivity cleaves rigorously to this schema. The subject, we have seen, is the ‘absolute and unshakeable fundament of truth’. The interrogation that immediately arises is *why these* four properties—fundament, absoluteness, unshakeability, truth—characterize the subject. Here, precisely, the functioning of secularization as a key for deciphering hidden meanings

10. “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins”, pg. 414.

comes most sharply into focus. Indeed, one would be mistaken in searching for an answer in Descartes' elucidation of the cogito principle; the essential has already played itself out earlier, in the 'turn from *energeia* to *actualitas*.' In effect, the explanation of the *meaning* of these attributes of the subject has no independent status, but remains entirely subordinate to, and reproduces, what has taken place in Scholastic philosophy.

The Properties of the Subject

The following questions present themselves to our consideration: (1) Why must the subject be a *fundament*? (2) Why must it be an *absolute* fundament? (3) Why must it be an absolute and *unshakeable* fundament? And (4) why must it be an absolute and unshakeable fundament of *truth*?

(1) *Fundament*. Heidegger: "Because the totality of beings is the effected-effecting (*Gewirktes-Wirkende*) of a first effector, the totality of beings is enclosed in a particular structure, determined therewith as the counterpart... to the effector as highest being." (pg. 419) Inasmuch as the ex-sistent has its cause outside itself, the fundament is that which (a) must be thought *along with* the ex-sistent, and (b) must be understood as conditioning the existent in the sense of determining *what* it is, namely, an existent, and this both individually and as a totality. In Christian philosophy, this two-fold function, which defines the meaning of *fundamentum*, is ascribed to the Highest Being. How does it stand with the modern subject? "The subjectum, the fundamental certainty, is the permanently secured co-presentation of presenting man with the presented beings, whether human or non-human, that is, the objective."¹¹ The subject makes good its claim to being a fundament inasmuch as it (a) is that which necessarily must be thought *along with* all beings other than itself, and (b) determines these, regardless of their ontic domain, in *what* they are, namely, as *objects*. The symmetry is unequivocal: the move by which the object substitutes for the existent is paralleled by the move in which the Highest Being is displaced by the subject.

(2) *Absolute Fundament*. But the subject is not merely a fundament, but a fundament in the marked out manner of an absolute fundament, an unconditioned ground. Wherein does its peculiar unconditionality lie? "As *actus purus*, God is pure reality, therewith the causality of all reality."¹² Over and against the ex-sistent, God is an independent being and this in a particular and preeminent sense, namely, as the being that is *not* posited or brought into existence by another being. In a word, the First Cause is a *causa sui*. It was Descartes' epochal *cogito ergo sum* that first assured for

11. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 106. See further "Der europäische Nihilismus", pgs. 148-168.

12. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 423.

man the status of an unconditioned being: "The fundamental certainty is the always indubitably presentable and presented me cogitare = me esse..."¹³ Man posits his own being in the very act of thinking; *me cogitare* = *me esse* opens up the way for a *self-positing fundament*, an absolute fundament.

(3) *Absolute and Unshakeable Fundament*. Nonetheless, the subject is more than an absolute fundament; it is an absolute and *unshakeable* fundament. Why did this last attribute also have to be ascribed to the modern subject? And what does it mean? "The highest being is pure, continuously fulfilled realization, actus purus... This being (ens) is not only what it is (sua essentia), but is, in what it is, always and already permanent and invariable (est suum esse non participans alio)."¹⁴ The unshakeability of the *fundamentum absolutum*, of the Highest Being, is another way of expressing its permanence and unvariability. In a word, and with this we return to the contingency of created beings which had to be overcome by the subject, radical doubt does nothing more than reformulate the test already raised by Christian philosophy and that had to be met by what claimed for itself the title of the fundament. In the passage to the modern era, Descartes discovers a single unshakeable, because *indubitable*, proposition: *ego cogito ergo sum*. In and with all possible changes and transformations, it alone remains permanent and unvariable. "In this fundamental certainty, man is certain of this, namely, that he is as the presentant of all presentation, and therewith, as the domain of all presentness and with it of all certainty and truth; that now means: [he] is."¹⁵

(4) *The Absolute and Unshakeable Fundament of Truth*. With this, we reach the last of the attributes of the subject. In effect, its absoluteness and unshakeability are placed at the service of the subject's relation to *truth*, namely, as its fundament. The subject is *the* fundament of truth, whereby he decides about his own truth and that of all beings other than himself. By this is meant that man becomes the *measure* of beings insofar as "he decides from himself and for himself what is allowed to hold as being."¹⁶ With the emergence of subjectivity, man becomes the being that adjudicates in advance, and for himself, what *counts* and *can* count as being, i.e. as true. Here, as elsewhere in the conceptual framework of modern metaphysics, the essential does not play itself out in the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity, but earlier, in the Christian reception of antiquity. The process whereby *energeia* is transformed into *actualitas*

13. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 106.

14. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 415.

15. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 107. And further: "In Descartes' principle ego cogito, ergo sum... Man knows himself unconditionally certain as that being whose being is most certain. Man becomes the self-positing ground and measure for all certainty and truth." "Der europäische Nihilismus", *op. cit.*, pg. 134.

16. "Der europäische Nihilismus", pg. 171.

is followed by a parallel process whereby truth is transformed into certainty. This second transformation is no mere coincidence, a change that could or could not have come about in isolation from the first. If *the real is the true*, a change in the conception of reality necessarily carries with it a corresponding change in that of truth. With the passage from *energeia* to *actualitas*, the totality of beings becomes the caused of a first cause, and toward which the former are oriented as the Highest Being.

Consequently, a radical break is introduced into reality, through which the existent either exists in and from itself—the highest because self-causing being, the being that cannot not be—and what exists through another—created (caused) being. While this transformation in the concept of reality goes paired with a change whereby truth becomes the ‘intellectual’ attribute of its bearer, the essential is that truth comes to require a *bearer*, an ultimate guarantor and holder, and this in a two-fold relation, namely, of the fundament to itself (*as* the guarantor of being) and to the founded (*as* the guaranteed). When joined to its intellectual character, this two-fold relation defines truth as *certainty*. “Certainty is... self-conscious consciousness of the known...”¹⁷ In this way, Christian metaphysics assures for God the position of the *measure* (of the truth) of beings, insofar as He determines that they are and what they are.

The key to deciphering the hidden meaning of modern concepts is the one-to-one conceptual correspondence between a medieval and a modern concept, such that the latter’s meaning is determined in advance as the repetition of God’s relation to the created world. The epochal transition to modernity transforms neither the concept of truth as certainty, nor the need for a fundament of truth. The sole question is *who* is to be the ultimate measure and bearer of truth, whether God or man. “The demand of certainty turns to a *fundamentum absolutum et inconcussum*, to a substructure that is no longer in relation to an other, but has rid itself of this relation and rests in itself.” (pg. 429) The indubitability of the proposition *cogito sum* assures for man the metaphysical credential necessary to take over God’s place as the fundament of truth. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of the point which Heidegger is making. Intrinsic to the concept of the subject, in his opinion, is the loss of relationality, that is, the loss of the other in the autarchy of a self-foundation. We shall have the opportunity to challenge and ultimately reject this assertion in the course of our own interpretation of the concept of subjectivity.

In any case, with Descartes’ decisive insight concerning the indubitability of the cogito, the secularization of the attributes of the Christian God reaches completion: the subject is the absolute and unshakeable fundament of truth. That these four attributes belong together, that each

17. “*Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins*”, pg. 422.

connotes the others, does not find its explanation in an original and instaurating insight constituting modernity as the *Neuzeit*, therewith setting it apart from the Middle Ages. To the contrary. It is the implication of the hypothesis that modern philosophy necessarily reproduces the conceptual structures of Christian metaphysics. 'Unknowingly', in alienation from a past that remains effectual in a concealed manner, the Cartesian cogito does nothing other than to promote, in its novel interpretation of man, the concept of God developed in theology.

The Highest Good

Now, the central thesis of "The Era of the World Image" postulates an equivalence between the apparition of a novel self-interpretation of European man as *the* subject, on the one hand, and the transformation of the world into an *image*, on the other. If, as has been shown, the *meaning* of subjectivity is mortgaged to the medieval *causa sui*, can it fare otherwise with that of the 'World-Image'? At stake here is no longer the cause of the world, inspected in isolation from the latter, but the cause in its *two-fold relation* to the world, that is to say, the world as the caused of a causing.

(1) On the one hand, the secularization of the first effector unfolds "one and the same process" as the secularization of the medieval world 'structure' (*Gefüge*); the 'world image', in Heidegger's usage, designates the orientation and subordination of the totality of *objects* towards it, the *subject*, as that totality's fundament. To be sure, the modern *Weltbild* is not merely a replica of the Christian world structure; during the Middle Ages "at no time... does the being of beings consist therein, that it is brought before man as the objective, in whose domain of ruling and disposal it is posited and only thus *is*."¹⁸ But this disclaimer does not touch the essential. What secularization's methodological constraint of a one-to-one conceptual correspondence *does* require, however, is that *inasmuch as* man takes over the attributes of *causa sui*, he *also*, and *necessarily*, takes over the characteristics of the relation of God to a created world. Consequently, the possibilities open to a *positive* characterization of modernity, not in the sense of an expression of acceptance or approval, but of what can be affirmed as proper to it, are determined in advance by the secularization of the Medieval concept of fundament and its apposite attributes: "Being in its totality is now understood in such a manner that it first and only is, insofar as it is posited by presenting-producing man."¹⁹

18. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 88.

19. *Op. cit.*, pg. 87. It is within this framework that one can gauge what measure of novelty, i.e. discontinuity with what goes before it, Heidegger is prepared to allot modernity. "The question 'What are beings?'" transforms itself into the question concerning the

(2) On the other hand, and as the implication of this first relation of the cause to the caused, a second one-to-one correspondence comes into view: the subject is the secularized *summum bonum* or Highest Good. "...The bonum is causa and precisely as finis the causa causarum. From there that, precisely in regard to causalitas (i.e. *actualitas*), the bonum is the existence-giving for all the existent and therefore prius quam ens; causalitas causae finalis est prima."²⁰ The critical intention of the secularization theorem in its interpretation of the metaphysical ground of modern science becomes clearer. If the scientific world-image reproduces the relation of God to the world as its *causa essendi*, i.e. its cause of being, the technical exploitation and thoroughgoing domination of the world which the scientific world-image first makes possible enacts the self-understanding of the subject as its *causa finalis*, final cause. 'Unknowingly', in its continuation of the Scholastic God-concept, the subject views itself not only as that *by* the sake of which the social and natural world exists, but also that *for* the sake of which it is at hand.

§19. Second Variation on the Secularization Theme: From *agere* to *cogitare*

Heidegger's critique of the modern era rests on the thesis that the concept of modern rationality necessitates a teleology of unconditioned human self-empowerment, a teleology that finds its most explicit and accomplished formulation in Nietzsche's will to power. But it is the instaurating act of modern metaphysics which is decisive for all that was to come, up to and including Nietzsche: *ego cogito sum*. A sufficiently thoroughgoing genealogy of the concepts of subjectivity, presentation, and certainty, as implied in the cogito principle, reveals the essence of modern rationality and its teleology of total world control. Now, although nominally subordinated to the 'History of Being', the intelligibility of Heidegger's account of the emergence of modernity relies entirely on the secularization theorem and its explanatory potential for the continuities and discontinuities leading across its epochal threshold. *Ego cogito sum*; §18 concentrated on developing the genealogy of the *first* term of this epochal formula, discovering in the subject the secularization of the Scholastic God-concept: the absolute and unshakeable ground of truth. This first variation on the secularization theme prepares and renders ineluctable a second, that shifts attention to the following term of Descartes' epochal formula, *cogitare*.

fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis... this transformation *is* the beginning of a new thinking, wherewith the era becomes a new one and the following time the new time of modernity (*das Zeitalter zu einem neuen und die Folgezeit zur Neuzeit wird*). "Der europäische Nihilismus", pg. 142.

20. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 416.

Before passing to this second variation on the secularization theme, however, a caveat is in order. Indeed, it is not possible to stop short, as it were, after the first variation, accepting as valid Heidegger's genealogy of the subject, while putting to a side as superfluous, or even rejecting, the remaining elements of his genealogy of modern rationality. This is especially tempting due to the rich philosophical and semantic tradition surrounding the concept to which Heidegger appeals in his attempt to think through to its end the significance of *cogitare*, namely, *Vorstellung*. The *Weltbild*—an image of the world and the world as image—to which Heidegger has recourse when explaining the concept of presentation, belongs to this tradition. But the strategy by which the genealogy and concept of subjectivity would be retained, discarding the remainder of Heidegger's interpretation of modernity, must be nipped off at the very bud. For *only in its relation to the concepts of presentation and self-certainty does the concept of subjectivity obtain full justification*. In a word, the interpretation of the subject as an absolute and unshakeable fundament of truth *requires* the insight that *cogitare* is always a *cogito me cogitare*, a self-certain self-grounding of the ego. Consequently, subjectivity, presentation, and certainty are interdependent in Heidegger's interpretation; each of these concepts refers to and depends on the other two. The three stand and fall together.

Ego cogito

We can now turn to the second variation on the secularization theorem. The question reads as follows: what is it to *think*? The response to this interrogation is not a 'definition' in the ordinary sense of a concept that were to demarcate thinking from other acts, volitive, emotional, etc. It is well-known, in any case, that for Descartes the expression *cogitare* encompasses a very broad spectrum of acts that cannot be limited to 'thinking' in this strict sense. But here, once again, at issue is not what acts *do* fall within the broad concept of thinking Descartes employs, but the latter's properly *epochal* significance, that is to say, eliciting the concept's meaning by reference to its continuities and discontinuities with the equivalent concept that precedes it in Christian metaphysics. It is this problem which is broached in the question 'What is thinking?' The perspicuity of Heidegger's response is dictated by the one-to-one conceptual correspondence between Christian and modern metaphysics. The secularization of the Scholastic God brings with it the secularization of its mode of activity. *Cogitare* is the secularization of the *agere* (doing) of an *actus purus*. This, in Heidegger's view, is the implication of characterizing modern rationality as pre-sentation, *vor-stellen*.

The decisive aspect in this process is the shift leading from *energeia* to

actualitas wherein “*ergon* now becomes the *opus* of an *operari*, the *factum* of a *facere*, the *actus* of an *agere*.” (pg. 412) In effect, in terms of the economy of medieval philosophy, *agere* serves to conceptualize the nature of the *relation* of *causa sui*, *as causa sui*, to the existent *as* existent. The concept of doing implies those of *causa sui* and the ex-sistent, and vice-versa. In Heidegger’s view, this conceptual deformation of the Greek *energeia* serves, on the one hand, to legitimate and fortify the Biblical-Christian faith in creation and, on the other, becomes a self-evidence “that remains dominant for all later understanding of the beingness of beings”, the modern age included. (pg. 414) The question, however, is whether the ‘self-evidence’ of the *agere* of an *actus purus*, that is, an unconditioned doing, *in fact* remains the forgotten and unreflected presupposition of the modern age, or whether the secularization theorem *requires postulating* that self-evidence as the precondition for its explanation of the continuity leading from the Middle Ages to modernity.

Presentation

From the perspective of Heidegger’s interpretation, the metaphysical task Descartes inherited, hence the rule for deciphering the ‘hidden meaning’ of the *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, consisted in drafting a new metaphysical framework wherein the human relation to the world could be conceptualized as the effect of an effecting, the achievement of a doing, and this in the specific manner of an *unconditioned agere*. Its kernel is the cogito, cogitare: thinking. With this, we reach a decisive point in our documentation of the Heideggerian critique of the modern age. *That modern rationality reaches philosophical expression in the cogito principle means one and the same thing as the assertion that thinking acquires the determination of an ‘unconditioned doing’*. Otherwise stated: modern rationality is *rational* in so far as it submits itself to the requirement, stipulated by the secularization theorem, of reproducing the medieval concept of *actualitas*, with its relation between unconditioned effecting and conditioned effect, and *modern* inasmuch as it expresses this same relation in a new way. These two prescriptions would define the *meaning* of the cogito principle. Consequently, the thrust of Heidegger’s reading of the *Meditations* will consist in an interpretation of the concept of *repräsentatio* that emphasizes the break introduced by the cogito, yet in a manner that simultaneously allows it to reproduce the conceptual structure deployed by theology to secure a place for its ‘unconditioned reality’.

This assemblage of rupture and continuity finds its focal point in the interpretation of *repräsentatio* as *Vorstellung*: “In important passages, Descartes employs for cogitare the word percipere (per-capio)—to take something into possession, to take control of an affair, and this in the sense

of a positing for oneself of the sort of a presentation-for-oneself, of pre-sentation.”²¹ In Heidegger’s view, comprehending the structure of the Cartesian *repräsentatio* relinquishes the key to the essence of modern rationality itself. In effect, the cogito principle signifies that reason *is* presentational in the sense of a bringing something into view or of a placing at hand before one: ‘I think’ *means* ‘I pre-sent’, ‘*Ich stelle vor*’.

Ego cogito cogitata

Now, inasmuch as presentation can be considered from three different but interrelated perspectives, namely, as the *act* of presenting, as the *presented* of the presenting, and as the *relation* between presenting and presented, an essential characterization of modern rationality is defined by three interrogations: (1) What marks out *cogitare* as a presenting? In other words, what is thinking? (2) What marks out the *cogitatum* as a presented? That is to say, what is objectivity, the thought of the thinking? (3) What is the nature of the relation between *cogitare* and *cogitatum*, i.e. between presenting and the presented, thinking and objectivity? Schematically in the ninth addendum to “The Era of the World-Image”, exhaustively in the central sections of “European Nihilism”, the reconstruction of the Cartesian response to these questions delivers the node of Heidegger’s interpretation of modern rationality.

(1) *Cogitare*. A two-fold productivity characterizes the novel determination of thinking as a *cogitare*. For the one, to think means to *posit* something: “presentation means... to posit something from itself for itself...”²² ‘From’ and ‘for’; this double reference to the self further determines the positing (*stellen*) of presenting (*vorstellen*) as a securing (*sicherstellen*) in the sense of a putting into safe-keeping or guaranteeing. In this manner, presentation is a *per-capio*. For the other, every *ego cogito* is a *cogito me cogitare*: in positing something, the presenting at the same time posits the ‘presentant’ *as such*, i.e. as the effector of an act whereby something is presented or posited. “The presenting I is in each ‘I present’... essentially and necessarily co-presented as that towards which and from which and *for* which the presented is posited.”²³ What, then, is *cogitare* as an act? It is the novel determination of the theological concept of unconditioned *agere* as a presenting, namely, *the self-positing act of the ego whereby it posits something as the presented of its presenting*.

(2) *Cogitatum*. This has an immediate implication for the second sense of presentation, namely, as *cogitatum*. In effect, no characterization is

21. “...des Sich-zu-stellens von der Art des Vor-sich-stellens, des ‘Vor-stellens’.” “Der europäische Nihilismus”, pg. 151.

22. “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, pg. 106.

23. “Der europäische Nihilismus”, pg. 154.

possible for the object, the *cogitatum*, other than by way of a meditation on the meaning of its posited character as the presented *of* the presenting. But if the 'of' concedes a certain priority to the ego over against objectivity, how is that priority to be understood? "...In each presenting, presenting man co-posita himself—not additionally, but in advance..." (pg. 154) Our question can be reformulated as follows: discounting a merely temporal priority of the subject over its *cogitata*, what meaning accrues to 'in advance' here? An answer can be extracted from a related observation. Indeed, from the perspective of consciousness, *cogito me cogitare* signifies that the "consciousness of things and objects is essentially and fundamentally first self-consciousness and only as such is consciousness of objects possible." (pg. 155) In other words, self-consciousness makes possible the consciousness of things, but not vice-versa. Only on the ground of self-consciousness does consciousness of objects arise. That is to say: *objectivity is the product of an act that has its necessary and sufficient condition of possibility in itself, i.e. the 'I think'*. Or, as Heidegger also indicates, Descartes' *cogito* opens up the essential possibility that "presenting itself takes place in the horizon of the presentant (*des Vor-stellenden*)" (pg. 155). One cannot sufficiently emphasize the importance of this outcome for Heidegger's reconstruction of the *cogito* principle; it furnishes the central objection he marshalls against modern rationality, inasmuch as *the cogito would have brought about the metaphysical usurpation of the Scholastic conception of God as the fundament, as self-causing*. Moreover, this finding lends retrospective credence to our caveat that it is not possible to disengage the concept of the subject from those of presentation and certainty. Only with the recognition that self-consciousness precedes consciousness of objects does the concept of presentation consolidate the interpretation of the subject as the self-positing ground of the existent. And only then does the loss of relationality in the autarchic self-foundation of truth make itself heard.

I shall later argue that this account of presentation is untenable, and consequently, that Heidegger's account of subjectivity as a secularized *causa sui* suffers the same fortune. For the moment, however, I do not wish to controvert the accuracy of this interpretation of the *cogito*; it suffices for our present purposes to show that it is the necessary implication of the secularization theorem. From the moment that the *Meditations* are saddled with the task of taking over and securing a place for theology's 'unconditioned reality', the relation between *ego cogitare* and *cogitatum* must be construed in such a manner that thinking (acting) means effecting, not merely in the manner of a cause, but of *self-causation*. *Ego cogito sum* secures for the ego the position of the *self-effecting effector of the effected*: "For this marked out presentation, the *self* of man is, in an essential way, the fundament. The self is sub-iectum." (pg. 155) Hence, from its initial explanatory function for the manner in which the

transition from Christian philosophy to modernity is accomplished, secularization passes over to become a critical category in a way that is not exhausted in merely unmasking the 'illegitimacy' of modern rationality as the continuation of Christianity by other means. For at the same time that secularization is employed to give account of the inception of modern subjectivity, its issue, a secularized God, condemns the subject to unfolding a teleology of total world control. In this, Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem is far more radical in its critical implications than Löwith's.

(3) *Cogito cogitatum*. The consequences of this interpretation are brought together and sharpened in the explication it furnishes of the third sense of presentation, namely, the nature of the *relation* between man and world made possible by the cogito principle. Objectivity is not merely presented in and from the 'I think', but is presented *for* it, that is, is placed at the subject's disposition. That there is no objectivity 'without' subjectivity means that an object is an object *for* a subject. This placing at the disposal of the ego unveils the ultimate significance of man's self-interpretation as the fundament and measure of the truth of all beings: "the true is that which man clearly and distinctly brings forth from himself and delivers it to himself as such a pre-sented, in view of securing the presented [for himself]... The security of this pre-senting is certainty. The true in this sense is the real."²⁴ In other words, and this is the distinctive twist modernity gives the equation, the true is the *objective*, where the objective (the *cogitatum*) is earmarked with the essential determination of its permanent and thoroughgoing *availability* for the subject: "... the presented is not only given as such, but is posited as available."²⁵

Therewith, the hard core of modern rationality obtains clarification: *the cogito principle inaugurates a novel human relation to the world in which the latter is posited as pure availability*. Only when modern metaphysics has succeeded in conceiving the world as the object *of* a subject can it also become the object *for* the subject, that is to say, that which comes to lie under its control and dominion. The one-to-one correspondence with Christian metaphysics becomes visible once again. In the relation of the presented to the presenting implied in *ego cogito cogitata*, modernity reproduces God's two-fold relation to the medieval world-structure, such that the subject becomes the (objective) world's *causa essendi* and its *causa finalis*. Nevertheless, the question immediately crops up: for what? With what purpose? "For the further pre-senting that everywhere wants to secure and that is out to establish beings as the secured." (pg. 153) At every step, modern rationality reveals the world as pure availability, placed at man's service to promote and make possible his self-security. This,

24. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 427.

25. "Der europäische Nihilismus", pg. 152.

ultimately, is the implication of interpreting the world as objectivity, as a world-image, and the subject as the fundament of truth. This assertion returns us to the point of departure of this section, namely, clarifying the nature of the internal relation between rationality and purposivity as stipulated by Heidegger. That relation can now be formulated as follows: *the cogito principle posits the world as the domain made available for the subject's unconditioned self-security.*

But two problems remain outstanding. First: why is human security the immanent purposivity deployed by the cogito principle? Second: why need self-security entail limitless world-domination and exploitation? A response to these interrogations leads over to still a further variation on the secularization theorem.

§20. Third Variation on the Secularization Theme: From Salvation-Certainty to Self-Certainty

Whereas §§18 and 19 have traced the development of the secularization theorem in its explanatory import for the concepts of modern subjectivity and presentation, the topic to be examined henceforth regards secularization's explanatory and constitutive import for the teleology immanent to modern rationality.

Now, for the reader who follows Heidegger's argument, a difficulty makes itself apparent. In a certain sense, it would seem, a third variation on the secularization theorem has been rendered superfluous. Because, if Heidegger's interpretation of the cogito principle is correct, the internal relation between rationality and teleology *already* lies embedded in Descartes's novel determination of *cogitare* as a pre-sentation: "Presenting is a securing." *Into this lapidary formula is compressed the essential of Heidegger's interpretation and critique of modernity.* Whereas its first term—presentation—raises to concepts the modern concept of rationality, the second—securing—exhibits its immanent teleology. In other words, on the basis of what has already been expounded, no further appeal would need to be made to the secularization theorem in explaining the purposivity unfolded in the cogito principle. If Heidegger is forced to introduce a third variation on the secularization theorem, and even as its most decisive application, it is because neither of the two foregoing variations succeeds in making clear *why secularization was at all necessary*, that is to say, why man had to take over the attributes of the Scholastic God in the first place. More sharply formulated: if Scholastic metaphysics made room for man *and* God, why was a rebellion necessary whereby modern man robs God of what was His? Why was the subject's usurpation of the Scholastic God-concept required? In short, why was *emancipation* from theology (even if it proves to be merely a pseudo-emancipation) the elementary

claim European mankind posed for itself at the outset of the modern era?

In the absence of a response to this problem, Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality remains entirely unpalatable, and is condemned to founder. The third variation on the secularization theme, dedicated to the problem of self-certainty, is the attempt to provide such a solution. In any case, once again it becomes retrospectively clear why Heidegger's interpretation of the concepts of subjectivity, presentation, and certainty cannot be disengaged from one another. If the concept of subjectivity as an absolute and unshakeable fundament only achieves its metaphysical 'proof' in Descartes' insight that every cogito is a *cogito me cogitare*, a self-positing in the positing of objectivity, it now turns out that both subjectivity and presentation rely on a further concept that explains *why* these secularizations were necessary in the first place: certainty. Moreover, at the same time that it lends plausibility to these earlier concepts, (self-)certainty completes the interpretation of the subject as a fundament: the absolute and unshakeable ground of *truth*. Why, then, is security in the form of certainty the immanent purposivity deployed by modern rationality?

Metastasis

Ostensibly at least, the answer to this question is an unambiguous application of the secularization theorem or, one should perhaps say, its metastasis. At the end of the Middle Ages, the theological self-interpretation of man is oriented towards "securing the salvation of the individual immortal soul", where "all knowledge is related to the order of salvation and stands at the service of securing and promoting salvation." (pgs. 132-133) Eschatology governs human purposivity in the two-fold manner of a 'certainty of salvation' and a 'path of salvation'. On the one hand, truth obtains its Christian determination as revelation and is placed in the hands of the 'Schoolmen', the teachers of the doctrine of faith and of salvation. On the other hand, history becomes a history of salvation, with its collective and individual phases: creation, original sin, redemption, last judgment. These two eschatological aspects are closely bound together. In the same movement by which history becomes a history of salvation, "the way (i.e. the method) is also established by which the value of knowledge [of salvation] could be determined and mediated." (pg. 133)

The medieval horizon is thereby outlined by reference to which a series of one-to-one conceptual correspondences can be successively picked out to explain the emergence and 'hidden meaning' of key 'modern' concepts. (1) First and foremost, of course, is the basic movement leading from salvation to self-certainty. In this sense, the emancipatory claim of modern rationality defines itself by opposition to the situation it seeks to overcome: "The essential Christian thought of the certainty of salvation is taken over,

but 'salvation' is not otherworldly blessedness; the way thereto is not that of self-renunciation (*Entselbstung*)." (pg. 133) That self-certainty "takes over" the meaning of salvation-certainty, although in another guise, conveys and reinforces the idea of the permanence of a certain theological content—security—that, forgotten in its sources, remains the spring secretly at work in modern rationality. (2) But if self-certainty merely becomes the secularized version of the certainty of salvation, a parallel process takes place in respect of the path of salvation, with its emphasis on a way of securing salvation. Predictably, modern method, scientific method in particular, becomes its secularized variant. "The question concerning 'method', i.e... the question concerning the gaining and foundation of a security guaranteed by man himself comes to the foreground." (pg. 133) (3) Moreover, and although not explicitly alluded to by Heidegger, it becomes possible to see in the modern scientist, who founds his access to truth on the guarantee of modern scientific method, the secularized version of the 'Schoolman'. (4) Closely bound up with method goes the secularization of revealed truth. "'Method' is not to be understood here 'methodologically', as the way of investigation and research, but metaphysically, as the way to an essential determination of truth that is exclusively groundable in human capacities." (pg. 133) Obviously, the methodological significance of method is subservient to the latter. (5) Additionally, the history of the subject becomes a secularized history of salvation, wherein historical 'progress' acquires the meaning of a secularized version of the theological quest for otherworldly security. "Salvation and well-being come to be searched for exclusively in the free self-unfolding of all creative possibilities of man..." (pg. 133)

Self-Security

We need not concern ourselves with exploring each of these permutations on secularization; all have been put forth in one form or another by other thinkers in the course of this century, and they are the least original of Heidegger's contributions to the interpretation of the inception of modern rationality. The seriousness of his critique is situated in the analyses of subjectivity and presentation, not here. At issue, however, is not the originality or non-originality of this third 'variation' on the secularization theorem, but the plausibility of Heidegger's account *as a whole*. For the moment, I merely want to point out that the entire weight of Heidegger's genealogical explanation of modern rationality rests on the thesis that, at the end of the Middle Ages, European mankind was forced to secure its salvation in another way than that availed by Scholastic philosophy. Only when modern man takes upon himself the responsibility of securing his own salvation, can he also raise the claim to being *the*

fundament of the world. The further question which arises focuses on the secularization of salvation-certainty: is this account of why emancipation from theology was necessary consistent with the methodological requirements of secularization itself? In the negative response it gives to this question, Chapter 5 commences to dismantle Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality.

In preparation thereto, a fuller consideration of the concept of self-security is helpful at this stage of our analysis. In Heidegger's view, human security is not merely one amongst a set of possible and eventually competing purposes which the cogito could set for itself; to the contrary, it defines the purposivity presupposed in all other purposes and to which these are subordinated. All rational behavior in the modern age aims at securing mankind, that is to say, its very rationality is determined by its subordination to this finality. But what, properly, does 'securing' mean? Nominally, of course, the verb signifies relieving from exposure to adverse contingencies, acting to put something beyond hazard of being lost or not received. But what is that 'something'? The question concerning purposivity transfers our attention from the securing to the secured: *what* does the cogito secure? The "self-unfolding of all of mankind's capacities." (pg. 145) Self-security does *not* designate a specific content, a concrete goal to be achieved. In that sense, no particular 'thing' or 'value' is secured by the cogito principle. The opposite is the case: *to secure, in the manner of cogito sum, means to ensure the conditions necessary for the deployment of any and all purposes mankind could set for itself.* Not a specific end, but the promotion of all human potentialities, defines security as the purposivity constitutive for modern rationality. And this concept of security is held to be the secularization of salvation certainty. "The novelty of the new era over against the medieval, Christian [era], consists in that man sets out, from himself and with his own capacities, to become certain and sure of his humanity (*Menschseins*) at the center of the totality of beings." (pg. 133) Here, once again, the discovery of a theological concept that is allegedly continued in a modern surrogate means that the latter's claim to a rupture marking a new beginning must be unmasked as illusory, as the product of modern mankind's unreflective relation to its own past. The critical intention of this unmasking becomes most acute there where this teleology is declared unconditional in its scope and pretensions. "The securing of the highest and unconditioned self-unfolding of mankind's capacities towards the unconditioned domination of the entire earth is the secret thorn... [driving] modern man..." (pg. 145)

Freedom

This third variation on the secularization theorem can be resumed by noting its two grave implications for the teleology of modern rationality. On the one hand, when the modern concern with human security is conceived as a secularized form of salvation-security, it can be discredited as part and parcel of the camouflaged usurpation whereby man seizes for himself the attributes of Christian philosophy's God. The implication of Heidegger's critique is that the claim of modern man to posit ends for himself *necessarily* divests the world of any value it might possess of its own, subordinating it to a mere means for human security. By way of this detour, it seems, mankind does nothing other than secularize the Scholastic equation between the *summum ens* and the *summum bonum*; *self-security, understood as the self-positing of ends, brings to concepts the shift whereby mankind becomes the final cause of the world*. Metaphysically speaking, European mankind would have secured its standing as the cause of being and final cause of the world with the novel determination of objectivity as, respectively, the posited *from* and *for* the 'I think'. From the point of view of Western metaphysics, the irruption of the subject into history announces itself in the apparition of an 'anthropology': "... the philosophical interpretation that explains and appraises beings in their totality *from* man and *for* man."²⁶ Anthropology, here, stands for the covert continuation of theology and its God-concept.

On the other, because Heidegger stipulates that self-security is only possible by secularizing the unconditioned doing of the *summum ens* into an *ego cogitare*, the human relation to security must *necessarily* appear boundless in its scope and pretensions, for it merely secularizes the omnipotence of the Scholastic God over its creation. *Freedom*, in this context, acquires a novel determination that meshes with the limitless demands and reach of human security. In effect, "to be free now means that man replaces a salvation-certainty that gives the measure of truth with a certainty by virtue of which and in which he becomes certain of himself as that being which posits itself for itself."²⁷ In its philosophical conceptualization, freedom legitimates the transformation operated in the human self-interpretation whereby it posits and opens up the world for itself as the domain available for the realization of mankind's unlimited security. This claim is unconditioned, that is to say, it posits a state of affairs wherein the totality of conditions are met for the enactment of any and all purposes which European mankind, collective and individual, could posit for itself. In other words, freedom expresses the new awareness of man's doing as *unconditioned*, hence only *self-conditioning*.

26. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 91, my italics.

27. "Der europäische Nihilismus", pg. 143.

It is as much the case that the concept of freedom serves to legitimate metaphysically this momentum towards total world-control, as that modern history can now become conceptualized as the history of freedom: “The new freedom is—metaphysically seen—the opening up of a manifold which henceforth can and will be knowingly posited from man himself as necessary and mandatory. The essence of the history of modernity is given by the execution of these manifold ways of the new freedom.” (pg. 143-144) In the secularization of the Scholastic God, the unlimited self-empowerment of human being, embodied in the concept of freedom, becomes the telos imparting its internal coherence and meaning on the era and its essential manifestations: “Because everywhere to this freedom belongs man’s own self-mastering of mankind’s own essential determination, and [because] this mastery requires power in an essential and explicit manner, therefore, only in modernity’s history, and *as* its history, does the essential empowering of power become possible as the fundamental reality.” (pg. 144). The outcome of this genealogy of modern rationality can now be connected with the question concerning power and self-empowerment: *theory, technique, and practice are the figures of modern freedom*; these modes of modern rationality are the vehicles whereby the subject makes good its historical vocation to individual and collective self-empowerment.

§21. The Welfare State and the Metaphysical Fundament of Modernity

Before more closely exploring the connection between the outcome of Heidegger’s genealogy/critique of modern rationality and the will to control unfolded in modern technique and practice, let me first briefly outline the most salient aspects of the foregoing discussion. Our compass point has been the dense formulation “Presenting is a securing”, that resumes Heidegger’s interpretation of the concept of modern rationality and its teleology. Drawing on the ninth addendum to the essay “The Era of the World Image”, and on the later essays “European Nihilism” and “Metaphysics as the History of Being”, it has been shown that this equation relies on a specific manner of explaining the identities and differences of the Middle Ages and modernity, namely, the secularization theorem. Consequently, the *meaning* of the three concepts into which the equation resolves itself—subjectivity, presentation, certainty—is *Christian*, because it repeats in respect of man the position enjoyed by the Scholastic God in respect of the created world, and *modern*, inasmuch as it formulates the conceptual structure of medieval metaphysics in a novel manner.

Each of these three concepts relates to and depends on the other two. In respect of *subjectivity*, the one-to-one conceptual correspondence

stipulated by secularization requires that the ego be (1) a *fundament*, in the sense of what must necessarily be thought along with all things other than itself and as determining these in what they are; (2) *absolute*, as a self-positing fundament; (3) *unshakeable*, because the indubitability of the cogito gives expression to the subject's permanence and unvariability; and (4) of *truth*, because in its self-certainty the subject is conscious of itself as the ground and measure of the being of beings. In regard to *presentation*, the unconditioned *agere* of *actus purus* dictates a three-fold secularization: (1) as *unconditioned thinking*, wherein the self-positing act of the subject posits something as the presented of its presenting; (2) as *conditioned objectivity*, wherein the presented is an effect that has its necessary and sufficient condition of possibility in the effecting (presenting) of the subject; (3) as the *relation* between subjectivity and objectivity, wherein the latter appears as the object *of* and *for* the former. Finally, in what concerns *certainty*, the need to resolve in a new way the Christian concern with salvation leads over from the certainty of salvation to *self-certainty*, conceived as the free (unconditioned) self-positing of any and all human purposes in a world opened up as available to this effect.

Two are the principal implications of these variations on the secularization theme. Not only must the emancipatory self-understanding of modernity be relinquished in favor of insight into its unconscious repetition of what goes before it, but a thoroughgoing critique of the era becomes indispensable, inasmuch as its hidden meaning is the arrogation of a position in respect of the world which is not man's own.

A Genealogy of the Welfare State

If we look back to §1 of this book, it would seem that we have strayed far from our initial interest. From the conceptual constellation everyday life most often associates with the welfare state, e.g. unemployment, pension schemes, child benefits for families, taxes, educational and manpower policies, etc., we have landed in a consideration of the meaning of *ego cogito cogitata*. The dissimilitude between the two could not be sharper, it seems. On the one side, the concreteness of concepts such as sickness and unemployment payments or subsidized housing; on the other, the abstractness of the 'I think' principle. On the one hand, a cluster of concepts associated with the 'real world'; on the other, an investigation into the meaning of certain philosophical concepts. An elemental question presses itself on us: what does a genealogy of the cogito principle have to do with the welfare state? In what way is a transformation taking place in the history of Western metaphysics determinative for the apparition of welfare economics in the course of the 20th century?

Another, related dissemblance provides the key to this question. The

kinds of activities associated with the welfare state are highly and increasingly *differentiated*. The open market operation of the central bank is different to the subsidizing of university studies, and these, in turn, are different to the regulation of corporate fusions or the construction of a high-speed train network. This differentiation is accompanied by a *specialization* of institutions and knowledge, not as its mere 'by-product' but as its essential condition. Over against this rich diversification and specialization of human doing stands a philosophical question that focuses on a single type of activity, an activity, moreover, that does not even fit into any of those grouped under allocation, distribution, and stabilization: 'thinking'. What does 'thinking' have to do with any of the great variety of activities unfolded under the economic categories of the welfare state? The one stands in contrast to the manifold, unity at variance with diversity; yet *therein* lies the cogito's relevance for the welfare state. In a meditation on the meaning of *ego cogito cogitata*, one attempts to grasp the identical in differentiation, sameness in variegation.

But what remains 'the same', however different the activities unfolded in the welfare state? I have argued that, first and foremost, this identity is *rational*, in a determinate sense of the term 'rational'. More fundamental than the difference between modern technique and practice, between activity oriented towards means and activity directly oriented towards ends, lies a common interpretation of rationality as a *setting-a-given-in-order*. For the economic categories of the welfare state, as much as for the practical transformation of society, the recognition of the non-binding character of the existent is the incitation to its rational ordering. Now, I have observed that this formulation of the concept of rationality coincides with what Kant calls *synthesis*, the 'I think' principle. A genealogy of the cogito principle is indispensable for an enquiry into the economic foundations of the welfare state, and this not restricted to the genealogy proposed by Heidegger, because *in the relation between the ego cogito and its cogitata is concentrated the effort of modern metaphysics to think through to its end the concept of reality as the made of a human making*. In a consideration of the cogito principle lies the key to an understanding of how, in the manifold ways and patterns of his technical and practical activity, modern man relates productively to reality. Conversely, a reflection on the presuppositions of modern technique and practice, such as that we have unfolded in Chapters 1 - 3, illuminates the epochal significance of the concept of reality brought to a fore in the cogito. Earlier than all economic differentiation of the means-end relations unfolded in allocation, distribution, and stabilization, earlier than all differentiation concerning political and social ends in modern politics, a common concept of reality confers on technique and practice their specifically modern character.

This suggests a 'genealogy' of the welfare state that cannot simply be equated with a documentation of the social and political changes leading

out from the 'liberal state', but which finds its most general framework in modern metaphysics itself. Compared with the decisive breakthroughs that gave birth to modern science several centuries ago, the welfare state seems to have a much more frail and precarious hold on modern history. And yet, no less than for modern science, the essential in a 'history' of the welfare state consists in a genealogy of the concept of reality it embodies. However 'concrete' the accounts of the transformation leading from the liberal to the welfare state, be these in the manner of a(n unstable) compromise enacted by capital with labor to defuse an incipient social revolution, or as the permutations in law conducting from the concept of tort to that of risk,²⁸ it seems to me that the decisive question is neither posed nor answered: *what conditions were required such that man could come to view existent social structures as a non-binding 'fact' amenable to technical and practical transformation?* The continuities and discontinuities going from theology to modern metaphysics that prepared the apparition of this 'abstract' concept of reality are the self-evident presupposition which lends all 'concrete' histories of the welfare state their concreteness. Only by reference to the history of Western ontology is the concept of reality presupposed in Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which it shares with Habermas's essay "Technology and Science as Ideology" or Marx's *Das Kapital*, fully comprehensible. The technical manipulability of the economic system and the practical transformability of given social structures are implications of what is meant by 'rationality' in the modern era.

But *what* meaning the cogito principle possesses is not independent of a decision concerning *how* it is determined by reference to what first took place in Christian metaphysics. It is the *meaning* of modern rationality which Heidegger's genealogy of the cogito principle seeks to unmask and criticize, insofar as technique and practice would be the vehicles whereby modern man prolongs, by secularization, the position enjoyed by the Scholastic God in respect of the created world. The *General Theory* and *Das Kapital*, from the perspective of Heidegger's account of the genesis of modern rationality, are heirs of Descartes' *Meditations* not merely because they continue the concept of reality as *actualitas*, i.e. "the opus of an operari, the factum of a facere, the actus of an agere",²⁹ but because this interpretation of reality coincides with a claim to unconditioned security in the manner of a *self-certainty*.

28. See François Ewald, *L'État providence* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986); Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*; Nicos Poulantzas, *Pouvoir politique et classes sociales* (Paris: François Maspero, 1971); Pierre Rosanvallon, *op. cit.*

29. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 412.

Welfare

This returns us to the internal connection between the concept of modern rationality and its teleology of world-domination: "Presenting is a securing." In the prolongation of Heidegger's genealogy of the cogito principle, a *second* identity unifies the manifold economic activities of the welfare state, and is the necessary implication of the concepts of reality/rationality it unfolds: *a unity of purpose*. Allocation, distribution, and stabilization are theoretical shorthand for the different purposes of economic activity envisaged in the welfare state. From the standpoint of economic rationality, the difference between these purposes, rather than their identity, is all that matters. 'Historically', also, holding them apart is important, because the welfare state is consolidated in the very process whereby allocation, the single function allotted the liberal state, is supplemented with distribution and stabilization. What, in the perspective of Heidegger's genealogy, is the significance of this 'supplement'? The question concerning their possible unity in the sense of the more general purpose presupposed in each, and to which allocation, distribution, and stabilization are themselves mere means, escapes the interest of economic theory proper. Nonetheless, in the absence of this implicit, all-encompassing purpose, allocation, distribution, and stabilization immediately lose their *economic* relevance, their relevance as the purposes envisaged in the theory and practice of welfare economics. All purposes implemented in the welfare state, e.g. economic growth, a 'tolerable' poverty floor, high employment, an efficient and up-to-date infrastructure, low inflation, etc., are themselves *means to a further end*, itself implicit because self-evident. What purpose is this?

Now, when contrasted with the variety of 'functions' ascribed to the welfare state, it would seem that security is the purpose proper to 'distribution', inasmuch as it includes the tax-transfer mechanisms and social welfare institutions normally associated with social security. Everything turns on the insight that 'social security' is already a *restriction* of a more fundamental concept of security underlying, and giving purposive unity to, allocation, distribution, and stabilization. If the subject's 'natural' history finds in techno-science the instrument appropriate for achieving its boundless self-security in nature, Heidegger's interpretation of modernity can be seen as suggesting that *the welfare state marks the stage in modernity's social history wherein the subject's unconditioned self-security is divested of its inarticulate character to become reflectively posited as the necessary presupposition of state activity*. The construction of a new road to tap the agricultural potential of a fertile region; the redistribution of income by way of a progressive tax formula; the reduction of inflationary pressure on the economy by increasing reserve requirements on commercial banks; these and all other forms of state activity presuppose the elemental

manipulability of society and nature in view of achieving human welfare. But what does welfare—*the good* mean here?

It is of course the case that the name of a phenomenon must not be confused with a description of its specificity. In this context, one cannot simply take for granted that the word 'welfare' in the expression 'welfare state' brings to the fore the characteristic feature of the mode of social organization dominant in the West, to then work back and demonstrate the concept's descriptive or prescriptive function. Such an endeavor remains abstract, and above all, unfounded. But another approach, dictated by the secularization theorem, does seem possible. What *could* 'welfare' mean in light of the cogito principle? Again from the perspective of the secularization theorem, a single interpretation appears ineluctable: welfare is the unlimited security of the subject. In other words, construed as the necessary presupposition of the state's activity, *welfare designates the set of conditions necessary to ensure the unconditioned self-unfolding of human capacities and potentialities*. As such, welfare remains a thoroughly Christian concept; concealed in its historical origins would lie an usurpation whereby the subject has taken upon itself the attribute of the *summum bonum* in respect of the social world which it views as its own creation. Only beginning from here on can the concept of welfare function descriptively, as the articulation of its most elemental presuppositions, *and* prescriptively, as the ideal by which the existent is measured and criticized, and in relation to which either social 'progress' or 'regression' now become essential historical possibilities.

Consequently, in each and every of its possible permutations, modernity would only succeed in more thoroughly 'subjectifying' the individual, that is, strengthening the hold of the interpretation of human-being as a subject, and in 'objectifying' society. This, ultimately, would be the historical significance of 'supplementing' allocation with distribution and stabilization, that is, the passage from the liberal to the welfare state. The process whereby contemporary man comes to view a stable situation of severe unemployment as a non-binding fact, as a fact that he can transform through his own doing, marks yet a further stage in the history of the subject's freedom conceived as a teleology of progressive self-empowerment. In this sense, not an external and fortuitous connection, but an intimate solidarity links up, in Heidegger's opinion, the human relations to the natural and social world enacted in modern technique and practice: "To the essence of the subjectivity of the subjectum and to man as a subject belongs the unconditioned power to strip away the barriers of domains of possible objectivation and the right to decide about the latter."³⁰ The welfare state, in this sense, marks the final triumph of subjectivity and of the objectivation of society.

30. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", pg. 107.

But what does objectivation mean here? In the same movement by which unlimited security comes to be explicitly posited as the telos of state activity, a novel interpretation of society, latent theretofore, would have reached expression in the welfare state: the disclosure of the social world as a privileged *medium*, a medium *for* the subject's self-securing and *in* which self-securing proceeds. If the word 'medium' evokes the idea of a condition or environment in which something may function or flourish, the concept of flourishing at work in the welfare state—the unlimited self-securing of the subject—would reduce the word's more original possibilities to the single meaning of an *inventory—Bestand*, i.e. would make of participation in social life a mere *means* to self-security. From the perspective of Heidegger's thinking, not coincidentally, but as the necessary implication of the immanent relation linking up modern rationality to its inherent teleology of unlimited self-empowerment, the welfare state would mark the social consolidation of modern man's drive toward total world-control. The will to transform a 'bad reality', the technical and practical interest in rendering the social and natural world serviceable for human needs and purposes, visible in both Keynes's 'theory and practice of full employment and Marx's critique of fetishism, appear, in the light of Heidegger's genealogy, as different facets of one and the same historical process whereby modernity pushes implacably through to its end the novel determination of rationality as the unconditioned doing of a secularized *causa sui*.

CHAPTER 5. SELF-PRESERVATION

The general thesis orienting our genealogical considerations can be summarized as follows: the most basic conditions of possibility for the emergence of the economic functions of the welfare state have to be searched for in the changed self-perception of man and of his relation to the social and natural environment taking place in the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era. In short, at issue is the inception of the cogito principle itself, wherein this changed set of presuppositions first reaches philosophical conceptualization. From the viewpoint 'of its traditional 'historical' presentations, a genealogy of the welfare state that chooses to concentrate on the cogito principle is irremediably abstract and far removed from the concrete historical events that explain its apparition. For, rather than referring to the evolution of the workhouses and the fading out of charity as an acceptable manner of dealing with indigence, or the irruption of the Industrial Revolution and the transformation in legal paradigms going from tort to risk, attention is being focused on the cogito principle, and how it clarifies the sense of the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity.

And yet, in another sense, these reflections on the genesis of modern rationality are more 'concrete', historically speaking, than what the former can be. In effect, a genealogy of the cogito principle attempts to dig out and reveal the origin and the sense of the most basic presuppositions of the modern era, those that lend its central manifestations their properly epochal character. The welfare state does not extricate itself from these presuppositions. They are the condition of possibility of its allocative, distributive, and stabilizing functions. Although Keynes's observation that the world as it is or has been is a fact of observation, not a necessary state of affairs that cannot be changed, comes *after* having laid the theoretical groundwork for welfare economics, the concept of reality to which it gives word *precedes* his entire investigation and first makes it possible. In all their concreteness and variegation, the different services, activities and institutions whereby these functions are fulfilled find their origin in the fundamental change taking place in man's self-perception and the perception of the social and natural world to which the cogito principle gives expression.

It has been Heidegger's great merit to have clearly realized the epochal character of the cogito principle, and to have attempted to articulate its significance for the central manifestations of the modern era. It is from this foundational perspective that his genealogy of modern rationality is of interest to our own endeavor. A single organizing insight is its outcome: a thoroughgoing analysis of the cogito principle reveals an internal connection between rationality and purposivity, according to which the

novel determination of reason as a *cogito cogitatum* (i.e. the self-positing act of the subject whereby it posits objectivity as the presented of its presenting) lays bare the world, both natural and social, as available for the unconditioned self-security of modern man. Self-security consists in the possibility of deploying any and all purposes, individual or collective, mankind could set for itself, rather than a specific goal to be achieved. The relation between rationality and purposivity finds compact expression in the formula "presenting is a securing." Only after the teleology of self-empowerment immanent to the cogito principle has been recognized, does one grasp the essence and the fundamental direction of modern history. And only then, it would seem, does the significance of the welfare state as a figure of Enlightenment make itself known.

Dedicating renewed attention to the cogito principle, Chapter 5 will essay developing a quite different genealogy of modern rationality. In terms of the welfare state, my question is how a genealogy of the cogito principle serves to clarify two key presuppositions we have encountered in the analysis of Keynes's *General Theory*. On the one hand, there is the presupposition of the *facticity* of the given world, a presupposition that is irreducible to the assumptions guiding Greek thinking on *techne*. In lieu of Heidegger's interpretation of the subject as a secularized *causa sui*, what historical conditions ushered in this manner of disclosing the given world? On the other hand, and directly connected with this, comes the relation between existence and possibility at the heart of economic technique in the welfare state. An elemental logic has been discovered in the *General Theory*, whereby the existent has forfeited its ontological primacy in its relation to possibility, such that it functions as the condition for the realization of the possible. Both presuppositions, namely, the facticity of the social world and the relation between existence and possibility, lie at the base of the critiques of liberal capitalism in *Das Kapital* and of advanced capitalism in *Legitimation Crisis*. The question is the following: in what way does a genealogy of the cogito principle contribute to making clear the significance of these presuppositions indispensable to the 'theory and technique of full employment' in the welfare state, no less than to its Enlightened critique? Methodologically, whereas Heidegger's genealogy of the cogito principle is worked out in the framework of the secularization theorem, I will argue that the envisaged problems can best be grasped by recourse to the 'reoccupation theory' propounded by H. Blumenberg.

This broad set of problems will be explored in seven phases. Initially, §22 confronts Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem with its own methodological requirements to undermine his interpretation of the subject as an 'unconditioned fundament'. This initial destructive step clears the way for elaborating an alternative account of the significance of the epochal transition leading into modernity. In contrast with the reproductive interpretation of human doing that achieves its accomplished metaphysical

expression in Aristotle's treatment of *dynamis* and *energeia*, argues §23, the central problem consists in securing an understanding of the process by which modern man comes to view his relation to reality as *productive*. Hence, §24 begins by outlining the modalization of being evolving from the Scholastic determination of divine power as a 'making' or 'bringing into being'. For its part, §25 evidences that the modern interpretation of man and of his relation to the world inverts, in a certain sense, the Scholastic conception of the relation between possible-being and existent-being as summarized in the formula *factibilis neque possibilis*, the 'feasible or possible'. This initial overview of the modern reception and transformation of Scholastic ontology is followed up, in §26, by presenting Blumenberg's development of a 'reoccupation theorem' in response to secularization as a category of historical explanation, and his pinpointing of self-preservation (*conservatio sui*) as the principle of modern rationality. Subsequently, §27 brings together the findings of the foregoing steps by articulating the concept of self-preservation with the synthetic interpretation of reason I have outlined in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Finally, §28 ushers in the problem-field of Part III, connecting self-preservation to the concept of Enlightenment.

§22. Undermining the Secularization Theorem

Heidegger's genealogy of subjectivity, presentation, and certainty resumed the essence of the modern era. In considering these concepts, it was noted that if the first obtains its metaphysical warrant in the second, both subjectivity and presentation are intelligible as secularizations of Christian concepts only if the *need* for such a secularization has been justified in the first place. Self-certainty, itself the secularization of salvation-certainty, serves this function in the economy of Heidegger's argument. The question which has been postponed until now concerns the *explanatory* value of this 'third' variation on the secularization theorem. By this I mean two things. (1) We must consider whether appeal to salvation is in fact capable of evidencing why the secularization of self-causation into subjectivity was at all necessary. Does Heidegger's account of self-certainty satisfy this requirement? (2) We must ascertain whether recourse to salvation makes intelligible why the modern concept of human doing as a *cogitare* had to be the secularized repetition of the unconditioned *agere* of an *actus purus*. Again, does Heidegger's account of self-certainty satisfy this requirement?

Given the interconnected character of the three aforementioned concepts, if the response to these two questions is negative, then not only would it be possible, and even necessary, to account for the concepts of security and freedom in a new manner, but the very interpretation of the meaning of subjectivity and *cogitare* would also be flawed and in need of reconsideration. In short, whereas Heidegger's movement of thinking goes from subjectivity to certainty, passing through presentation, our own

direction of analysis is the inverse: a review of certainty clears the way for the consideration of presentation and then of subjectivity.

A Struggle for Ownership of Self-Causation?

Under this general title is summarized Heidegger's response to question (1) set out immediately above: *why does concern with salvation render inevitable the secularization of the Scholastic God at the end of the Middle Ages?*

The kernel of Heidegger's thesis concerning the passage from *Heilsgewißheit* to *Selbstgewißheit* is an earlier cited passage according to which "concealed in its origin, the necessity governs that man secure his salvation for himself in this or that way, with its Christian or another meaning." On closer inspection, however, the *explanatory* function of this thesis breaks down in a decisive point. Behind the apparent historical 'necessity' Heidegger postulates for modernity's emancipation from theology, there is no adequate explanation for *why* this had to occur, other than the bald assertion that in theology "man can never be or become unconditionally certain [working out] from himself of [his] salvation."¹ In other words, *because* the requirements of an unconditioned and self-guaranteed certainty were not met, a novel comprehension of the human relation to security had to be formulated at the dawn of the modern era. Once this formulation of the problem has been accepted, the rest of Heidegger's argument imposes itself quite inexorably on the reader. But it is this decisive first step, while seemingly the easiest to take, which causes most difficulties. Indeed, the 'because' still falls far short of its explanatory pretention: *why* (if at all) was this claim formulated in the first place? Why did man 'have' to become *unconditionally* certain of his salvation? This unresolved problem reappears with particular clarity in the central assertion of the ninth addendum to *Die Zeit des Weltbildes* cited earlier: "the emancipation from the revealed certainty of salvation *had* to be in itself an emancipation to a certainty in which man secures truth as the known of his own knowing"². It is the 'had' which encloses the heart of the problem in this assertion: *that* such an emancipation was possible is not yet to have evidenced *why* it had to occur. This omission is not merely a peripheral question, one that leaves untouched the main thesis concerning the meaning of emancipation (secularization). To the contrary, when a claim to an alleged historical necessity is made, the order of questioning must be inverted. Until it has been shown why the need for 'emancipation' to an unconditioned and self-guaranteed self-certainty emerged as the necessary

1. "*Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins*", pg. 423.

2. "*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*", *op. cit.*, pg. 105 (my italics).

response to Scholastic philosophy, the claim that such a need arose must be placed between brackets as unsubstantiated. What *explanation*, then, does Heidegger propose for this transition?

When one canvasses his texts with this question in mind, the observations that deal with it are extraordinarily sparse. The turn from *energeia* to *actualitas* brings with it, we are told, a shift whereby truth becomes an intellectual attribute, that is to say, God and man become the 'bearers of truth' that decide on knowledge and certainty. And inasmuch as "certainty brought to the fore [the question of] its bearer by way of the essential claim to the self-execution of its self-securing, it [certainty] kindled the struggle (*Kampf*) between the possible bearers of its essence."³ Nonetheless, that certainty might have been brought to the fore in the manner suggested by Heidegger does not *require* a 'struggle' between God and man as the possible bearers of unconditioned, self-guaranteed truth and security. Although displaced, the question remains unresolved: *why* was such a 'struggle' necessary in the first place? Strictly on the basis of this account of *actualitas*, nothing necessitated that modernity break out from theology by first posing these exigencies for itself. To the contrary, the 'struggle' must be posited *ex post facto*, in the form of an unfounded historical hypothesis, to account for a transition the meaning of which has been fixed a priori.

Let us probe more deeply into this, for it seems to me that we here come to stand on the very bedrock of Heidegger's analyses of the inception of modern rationality. If, in advance, one stipulates that, with the turn to *actualitas*, "the trinity God, World (Nature), Man circumscribes the circle of possibilities according to which one of these domains of the real takes over the determination of the essence of reality" (pg. 421), then one also stipulates a priori an either/or situation in which 'either' God 'or' man determines that essence, and this in the *same manner*, namely, as an unconditioned *agere*: either *actus purus* or *cogito sum*. Once such a disjunction has been stipulated, only a 'struggle' can resolve it; obviously, its outcome must be interpreted as the appropriation, or better, the unlawful expropriation of what is not man's own. Inevitably, it seems, the cogito inaugurates an era in which "Man knows himself unconditionally certain as that being whose being is most certain. Man becomes the self-positing ground and measure for all certainty and truth."⁴ Nonetheless, the apparent unassailability of this conclusion relies on the assumption that *only* a self-grounding of the subject could have sufficed. But this remarkable, not to say fantastic, requirement which man would have posed for himself at the outset of modernity remains unsubstantiated in its alleged 'historical necessity'. In short, only the presupposition that the subject *had* to take

3. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pgs. 422-423.

4. "Der europäische Nihilismus", pg. 134.

over the attribute of self-causation from God makes plausible the corollary assertion that modern mankind *had* to understand its relation to security in terms of a claim to an unconditioned and self-guaranteed truth. Yet, conversely, in the economy of Heidegger's argument, the passage to unconditioned self-security required by salvation-certainty was supposed to explain *why* the subject's arrogation of self-causation was at all necessary. The circularity of the argumentation is at hand: *the thesis that the ego is a secularized causa sui constitutes the thema probandum of an explanation of the historical genesis of modern subjectivity, not its unquestioned and unquestionable presupposition!*

It will immediately be retorted, of course, that if the appeal to salvation-certainty does not explain the 'historical necessity' of the transit to secularized self-causation, Heidegger's analysis of the cogito principle, as set out heretofore, proves that this transit *in fact* took place. We can leave to a side, for the moment, the implications this concession would have for the explanatory value of the secularization theorem. The substantive point concerns the meaning of subjectivity as such. In this respect, careful examination of the concept of subjectivity, in both Descartes and Kant, evidences that, in fact, such a transformation *did not take place*, that the subject is *not* self-causing, but rather *conditioned*. Because Heidegger's reading merely 'proves' what has been stipulated in advance as having had to occur, it neglects a key aspect of the modern concept of subjectivity, namely, its finitude. To be sure, I am dogmatically invoking here an alternative concept of subjectivity (and an alternative genealogy of the subject) which has not yet been expounded in detail. Until it has been developed, these reflections can only undermine Heidegger's genealogy, without yet succeeding in overthrowing it. But at least the first step has been taken in this direction. Anticipating the further course of our argument, it may be said that self-preservation, the core of the concept of subjectivity, is not equivalent to self-causation. To put it another way, that the subject is a cause does not mean it is self-causing.

Unconditioned Self-Legislation?

In any case, this first circularity is the presupposition of a second circularity supporting Heidegger's interpretation of the modern concept of freedom. Freedom concentrates the problem of limits and constraints, of what is binding for man, i.e. what presents itself to him as compelling and obligatory. Nonetheless, freedom is not merely the absence of constraints or fetters, a state of arbitrariness; positively, freedom implies a relation to necessity, hence to what is mandatory, obligatory. If man was earlier bound by the revelatory truth of theology, emancipation 'had' to be a casting away of all constraints in the form of a *self-binding*. "The subject

is 'subjective' in that the determination of beings and therewith of man himself no longer is confined within any limits, but is in any case unlimited." (pg. 171) Consequently, from Heidegger's perspective, 'self-legislation' in the broadest of senses, which includes both theoretical and practical freedom, falls together with the subject's claim to being the unconditioned, because self-grounding, fundament of truth. "To be free now means that man replaces a salvation-certainty that gives the measure of truth with a certainty by virtue of which and in which he becomes certain of himself as that being which posits itself for itself." (pg. 143) And because 'self-legislation' is equivalent to 'self-certainty' in the sense of a self-grounding fundament, freedom inevitably plays itself out in a teleology of "world-conquest and world-domination." (pg. 171) The double entailment we are being invited to accept is seductive: (1) only when modern man has recognized that his doing is *unconditioned*, can freedom take over the form of *self-legislation*; and (2) the modern understanding of freedom as self-legislation *necessitates* unconditioned world-control.

As the consideration of these two entailments shows, it is the first step, namely, the interpretation of human doing as unconditioned, which is perplexing and in need of further elucidation. With this, we pass over to the second of Heidegger's genealogies, i.e. the concept of 'presentation'. If the immediately preceding question is addressed to undermining Heidegger's genealogy of the subject, an exploration into his account of *cogitare* as the secularization of the *agere* of *actus purus* is now required. With which question (2) announced at the outset of this section can now be raised: *why must human doing be unconditioned? Why (if at all) does cogitare, in the very broad sense that includes the self-positing of purposes, imply the absence of all conditions and constraints on man, other than those he sets for himself?*

In a way, of course, undermining the genealogy of the subject immediately undermines the genealogy of presentation as well. For, in the economy of Heidegger's argument, the secularization of the Scholastic God into an unconditioned *sub-jectum* obtains its metaphysical proof in Descartes' alleged insight that thinking not only posits the self *with* objectivity, but posits it *in advance* of the latter, as its necessary and sufficient condition. "In each presenting, presenting man appears with [the presented]—not subsequently but in advance, insofar as he, the *pre-sentant*, brings the pre-sented to *himself*." (pg. 154) That all thinking is a *cogito me cogitare* proves that the subject is unconditioned. *But the difficulty is that concern with salvation, as outlined by Heidegger, does not suffice to explain why it had to be proved that the subject is unconditioned!* The scope and strength of the 'proof' (presentation: the unconditional character of human doing) is determined by what 'has' to be proved (subjectivity: the unconditioned fundament of the world); but did Descartes need to prove this at the outset of modern metaphysics? Nothing in Heidegger's

reference to salvation authorizes this alleged necessity, other than the assertion that, because man could not be unconditionally certain of his salvation in Scholastic philosophy, he had to search for it elsewhere. But then the circularity (and it is not hermeneutical) is patent: is the need for an unconditioned certainty of salvation what leads to the positing of man as the unconditioned *sub-jectum*, or is the premise that man had to take over the position of God in respect of the created world what determines in advance that the certainty of salvation had to be unconditional?

Anew, it will be objected that even if salvation does not necessitate that *cogitare* be a secularized *agere* of *actus purus*, Heidegger's genealogy of presentation evidences that this secularization *in fact* occurred. And once again, putting aside the breakdown of the explanatory value of the secularization theorem, the counter-objection must be that, *in fact*, careful consideration of the concept of self-preservation forecloses the interpretation of 'I think' as a secularization. To the contrary: the finitude of the subject is confirmed in the conditionedness of its activity. More sharply worded, 'I think' is not a *cogito me cogitare* in the sense propounded by Heidegger; subjectivity does not precede objectivity as its necessary and sufficient condition, nor does self-consciousness precede as its condition the consciousness of objects. The ground is thereby cleared for an appraisal of what it could mean that modernity defines freedom as self-legislation, and whether modern rationality necessitates a teleology of unconditioned world domination.

§23. Moving Beyond Secularization

The aim of §22 was to undermine Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality, concentrating on the plausibility of his effort to explain the 'secularizations' of subjectivity and presentation as a consequence of the Medieval concern with salvation. In both cases, I have suggested, the apparent plausibility of this explanation rests on an argumentative circularity. 'Undermine', I say, because §22 remains partial and incomplete in its critique until an alternative interpretation of the concepts of subjectivity, thinking and security has been worked out. To this effect, it does not suffice to abstractly 'oppose' other meanings to those outlined by Heidegger. To be sure, the methodological assumption that the meaning of the key concepts of modern rationality repeats the conceptual structure of Christian metaphysics must be rejected as untenable. But the manner and direction of Heidegger's enquiry, more than its results, is invaluable. For although secularization breaks down in its explanatory function, the core of his methodological assumption is nonetheless correct: *the meaning of the concepts of subjectivity, thinking, and security is determined by the continuities and discontinuities linking modern metaphysics to Christian*

philosophy. Making intelligible which continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold are relevant to the emergence of modern rationality—a *genealogical* survey—is the indispensable prolegomenon to elucidating the meaning of those concepts. Consequently, the positive elaboration of the latter will be the outcome of a concrete genealogy/analysis of the *cogito* that disproves the alleged usurpation of self-causation. This does not mean, however, that it is either necessary or possible to reject the content of Heidegger's analyses out of hand. To the contrary, I am of the opinion that his diagnosis of modern rationality is fundamentally correct in several, decisively important aspects. The task of this and the following sections is to cull out these aspects, ridding them of their insertion within the framework of the secularization theorem, to examine how they might place us on the track of an alternative genealogy and interpretation of modern rationality.

Intransitive Conservation Interpreted as Self-Causation

The aspect to be touched on here takes its point of departure in signaling a detail of the lapidary formula "Presenting is a securing" which has been neglected hitherto, namely, a certain incongruity in the treatment of the two terms. Whereas Heidegger imputes the genesis of the first of these, i.e. modern rationality, to the secularization of the unconditioned *agere* of an *actus purus*, the secularization of salvation-certainty is held to be responsible for modernity's entelechy. On the one hand, by way of the *ego cogito cogitata*, modern metaphysics would have reproduced the structural relation connecting the creator to the world it creates: 'presenting'. On the other, in view of the telos of modern rationality, the ego does not supplant God, but conserves as its own what was already mankind's condition in Christian philosophy, namely, a *purpose* (certainty of salvation), a *path* towards the purpose (self-renunciation), and purposive *movement* along the path (history of salvation): securing. In emancipation from theology to modernity, each of these elements is conserved under a new guise, respectively, self-certainty, method, and progress. In each of these three permutations, the cogito principle seems to repeat the eschatological pattern which was already mankind's lot in Scholastic philosophy. Consequently, whereas the concept of modern rationality, resumed in that of 'presentation' (*Vorstellung*), would have effected the usurpation of the position reserved for *God* in Scholastic metaphysics, the entelechy inherent to the cogito, condensed in 'securing' (*Sicherstellen*), continues, by other means, what was already the destination of *human being* in that system. The incongruity, then, consists in that a human problem at the end of the Middle Ages would have motivated a superhuman response. But wouldn't precisely a *human* response have been

a more plausible solution, given the incommensurability between God and man in theology? *Certainly, but only if the nature of the problem itself has been formulated in terms that allows of a human response.* In my opinion, the basic flaw in Heidegger's genealogy would be not so much the superhuman response that he forces modern rationality to take on itself, but that he formulates the problem in such a way that it can *only* be resolved in this way.

Let me restate this insight in another way. Heidegger's thesis is that "As *actus purus* God is the pure reality and therewith the causality of all the real, i.e. the source and the abode of salvation, that guarantees eternal existence as blessedness. Man can never become nor be unconditionally certain of this salvation from and of himself."⁵ We have already indicated that the need for an 'unconditional' certainty of salvation has not been explained, but remains the self-evident and unsubstantiated premise without which the secularization of the self-causing cause of the world and of its peculiar causal working cannot be explained. But rather than the question *why* the claim to an unconditional certainty needed to be formulated in the first place, it is the concept of *salvation* which Heidegger employs, to which I now want to draw attention. Because if, in response to the difficulty I have noted, one waters down, as it were, the acuteness of the problem posed by salvation, such that it no longer is 'unconditional' certainty that man requires, then why it was at all necessary to break out of the Middle Ages cannot be explained by reference to salvation. Indeed, this watered down version of salvation certainty poses a dilemma for Heidegger's genealogy: either the relative uncertainty of salvation creates the need to overcome theology—but then this at its very *beginning* and not at its end, or it proves tolerable and bearable for man, and does not require 'emancipation' from theology. This casts doubt on whether salvation can *at all* have the catalyzing function Heidegger assigns it. The following question imposes itself on us: is self-certainty to be interpreted as a secularized certainty of *salvation*? In other words, is it actually the medieval concern with salvation which underlies the need for emancipation and the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity? Or does the latter draw its meaning from another, quite different problem in Scholastic metaphysics?

Contingency

Now, as the earlier cited passage indicates, salvation is taken to mean "eternal existence as blessedness." Not the created being as a created being, but only God, "the causality of all the real", can guarantee eternal existence. That is to say, *certainty is the guarantee of permanent existence.*

5. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 423.

Whereas *actus purus*, the being that cannot not be, “does not know the situation of possibility, because it would still not be something in that situation”, the created being’s relation to its own reality is otherwise: “in each not-yet lies a lack of being, inasmuch as the latter is distinguished by permanence (*Beständigkeit*).” (pg. 415) Absolute certainty, then, must mean overcoming the ‘lack of being’ (*Mangel des Seins*) marking out the existent as an ‘ex-sistent’, i.e. as a being that has its cause of being outside itself. In other words, with the exception of God, *the existent is not self-sustaining*. The creation’s lack of being means that, from and of itself, it is incapable of “overcoming nothingness”, the *nihil*. (pg. 418) What Heidegger calls here a ‘lack of being’ has its proper concept in Scholastic metaphysics, namely, *contingency*. The contingency of created beings requires their conservation in existence by God. Otherwise stated, to the concept of created being belongs its *transitive* conservation, its conservation from the *nihil* by a being other than itself and which cannot not be: *causa sui*. This much is correct. But its consequence is that *human contingency, not salvation, is the problem to which (unconditioned) security would be a response*. That against which man needs to be secured is the abyss of the *nihil*; ‘eternal bliss’ has no say here.

Moreover, and here we tie up with the preceding criticism of secularization, as soon as contingency is taken up in the a priori framework of an ‘either/or’ scenario, as a ‘struggle’ between God and man, a single possibility is open to mankind at the inception of the modern age. Given unconditioned certainty in the manner of a guarantee of existence, either God or human-being itself can function as man’s ultimate guarantor. In other words, the only way to overcome the insecurity deriving from the *nihil* would consist in the interpretation of the *ego cogito* as a *causa sui*. *Ego me cogitare*: “Man knows himself unconditionally certain as that being whose being is most certain...” We arrive here at the very kernel of Heidegger’s thesis concerning modern rationality: in the epochal passage leading from God to the subject, *transitive* conservation is overcome by *intransitive* conservation (*self-conservation*), where the latter is understood to mean one and the same thing as *self-causation*. In the cogito principle, man would have “overcome nothingness (i.e. the lack of reality)” that was his lot in Scholastic metaphysics. The hiatus separating the human from divine reality can only be resolved by a struggle wherein man renounces to his specific status in theology. With this, Heidegger in effect argues (1) that *only* a claim to unconditioned self-certainty suffices for mankind at the inception of the modern age, and (2) that making good this claim entailed taking over God’s position in respect of the existent, human-being included, a take-over which would have been assured metaphysically with the insight that *ego cogito* is always and in advance an *ego me cogitare*. These two theses are, of course, determinative for Heidegger’s interpretation of the modern concept of freedom.

Retgression to History's Commencement, Rather than Eschatological Progression

We shall later show, both in respect of Descartes and of Kant, what fundamental distortions of the concept of intransitive conservation were required to push the secularization theorem through to its end. We can provisionally content ourselves with noting a further problem that contingency creates for the equation "presenting is a securing." As the *eschaton* that takes place in the *future*, at the end of history and as its completion, it is obvious why salvation would have been the most attractive candidate to which the secularization theorem could turn in its attempt to both posit an immanent teleology for modern rationality and to explain the sense and the direction of its movement (self-empowerment). But it is apparent that contingency, the concept to which the thesis of an unconditioned self-certainty effectively recurs, regards the *past*, not the future. Indeed, as Heidegger's reference to permanence in being (*Beständigkeit*) attests, the transitive conservation of created being refers to a past act of creation that is continuously updated by divine concursion. Instead of continuing 'by other means' the forward-looking orientation provided by eschatological salvation, Heidegger's secularization of contingency has the paradoxical effect of turning modern man's gaze *backward*, to the guarantee of his existence and of the world. This orientation towards the past becomes visible in his interpretation of thinking as 'pre-sentation'. At each turn, the subject precedes, is earlier than objectivity. As shall be evidenced in Chapter 8, only when the passage to modern rationality is *not* interpreted as the abolition of human contingency, but as its continuation, does the future-orientedness of modern rationality become intelligible. Succinctly, *the modern solution to the problem of contingency unfolds a novel concept and experience of time*, the specificity of which cannot be elucidated either by reference to eschatology or as the secularization of self-causation.

A crucial implication follows from undermining the interpretation of the immanent teleology of modern rationality that takes its guide from the secularization theorem: the characterization of security as the creation and maintenance of the conditions necessary for the unfolding of self-posed purposes can neither be reduced to a secularized salvation-story, nor does it necessitate a claim to unconditionality in the sense suggested by Heidegger. Welfare and security in the welfare state are not merely the continuation, by other means, of the medieval concern with eternal bliss. This opens up the possibility that, instead of being the expression of self-empowerment, the modern concern with security could be a response to the finitude of human being which reaches philosophical conceptualization in the cogito principle. In other words, *not in overcoming the sharpened awareness of human finitude at the end of the Middle Ages*,

but in dealing with it in a novel manner, would define the meaning of security at the outset of the modern era. What this could mean shall be worked out in a concrete manner in §31.

§24. Divine Omnipotence and the Scholastic Modalization of Being

The preliminary undermining of Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem accomplished in §22 raises the question concerning those aspects of his genealogy that can be recuperated in view of an alternative interpretation of modern rationality. Taking the formula "Presenting is a securing" as its leading thread, §23 associates the problem of security with contingency instead of with salvation. Having canvassed the second term of this formula, we can now turn to its first term, the center of gravity of Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality. The grave objection it levels against modernity focuses on the concept of *production* that would have been inaugurated with the Cartesian cogito. "The essential turn of truth to the certainty of a presentation is determined by the essence of being as *actus purus*. Therefore, the world of Christian faith remains determinant in manifold ways for the organization and care of the real (for culture), but also for the interpretation of the real in what regards its reality (for modern metaphysics)."⁶ That is to say, the interpretation of the human relation to reality unfolded by modern metaphysics promotes, by way of secularization, the theological concept of reality. In a word, the *cogitatum* is the *product* that finds its necessary and sufficient condition of possibility in the *ego cogitare*. Conversely, and this is the burden of Heidegger's critique, the Cartesian cogito introduces the novel interpretation of human activity as *unconditioned production*. Even if not all later philosophy is Cartesianism, modern metaphysics, up to and including Nietzsche, remains Cartesian insofar as it continuously reproduces this peculiar determination of human activity. "Modern man appears... as he who, in all relations to everything that is, *therewith also to himself*, stands up as the self-asserting producer, and who directs this uprising towards an unconditioned [world] domination."⁷ Unconditioned self-empowerment, the hidden spring governing the principal manifestations of modernity, rests on the novel self-interpretation of man, gained at the dawn of the era, as the unconditioned producer of reality. One notices the connection that is being made: because the concept of production pursuant to *ego cogitare* would necessitate *unconditionality*, the unmasking of the latter as the secularization of the *agere* of *actus purus* also requires rejecting the recognition of an ontological productivity in

6. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", *Nietzsche*, II, pgs. 426-427.

7. "Wozu Dichter?", in *Holzwege*, pg. 285 (My italics)

human doing. More succinctly: if production is always unconditioned production, then the concept of a productive relation to reality must be rooted out as illegitimate.

Agere and the Modern Concept of Production

With this, we at last come to stand on familiar ground. At the heart of the problem concerning the meaning of *cogitare*, in its relation to the Scholastic *agere*, lies the modern determination of human doing as a 'making', hence of modern rationality as a specific interpretation of the human relation to reality. *The relation between the ego cogito and its cogitata concentrates the effort of modern metaphysics to think through the concept of reality as the made of a human making.* In other words, the cogito principle raises to philosophical concepts the productive concept of reality governing modern theory, technique, and practice. Everything turns, then, on securing an adequate comprehension of the concept of production: does the cogito principle countenance the Heideggerian interpretation, such that intrinsic to *ego cogitare* belongs the claim to production as *self-production*? If not, then (1) what concept of 'production' does 'I think' entail, and what meaning can be granted the self-positing taking place in the *cogito sum*? And (2), what meaning accrues to the *cogitatum* as the 'product' of the *ego cogitare*?

In any case, it must be conceded to Heidegger that, beyond all distortions introduced by the employment of the secularization theorem, his appraisal of the inception of modern rationality is fundamentally correct in at least three crucial aspects:

(1) The first concerns the reference-point of the modern concept of production. It must be acknowledged that the *agere* of the Scholastic *actus purus* is determinant for the novel interpretation of 'making' at the outset of the modern era. In other words, 'making' denotes *causality*, even if not *self-causation*. In effect, the 'bringing into being' constitutive for modern technique and practice is determined by what precedes it in Christian philosophy, not by the 'bringing into being' which Greek thinking associated with the term *techne*. But what is the relevant meaning of 'determined' here? This is the decisive question. In lieu of the secularization theorem's a priori prescription that the cogito must needs reproduce the unconditioned *agere* of *actus purus*, what could it mean that Christian philosophy 'determines' the productive concept of reality unfolded in theory, technique, and practice in the modern era? This question is the key of an ontological *causality* investigation in respect of the cogito, i.e. of the causality of the ego on the world.

(2) Although incorrectly presented as a question of salvation, the second point that must be granted to Heidegger is the determinant function of

human contingency in Scholastic metaphysics for what was to follow as the cogito principle. But, as in the previous point, at issue here is the *sense* which 'determinant' possesses in giving account of the modern reception of contingency. Does self-preservation fall together, as Heidegger asserts, with self-causation? If not, how are the *continuities* leading over the epochal threshold to be understood? And, on the other hand, in what way does it make sense to speak about modernity as the *Neu-zeit*, not merely the secularized repetition of the Middle Ages? What, in other words, is authentically modern in the cogito principle, hence *discontinuous* with what went before it? In particular, what pivotal function could be assigned to human contingency, such that it renders intelligible the sense of these epochal continuities and discontinuities?

(3) Closely bound up with these two points, it must be ceded to Heidegger that the Scholastic concept of God is determinant for the *substantiality* of the subject. With the Christian reception of antiquity, "the subjectum henceforth becomes the name that names both the subject in the subject-object relation and the subject in the subject-predicate relation."⁸ But as the exploration into the modern reception of contingency will make clear, this does not imply accepting that the subject is the secularized prolongation of the self-causing cause of the world. Nor does it mean that because a secularized *summum ens*, *summum verum* and *summum bonum* are the (secularized) attributes of the subject. *But it does suggest that the predicates of truth and goodness are activated through the substance.* The good and the true are the real; but, for modernity, the real (objectivity) is a product of the subject's activity. The *modern* convertibility of the Scholastic 'transcendentals'—*unum, bonum et verum convertuntur*—ultimately resides in the recognition that the real is the realized of a realizing activity, the *factum* of a human *facere*. This problem is the heart of an ontological *substantial* investigation into the cogito principle, i.e. of the ego as the substance activating the predicates of the real.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to working out the first and second of these aspects more fully. The third is discussed in Part III of this book. In successively sketching out the ontological determination of divine power as a 'making', and the modern reception of the Scholastic modalization of possible-being and existent-being, §§24 and 25 deal with (1). For its part, §26 addresses (2) by situating the problem of contingency in the framework of Hans Blumenberg's 'reoccupation theorem'. Finally, §27 ties together the strands of thinking developed under (1) and (2), arguing that the determination of rationality as synthetic production is itself the modern response to the Scholastic problem of human contingency.

8. "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", pg. 431.

Production and Reproduction

The incommensurability of the relation between *dynamis* and *energeia* enacted in *techne*, on the one hand, and the relation between the actual and the possible in modern technique and practice, on the other, centers in the changed ontological status of the existent, which, in modern rationality, has been levelled down to a non-binding fact. Only by reference to this shift can one understand the transposition of 'making' into a *causa formalis*, which Aristotle had initially interpreted as a *causa efficiens*. This shift has its roots in Scholastic philosophy's three-way distinction between possible-, existent-, and necessary-being. Consequently, the investigation into the modern concept of production as *synthesis* is closely bound up with the question concerning the modalization of being gained in Scholastic metaphysics. A specific aspect of this vast philosophical *parcours*⁹ interests us here, namely, exhibiting the internal connection between the modalization of being achieved by Scholastic philosophy and the ontological determination of divine power as a 'making'. Only then do the continuities and discontinuities in the concept of production which lead from the *agere* of *actus purus* to *ego cogitare* become visible. The central insights I shall examine to this effect are contained in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II 'Creation', and Part I, Question 25 of the *Summa Theologiae*: 'God's power'.¹⁰ The resemblance of the theme announced in the titles of these texts to the problem of human power and self-empowerment in the modern era is not coincidental; in their thoroughgoing reflection on the concept of divine power, they contribute to revealing the changed set of presuppositions guiding the cogito's reception of the Scholastic distinction between possible-being and existent-being.

In his pioneering work consacrated to the history of the concept of possibility in ancient and Christian philosophy, August Faust resumes Aquinas's contribution to the Scholastic development of the *possibile logicum* noting that "by means of the development of a concept of possibility that has rid itself of the entire doctrine of potentiality, the strict Aristotelian dependency of logic (in particular the doctrine of judgment) on ontology is given up, and the first step taken toward a novel and autonomous logic."¹¹ While correct in its evaluation of the originality of medieval thinking over against antiquity, the effort to disengage logic from any trace of ontology is comprehensible, coming as it does from a disciple of the neokantian Heinrich Rickert. For the author of *Der Möglichkeits-*

9. For the emergence and development of this problem, see August Faust, *Der Möglichkeitsgedanke*, Vol. 2, and Heinrich Barth, *Philosophie der Erscheinung. Eine Problemgeschichte* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1966), Vol. I, pgs. 326-390.

10. *Summa Theologiae* (London: Blackfriars, 1964); *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) Book II: Creation. These works are cited, respectively, as ST and SCG.

11. Faust, *Der Möglichkeitsgedanke*, Vol. II, pg. 216.

gedanke, “The system of transcendental philosophy is no longer the reproduction of an already existent original, e.g. a supposedly already objectively given structure of the world, but owes its peculiar construction to philosophical conceptual formation itself, such that one could speak here of a noological, rather than an ontological or cosmological systematic.”¹² Nevertheless, the very contrast of ‘production’ with ‘reproduction’, by which Faust attempts to purify transcendental philosophy of ontology, evidences that the modern concept of reality is the core of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and this in the manner of *an ontology of appearances*. We shall turn to an explicit reflection on transcendental philosophy in Part III; for the moment, it is necessary to show summarily how the ontological enquiry to which Aquinas submits the concept of power, brings into focus with unique sharpness the sense of the transformation leading over to setting-a-given-in-order and the modalization of being implied in modern technique and practice.

‘The Feasible or Possible’

In laying out the plan of the book, *SCG,II,5* announces the subject matter to be treated under the general heading of divine power: “the bringing forth of things into being.” The motif is not unfamiliar; it is none other than the thread giving account of the identity and difference in the characterization of *techne*, on the one hand, and of modern technique and practice, on the other. In both, ‘bringing into being’ receives its fundamental characterization as a ‘making’; nonetheless, examination of the relation between the made and the making reveals irreducible concepts of reality underlying *techne* and technique/practice. As what went before and was to follow it in the unfolding of Western ontology, a reflection on the concept of divine power places ‘bringing into being’ at the center of Christian philosophy. And, once again here, bringing into being receives its fundamental determination as a ‘making’ (*facere*) or ‘doing’ (*agere*). This immediately decides on the nature of an investigation into divine power, namely, its *ontological* character. The task of eliciting the ‘thingness’ of things, their specific reality- or being-character, finds its conceptual node in the clarification of *the relation between the made and the making*. Such is the problem-set of the concept of divine power: “since power implies relation to something else as having the character of a principle... it is evident that power is in truth attributed to God in relation to things made...” (*SCG,II,10*) Therewith, a first ontological foothold is gained, inasmuch as the thing is a thing *made*. What conditions must be met such that being can be made? And what fundamental modes of being does an

12. *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pg. 3.

investigation into making exhibit? Responding to these questions clears the ground for grasping the continuities and discontinuities leading over to modern rationality.

At his disposal, of course, Aquinas has the Aristotelian conception of substantial change, namely, the actualization of what exists in potentiality, hence a 'bringing into being' from something already in existence. This solution is clearly inadequate for a philosophical grounding of *creatio ex nihilo*. In a move characteristic for the Scholastic manner of approaching the problem of 'bringing into being', substantial change is held to be true as regards 'particular making' and 'particular being'. But, in its preeminent sense, *facere* is not related to a 'being *this*', e.g. a man or white, but to 'being as such', or as Aquinas also indicates, being 'universally' considered (*ens universaliter*). The decisive ontological question consists in securing a characterization of 'being as such', i.e. of being as *made*, there where the concept of making, hence of power, has been rid of the limitation that it operate on a preexistent matter.

Consequently, the most elemental structure of being finds its systematic topos, within the framework of Aquinas's thinking, in the question concerning divine *omnipotence*: what can God do? In other words, making, in its basic ontological determination as a 'bringing into being' *ex nihilo*, falls together with the question 'What can be made?', i.e. the ultimate conditions for the makeability of things. Not only is the fundamental modalization of being therewith introduced, namely, *makeable*-being (possibility) and *made*-being (existence), but it gains a radicality entirely foreign to the distinction between *dynamis* and *energeia*. Whereas the concept of making germane to divine power implies "the introduction of being entirely... out of the non-being which is nothing at all" (*ST*,1,45,1), the making of *techne* presupposes that "the ontologically possible is always placed somewhere within the totality of the world... the *dynamis* always and already has its place in the universe, it already exists in some manner, and it only needs to be transposed from one stage of being into another to become *energeia* on."¹³ Evidently, the Scholastic elaboration of the concept of 'making' has to be bound up with a new understanding of existence and possibility as soon as the *nihil* functions as the backdrop of 'bringing into being'.

What, then, can God do? Now, the ontological import of 'making' comes explicitly to the fore in the purely negative solution to the problem concerning divine omnipotence: "God is unable to do whatever is contrary to the nature of being as being, or of made being as made (*entis in quantum est ens, vel facti entis in quantum est factum*)..." (*SCG*,II,25) But what *positively* characterizes made-being as made? The response to this question also delivers the general concept of possibility: "Whatever does not involve

13. Faust, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pgs. 67-68.

a contradiction is in that realm of the possible with respect to which God is called omnipotent.”¹⁴ Consequently, the basic structure of being as such comes to stand under a two-fold determination. On the one hand, viewed “in itself”, being entails non-contradiction; on the other hand, viewed in its relation to God, it appears as the makeable. Aquinas explicitly draws together these two determinations when noting that the self-contradictory is not subject to divine omnipotence, “not from any impotence of God, but because it simply does not have the nature of being feasible or possible (*factibilis neque possibilis*).” (*ST*,1,25,3) One cannot sufficiently emphasize the importance of this assimilation of the makeable and the possible for what was to come in modern rationality. And yet, inspected more closely, feasibility and possibility are not synonymous. Holding separate the elements of this apparent identity, and precisely as the elements that *jointly* determine being as being, is of importance. Firstly, possibility regards *non-contradiction* as the minimal condition that must be met by being as such, such that what implies contradiction falls outside the domain of possible-being. Hence, the very meaning of being implies rationality, *logos*, a rationality that is grounded in the non-contradictory content (logical possibility) of individual things and ultimately of the world.¹⁵ Secondly, feasibility refers to *relationality*, namely, the relation between an effect and its cause or principle: “We justify the meaning of power in God... as the principle of an effect.” (*ST*,1,25,1) As was the case with *techne*, also here making is a cause of bringing into being; but the causality involved in divine power is incommensurable with that of *techne* (and *physis*). For the latter, the product owes nothing of its being (the substantial unity of form and matter) to the poetic production as such; for the former, made-being is dependent on the making in a two-fold manner. This two-fold dependency delivers the essential features of the second mode of being, namely made- or *existent*-being.

Indeed, existence raises to concepts the recognition that made-being stands in a double relation of dependency to *actus purus*. (1) On the one hand, *that* there is a world, rather than nothing, is contingent. “Everything that can be and not-be has a cause; for considered in itself it is indifferent to either, so that something else must exist which determines it to one.” (*SCG*,II,15) Divine power functions here as the *causa essendi*, the transcendent condition required for the bringing of something into existence (*esse*) from nothing, a condition which, due to its transcendent character, does not stand in a relation of continuity with contingent being. In turn, the

14. *ST*,1,25,3. And the question adds: “Whatever can have the nature of being falls within the range of things that are absolutely possible, and it is with respect to these that God is all-powerful.” See also *On the Power of God*, Book I, Q. 1, a. 3, trans. The English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952).

15. “The presupposition of the rational content of individual things is reason as such, understood as a transcendent principle: as the divine intellect that produces things in their logical possibility” H. Barth, *op. cit.*, pg. 381.

contingency of the *ens creatum* can be conceived from each of the two manners in which the cause of its being operates, namely, the making or bringing into being as such and the preserving in being. In effect, divine power is required not only to create, but also to conserve beings in existence. Contingency, then, serves to express the dependency of made-being on God for both its *creation* and its *preservation* (*conservatio in esse*) from nothingness.¹⁶ (2) On the other hand, made-being—the existent world—is dependent on its maker not only in *that* it is, but in *what* it is. The infinitude of divine power manifests itself in the assertion that “his effects are always less than his power” (*ST*,1,25,2). When coupled to non-contradiction as the sole condition of possible-being, this entails that the existent arrangement of the world is not necessary. ‘Made being as made’ expresses here the dependency of the ‘whatness’ of the world on its creator. This *formal* dependency manifests itself in that, subject to the condition of non-contradiction, God could have made other worlds than that which he has effectively made. Hence, ‘making’ not only implies bringing into being in the radical sense of substituting *esse* for *nihil*, but also bestowing the world with a determinate order. “There is no reason why something should not be within divine power which God does not will, and which is no part of the present order he has established...” (*ST*,1,25,5) In this second meaning, then, dependency attaches to the given *world-order*; it regards the awareness that, from the perspective of divine power, the existent order is ‘merely’ *one* of the possible ways of ordering the world, hence that *other* orders were possible. “Though the present course of things is prescribed by the things that now exist it does not enclose God’s wisdom and power. Granted that no other arrangement would be right and appropriate to things as they exist at present, nevertheless God could make other things and under another constitution.” (*ST*,1,25,5) In this way, *making acquires the sense of a setting-in-order for which neither the form, nor the end, nor the matter are already at hand prior to the ordering*. To be sure, and this is fundamental, it is in respect of human being and its relation to the world that “the present course of things is prescribed by the things that now exist.” In other words, the full range of eidetic possibilities open to God at the moment of the creation of the world goes together with the latter’s binding character for man.¹⁷ Thus, from a human perspective, the *past* tense is not coincidental

16. H. Blumenberg notes that “Contingency expresses the ontic constitution of a world created from nothing and destined to disappearance, a world conserved in being only through the divine will, [a world] which is measured against the idea of an unconditioned and necessary being.” Hans Blumenberg, “Kontingenz”, in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1959), Vol. III, pg. 1794.

17. “Human knowledge has its measure in its object; it is related to the latter as something that stands autonomously over against it. Divine knowledge, to the contrary, is in a simple sense the measure (*mensura*) of everything that He knows.” Heinrich Barth, *op. cit.*, pg. 381.

when referring to possibility: from the *terminus ad quem*, a contingent world with its given order, i.e. 'real' possibility, thinking *regresses* to its *terminus a quo*, 'absolute' or logical possibility, but not vice-versa.

§25. The Modern Inversion of the Relation Between Existent and Possible-Being

With this, a vantage point is gained from which to present a general, although schematic, interpretation of the modern reception of the Scholastic modalization of being that does not simply conceive of this epochal transition as a secularization. In giving account of the modern concept of rationality, the essential consists in recognizing that divine power functions as a *boundary concept* by contrast to which modernity comes to interpret man's relation to the existent world. The essence of the transition can be resumed in the following way: synthesis, the modern concept of reason, is determined by the *agere* of *actus purus* in a two-fold manner: *negatively, as non-creative, that is to say, conditioned in its activity by a pre-given material; positively, as productive, i.e. supplying the form (order) of the realized.*

A philosophical reflection on 'bringing into being' that takes its cue from divine omnipotence, Christian philosophy achieves an understanding of 'making' and of the modalization of being irreducible to those apposite to *techné*. The concept of being in general encloses that of non-contradiction, possible-being; in addition to this minimal condition, being as made, i.e. existent-being, denotes the radical dependency of the world on its creator as the cause *that* it is and *what* it is. In elaborating the concept of reality implied in the determination of modern technique and practice as a making, the concepts of possibility and existence came to the fore. In contrast with *dynamis* and *energeia*, the existent has forfeited its ontological primacy, such that, leveled down to the status of a fact, it functions as the condition for the technical and practical realization of the possible. Intimately bound up with this, moreover, goes a specific interpretation of temporality, according to which orientation in the present is given by the future, the open horizon of the not-yet-realized-but-realizable. These features are condensed in the formulation of modern rationality as a 'setting-a-given-in-order'. Here, 'given' functions in a two-fold manner, inasmuch as it indicates that a 'material' must be given, such that the technical and practical setting-in-order of the world can take place, but also that the existent world has lost its persuasive hold over man, to become a non-binding fact.

By contrast with divine power and the Scholastic modalization of being, three key differences are visible. Firstly, the natural and social world has lost its contingent character for modernity. It is no longer conceived as an

ens creatum that must be conserved in being from the *nihil* by divine concursion. But, secondly, that the world must be *given*, such that synthesis can come about, evidences the dependency of man on a world that he does not create from nothing, and which concretely conditions his activity. In contrast with the concept of unconditioned production definitive for divine omnipotence in Scholastic metaphysics—creation, human power comes to be conceptualized as synthetic, hence *conditioned*, production. A third point refers to an aspect of Heidegger's secularization theorem which has been neglected thus far. Indeed, the *cogitatum* cannot be reduced to a product in the sense of a 'presented of a presenting' that finds its necessary and sufficient condition of possibility in the *ego cogitare*, but an achievement to which the ego stands in an *immanent* relation. The immanence of the *ego cogito* (subjectivity) to its *cogitata* (objectivity) forecloses reproducing the *transcendent* relation between the *summmum ens* and the *ens creatum*.

Dealing in a New Way With Facticity

This restriction of human making by comparison with the boundary concept of divine power goes hand in hand with a decisive similarity. Indeed, Christian philosophy had sharpened the awareness of the *facticity* of the world. In its conceptualization of the world as a *factum* that does not exhaust the scope of the possible, the margin is determined within which human 'making' could later function in modernity. In its properly Scholastic conception, facticity manifests itself in the recognition that the world could have been created in this or that manner; 'could have been' attests here to the insight that the present (and future) world-order is determined by its reference to the past as the domain of the possible. But there where the existent world is no longer a contingent *creatum* that owes its existence to a past act, the awareness of the facticity of the present (and of the past) world-order comes to be viewed in terms of *future* possibilities. The medieval comparison of the given world, 'the world as it is', with 'the world as it could have been', is replaced by modernity's comparison with 'the world as it can be'. The Scholastic recognition that the existent order of the world is not mandatory or necessary, inasmuch as other orders were possible, becomes, in the transformed set of assumptions guiding modernity, the incitation to its forthcoming technical and practical setting-in-order.

When technique discloses 'the world as it is or has been' as a 'fact of observation' without any necessary character of its own, or when practice reveals existent society as *bloße Existenz* (Habermas), with which is meant that the mere fact of a determinate arrangement of society does not, as such, yield any title of justification for its continued existence under that

form, modern rationality betrays its indebtedness to Christian metaphysics. The acute consciousness of the facticity of the world, as testified in both the *General Theory* and in *Das Kapital*, is not modern; what is thoroughly modern, however, is the manner in which facticity is *dealt* with, namely, in the epoch's elemental demand to a practical and technical setting-in-order of the given world. The critical gaze of the economist, of the engineer, or of the social theoretician, who demands that reason be given, responds to the awareness, prepared and progressively sharpened in the course of Scholastic philosophy, of the facticity the world. In the distancing that negates the binding character of the existent, modern critique remains faithful to, and repeats, what it has learned from the epoch which precedes it, even though the sense of the human relation to the world has been transformed.

In short, modernity *inverts* the direction of 'bringing into being' which the Scholastic reflection on divine omnipotence had summarized in the formula *factibilis neque possibilis*. *For a being to whom a material must be given as the condition of its productive activity, other worlds are possible (feasible) working out from the existent world.* Instead of regressing from real to logical possibility, as was required in a consideration of divine omnipotence, modern rationality recognizes that the essence of mankind's ontological productivity consists in *progressing* from logical to real possibility. The difference between Heidegger's employment of the secularization theorem, for the one, and the general interpretation of the inception of modern rationality emerging from the previous pages, for the other, can now be brought into sharper focus. Not the secularization of the *agere* of *actus purus*, but the changed understanding of the human relation to the existent world, first made possible by awareness of the latter's facticity, yields the key to the essential continuity and discontinuity going from unconditioned to synthetic production.

§26. Blumenberg: Reoccupation and the Passage from Transitive to Intransitive Conservation.

Now, §§22 and 23 scrutinize key aspects of Heidegger's genealogy in light of the methodological requirements to which the application of the secularization theorem is bound. Having shown that self-security cannot be consistently viewed as a secularized certainty of salvation, the full weight of the thesis concerning the teleology of self-empowerment inherent to modern rationality comes to bear squarely on the hypothesis of a secularized *causa sui*. But detailed inspection of Heidegger's argument reveals that it rests on an unfounded presupposition, namely, that given the need for an unconditioned guarantee of human existence, a radical disjunction emerges which could only be resolved by a 'struggle' wherein

either God or man himself provides said guarantee. *That* such an unconditioned guarantee was required is something that remains unquestioned and unquestionable, the indispensable a priori hypothesis in the absence of which the interpretation of *cogito me cogitare* as the self-causation of the subject loses its plausibility. Consequently, the formula “Presenting is a securing” derives its critical significance for modern rationality from the unsubstantiated presupposition that the *transitive* conservation of man by God in Scholastic metaphysics could only lead over to *intransitive* conservation interpreted as the secularization of the unconditioned *agere* of *actus purus*.

The determination of divine power as a doing (*agere*) or making (*facere*) is the object of closer examination in §24. With this we pick up, once again, the thread of thinking unfolded in Chapters 1 through 3, where it had been shown that although both *techne* and modern technique/practice define making as a bringing into being, this identity is accompanied by fundamentally different interpretations of the human relation to reality. These incommensurable ontologies find expression in different concepts of *mimesis*, of causality, and of the modalization of being. Conceding to Heidegger that the Scholastic concept of *facere* is determinant for the productive interpretation of modern rationality, §24 reviews the concept of ‘making’ apposite to divine power. When it has been freed of the limitation of a pre-existing matter (and forms), the problem concerning divine omnipotence—what can God do?—leads to a radical reflection on ‘being as being’, or as Aquinas also indicates, ‘made being as made’. Its outcome is the fundamental modalization of being as possible (non-contradiction) and existent (dependency).

Subsequently, §25 argues that the modern inversion of the Scholastic formula *possibilis neque factibilis* brings into focus the key continuities and discontinuities of the ontological determination of making as a bringing into being. The Middle Ages took its point of departure in the existent world (real possibility) to infer from it a multiplicity of feasible worlds (logical possibility) as its ultimate presupposition. Modern rationality, to the contrary, recognizes that working out from the existent world (logical possibility), other worlds are feasible (real possibility). But this inversion does not suggest a strict symmetry, whereby the interpretation of human making apposite to modern technique and practice would simply have substituted for divine power as the unconditioned production of reality. In its appropriation of the Scholastic equivalence ‘the possible or feasible’, the modern concept of synthesis encloses a two-fold determination of human making over against the boundary concept of divine omnipotence: negatively, as *non-creative*, i.e. conditioned by a pre-given material; positively, as *productive*, i.e. supplying the form (order) of the realized.

Can this transition be interpreted otherwise than as a metaphysical

'struggle' whereby man robs the Scholastic God of the position it had enjoyed in respect of the world? This question has its focal point in the modern reception of contingency.

Reoccupation instead of Secularization

Although not developed in response to this particular question, the genealogy of modern rationality proposed by H. Blumenberg in his important book *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966) is entirely pertinent to our endeavor. In its broadest lines, the book envisages developing and applying a theoretical framework to explain the continuities and discontinuities leading over epochal thresholds, in particular that of modernity. If, on the one hand, "History knows no repetitions of the same; 'renaissances' are its contradiction", radical discontinuity—incommensurability, on the other hand, is no less inimical to history.¹⁸ The problem of continuity and discontinuity comes to the foreground, albeit in an historiographically useless manner, in the highly general assertion that modernity is 'unthinkable without' Christianity. Blumenberg unfolds the problem of epochal transitions along two massive fronts. The first consists in a large-scale critique of the secularization theorem, in particular, its extended development in Karl Löwith's book *Meaning in History* and that explored by C. Schmidt under the general title of a 'Political Theology'. Indeed, also secularization claims to give account of sameness and difference in history, although limited, in its explanatory scope, to the passage from the Middle Ages to modernity. In the aftermath of this first destructive movement, Blumenberg works out an alternative theory, summarized in the category of 'reoccupation', which both overcomes the apories of secularization and attains a general explanatory potential which is not limited to the transition to modernity.

The critique of secularization encompasses methodological and substantive components. In its first aspect, Blumenberg's analyses focus on the methodological weaknesses and constraints to which secularization is bound in its explanation of change and identity across epochal thresholds. For the purposes of our own problem-set, it suffices to indicate that secularization "presuppose[s] the existence of constants in the history of ideas and thus [is] based upon a substantialistic ontology of history."¹⁹ Retrospectively, this sheds light on our own presentation of Heidegger's

18. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1986), pg. 596.

19. *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pg. 113. And further: "Constants bring a theoretical process to an end, where on different premises it might still be possible to inquire further... No a priori statement whether there are substantial constants in history can be made; all we can say is that the historian's epistemological situation cannot be optimized by the determination of such stable elementary historical quanta." (pg. 29)

employment of the secularization theorem. Indeed, it reveals that, at the decisive moment, questioning into the sense of the passage over to modernity ceases to the benefit of an a priori hypothesis concerning the necessity of a struggle between God and man for ownership of the attribute of self-causation. The 'either/or' scenario Heidegger would have us accept is an instance of what Blumenberg calls a substantial constant.

In any case, the detailed methodological examination to which Blumenberg submits the secularization theorem is not merely the historian's reflection on the consistency of his theoretical instruments; instead, it prepares and carries over into an assessment of the properly substantive aspect of secularization, namely, its *critical intention* in respect of the modern age. Indeed, the virulence of the latter is determined from the very start by the attitude toward historical continuity and discontinuity implied in assertions of the form 'B is a secularized A'. By positing a historical (Christian) 'substance', i.e. the identical content of a concept, that is then transposed or converted into another (modern) function, the outcome of secularization can only be conceived as "a pseudomorph—in other words: an inauthentic manifestation—of its original reality." (pg. 18) Consequently, emancipation, the claim to discontinuity with the past which modernity poses for itself, turns into its opposite, namely, alienation from an origin that remains hidden to and continuously effectual in modern consciousness. The sort of continuity in history which the premise of substantial constants makes possible, only leaves room for the interpretation of discontinuity as an illusion concerning the meaning of the present, a distortion to which the self-proclaimed era of radical new beginnings would be acutely prone.²⁰ The substantive aspect of a critique of the secularization theorem consists, then, in recovering a measure of legitimacy for the modern age, namely, showing how, in spite of decisive continuities that link it with the past, modern rationality *is*, in no less decisive aspects, discontinuous with Christianity and not merely its unconscious prolongation by other means.

To carry through this enterprise, an explanatory framework alternative to secularization is required which, sidestepping the pitfalls of historical substantialism, also avoids the apories of historicism. To meet this double exigency, Blumenberg unveils his reoccupation theory, and in respect of which the identities and changes leading over to *modernity* are only a particular case. "What mainly occurred in the process that is interpreted as secularization... should be described not as the *transposition* of

20. "Worldly reason's consciousness of its own authenticity is [taken to be] a misleading veil over a reality that otherwise could not overlook its continuous historical descent from that upon which it denies its dependence... The category of secularization is meant to make it evident that the denial of historical dependence is motivated by an epochal self-interest; it presents the alleged break between modern rationality and its past as ideological." *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pgs. 24-25.

authentically theological contents into secularized alienation from their origin but as the *reoccupation* of answer positions that had become vacant and whose corresponding questions could not be eliminated.” (pg. 65) On the one hand, historical continuity is provided by the system of questions and problems that, organizing man’s interpretation of the world and of himself, are carried over from one epoch into the next. Consequently, not the content of or solution to the problems, but the problems themselves, which Blumenberg also calls ‘functions’ or ‘positions’, determine historical identity. On the other hand, the new answers worked out by the following era for the problems it inherits, afford historical discontinuity. If a change of epoch is accompanied by the generalized loss of plausibility and acceptance of the answers available to the system of questions concerning man and his interpretation of the world, these questions themselves are bequeathed to the next era which answers them in its own way. “In history the price we pay for our great critical freedom in regard to the answers is the nonnegotiability of the questions.” (pg. 69)

Self-Preservation: The Principle of Modern Rationality

In view of our own problem-set, we need not concern ourselves here with the application of this insight in the direction of the Christian reception of antiquity, an historical process which possesses a structure analogous to the reoccupation of theology by modern philosophy. Nor, for that matter, is it necessary to review the different examples Blumenberg marshalls in support of the reoccupation of answer positions across the epochal threshold of modernity. Instead, it is important to note that, over against secularization, the reoccupation theorem provides an alternative framework for interpreting the inception of modern rationality. In lieu of the continuation of a Scholastic ‘constant’ in alienation from its origin, it suggests that *modern rationality is the new answer to a problem that first arose in the Middle Ages*. The legitimacy of the modern era, in other words, consists in the novel manner in which it would have addressed this problem, once the sort of solution provided by the system of Christian theology had proved untenable. “The Middle Ages left behind a question of which antiquity was unaware... In the face of the entire stock of ideas which it had received from ancient metaphysics, the Middle Ages forced itself to conceive of nothing, or the void (*nihil*), almost as the normal metaphysical state of affairs and to think of the creation from nothing as a miracle continually effected against this normality.”²¹ The Scholastic answer to this problem focuses on the doctrines of continual creation and

21. Hans Blumenberg, “Self-Preservation and Inertia: On the Constitution of Modern Rationality”, in *Contemporary German Philosophy*, eds. D.E. Christensen et. al. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), Vol. 3, pg. 218.

divine concursion: "The answer was the extravagant claim of a constant, inward, and most radical dependence of the world on God." (pg. 218) Blumenberg has meticulously documented the progressive sharpening of the concept of contingency in late Scholasticism to the benefit of what he has termed 'theological absolutism', wherein nominalism's magnification of God's *potentia absoluta* goes hand in hand with the reduction of man to powerlessness in respect of a world no longer dependable or enduring in its actuality. In its final and critical phase, Scholastic contingency brings about the disappearance of a world-order for man.²² In the face of the extreme pressure to which contingency submits man's interpretation of himself and of his relation to the world, the Scholastic solution of transitive conservation is no longer either plausible or acceptable. Modern rationality has to be understood, according to the framework provided by the reoccupation theory, as a 'breaking out' from the challenge posed by theological absolutism: "The provocation of the *transcendent* absolute passes over at the point of its most extreme radicalization into the uncovering of the immanent absolute": *cogito ergo sum*. (pg. 178)

If we compare this process with Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality, a key similarity comes into view. Correctly, Heidegger situates the background problem giving rise to modern rationality in the 'lack of being' (contingency) accruing to the *ens creatum*. As noted earlier, a continuous *transitive* conservation by *actus purus* is required to avoid the relapse of man and the world into nothingness. But bound by the a priori stipulation of an 'either/or' scenario, Heidegger must then postulate that the only possible issue for man from the abyss of contingency was outright expropriation of the divine attribute of self-causation. That is to say, transitive conservation is overcome by intransitive or *self-conservation*, interpreted as self-causation: *causa sui = conservatio sui*. More closely considered, however, it is clear that this solution to the problem is tantamount to *abolishing* it as a problem. If the modern subject is a secularized *causa sui*, then the question which gave rise to modern rationality has been dissolved, rather than resolved. Paradoxically, the *maximization* of the modern solution, as propounded by Heidegger, has the effect of *minimizing* the acuity of the problem with which theology confronts man. If man can become 'God on earth', then contingency is not so serious a matter, after all.

The reoccupation theorem, to the contrary, suggests that the *continuity* of the problem of the *nihil*, and not its simple abolition, is decisive for modern rationality. "The new answer to the question (which itself had since been radicalized) had to be even more radical in the sense of assuring

22. "The world as the pure performance of reified omnipotence, as a demonstration of the unlimited sovereignty of a will to which no questions can be addressed—this eradication even of the right to perceive a problem meant that, at least for man, the world no longer possessed an accessible order." *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pg. 171.

its rationality.”²³ *Transitive* conservation, the answer of theology to the problem it had created, is reoccupied in modern rationality by *intransitive* conservation or self-preservation. At face value, it would seem, the outcome of reoccupation is the same as for secularization. In fact, this new answer leads in precisely the *opposite* direction to that suggested by Heidegger. For an era that inherits in all its acuteness the problem of contingency with which man is confronted at the end of the Middle Ages, self-preservation *cannot* be interpreted as self-causation. To the contrary, modern rationality *retains*, takes over once again, the problem of the *nihil*, albeit to answer its challenge in a new manner. In other words, self-preservation appears as the modern response to the question: what alternatives remain open to man, given his radical finitude? Only in this way does one gain access to the continuity and discontinuity of modern rationality with what goes before it. Indeed, as Blumenberg notes, self-preservation “is not only a new rational principle among others, but the principle of modern rationality itself.”²⁴

§27. The Possible or Thinkable

Heidegger’s interpretation of the inception of modern rationality was correct on two counts, namely, (1) the determinative function of the *agere* of *actus purus* for the modern concept of production, and (2) the determinative function of human contingency for an understanding of the continuities and discontinuities leading across the epochal threshold of modernity. Granting the correctness of these insights does not, however, entail accepting the meaning Heidegger ascribes to them. The foregoing sections essay developing these two insights in a direction different to that prescribed by the secularization theorem. I have argued in respect of (1) that the synthetic interpretation of modern rationality encloses a two-fold determination in respect of *actus purus*: negatively, as non-creative; positively, as productive. And in respect of (2) it was held that contingency is retained, instead of abolished, in the passage to the cogito principle, hence that self-preservation is irreducible to self-causation. Only after this has been grasped can one begin to understand the significance of the cogito principle for the modern era. Now, whereas the response to the secularization theorem unfolded along the first of these strands of thinking remains within the general conceptualization of reason unfolded in the course of Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the second line of development introduces a

23. “Self-preservation and Inertia”, pg. 218.

24. *Op. cit.*, pg. 211. See, further, the set of essays collected under the general title *Subjectivität und Selbsterhaltung: Beiträge zur Diagnose der Moderne*, ed. Hans Ebeling (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), and Martin Moors, “Moderne rationaliteit en metafysische godsproblematiek”, in *Onze Alma Mater*, Leuven, 1989, 2, pgs. 169-183.

new concept as a result of Blumenberg's genealogy of modern rationality, namely, self-preservation. The entirety of Part III shall be consecrated to the consideration of this concept, and in the understanding that self-preservation is the cogito principle. But before proceeding to its more detailed analysis, it is first necessary to interconnect *conservatio sui* to our earlier presentation of the concept of modern rationality as a setting-a-given-in-order. The thesis to be advanced in the course of this section reads as follows: *the determination of reason as synthetic production is itself the modern response to the Scholastic problem of human contingency, i.e. self-preservation.* To be sure, this general formulation still lacks perspicuity, and requires further consideration. Now, the transformation in the concept of 'making' that goes from *creatio ex nihilo* to synthesis hinges, as we have seen, on the *inversion* of the relation between possible-being and existent-being summarized in the Scholastic formula *factibilis neque possibilis*. Consequently, the task of this concluding section is to work out in greater detail how the modern inversion of this formula coincides with what Blumenberg has called the reoccupation of transitive by intransitive conservation.

Inner Possibility

To this effect, a passage from Kant's essay "The Only Possible Argument for a Demonstration of the Existence of God" is particularly instructive.²⁵ To be sure, the first exhaustive development of the concept of self-preservation in Kant is to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nonetheless, pending the extensive treatment of the former in Part III of this book, a preliminary reconnaissance into this pre-critical essay is useful for developing the guiding thesis of this section. For the one, the essay explicitly deals with the modern understanding of the relation between existence and possibility. For the other, whilst making patent to what an extent the problem of the *nihil* remains active in and determinative for modern man's self-interpretation, it reveals at the same time how modern rationality affords a novel answer to this problem, an answer that is irreducible to the Scholastic solution of transitive conservation.

The essential for our purposes is concentrated in the second reflection of the essay, titled "On Inner Possibility Insofar as it Presupposes Existence." In a sense, this caption already summarizes the changed set of presuppositions under which modern rationality comes to view the relation between possibility and existence. Here, Kant is concerned with adumbrating the concept of inner possibility, in respect of which he proposes a distinction between its real (or material), and logical (or formal)

25. I am grateful to Martin Moors for having brought this passage to my attention.

aspects. A right (angle) triangle, for example, is in itself something possible, in which it is necessary to separate the material moment or “data”, i.e. the triangle and the right angle, from the formal moment, namely, the logical non-contradiction implied in the relation of the two terms.²⁶ A square triangle, Kant observes, is formally or logically impossible due to the principle of non-contradiction, but the material or data *given* to thought—the ‘square’ and the ‘triangle’—are already something in themselves, *exist*, hence also are thinkable or possible. A first conclusion can be derived from these considerations: *what exists must also be possible*. At face value, this formula remains consistent with the findings of the Scholastic modalization of being. But closer consideration shows to what an extent the development of the concept of ‘inner possibility’ is already foreign to the latter. Indeed, on the basis of the distinction between the two elements of inner possibility, Kant not only draws the conclusion that possibility ceases in the event of contradiction (logical impossibility), but also and even most radically in the absence of a material, “for then nothing thinkable is given, yet everything possible is what can be thought...” (A 18) In other words, if all existence is removed, that is, if there is no material to be thought (according to the principle of non-contradiction), then possibility also is removed. Consequently, a second conclusion can be drawn: *possibility presupposes existence*. As this formulation evidences, *creatio ex nihilo* has ceased to function in respect of the determination of the concept of possibility. In its Scholastic conception, the *possibile logicum* precedes the (formal and material) act of creation. In a word, possibility precedes existence. In Kant’s pre-critical essay, inner possibility (or its contrary, logical impossibility) implies the existence of what can (cannot) be consistently *thought* according to the principle of non-contradiction. That is to say, the existent precedes the possible. By finding its referent in thinking, the concept of inner possibility makes clear that the Scholastic *possibile logicum* has been replaced with a consideration of the *human* relation to possibility.

But Kant immediately adds, in a telling remark, “There is no internal contradiction in the negation of all existence.” (A 19) Notice what is being asserted here: possibility presupposes existence, i.e. the possible presupposes “a something” (*ein Etwas*) given or posited in advance for thinking; but *that* a material (existence) be given is not necessary, i.e. is not implied in the concept of thinking. The modern echoes of the *nihil* and Scholastic contingency are unmistakable here. “To say: it does not exist

26. “I shall also call the latter [i.e. the formal] the logical in possibility, because the comparison of the predicate with its subject according to the rule of truth is nothing other than a logical relation; the something or what stands in this agreement will sometimes be called the real in possibility.” “*Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*”, Kant, *Werke*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), Vol. 2, A 17-18.

means the same as that it is absolutely nothing; and it would be manifestly self-contradictory to add, despite this, that it is possible.” (A 19)

Inner Possibility and Self-Preservation

If we now take up these observations, however brief, in the context of Blumenberg’s reoccupation theorem, the continuity and discontinuity of modern rationality with the Middle Ages can be elaborated in a preliminary way. Kant’s two-fold assertion (1) that a material must be *given* or posited (*gesetzt*) for thinking, and (2) that the negation of all existence (the *nihil*) involves no contradiction, *carries over* the Scholastic problem of contingency. In effect, the latter implied the continued *dependency* of the created being on God, given that the *nihil* is the ‘normal metaphysical situation’. This radical dependency of contingent being on its cause is reoccupied, in Kant’s pre-critical essay, by the insight that thinking *depends* on existence as its condition, a condition, moreover, which is *not* entailed by the concept of thinking itself. But instead of the Scholastic solution to the *nihil*—*transitive* conservation—a new solution begins to outline itself. In effect, instead of immediately searching back for and postulating the cause of the ‘positing’ or ‘giving’ of existence (*causa sui*), the center of gravity of Kant’s reflection on the concept of inner possibility shifts toward a novel determination of the concept of *thinking*, even though the latter is not the object of an explicit elaboration in this pre-critical essay.

The change of direction is subtle but of utmost consequence if one wants to understand the kind of answer modernity could provide for Scholastic contingency. *Cogito sum*, ‘I think, I exist’: for the one, there is no thinking without existence, hence thinking is *dependent*; for the other, thinking itself, not the cause of existence, becomes the privileged object of philosophical reflection. In the cited passages, of course, Kant employs the concept of thinking in its immediate sense of *judgment*, namely, the connection of subject and predicate in conformity with the principle of non-contradiction. But this is not yet the essential. The point is that if the possible presupposes existence, then, conversely, *to think is to combine a material (that must be given)*. Although Kant does not draw the conclusion in this essay, it is clear that the combinatory function of thinking in respect of a given material implies its determination as a *formal cause*. A concept of self-preservation that both takes over the Scholastic problem of contingency and resolves it in a novel manner now can be brought into sharp focus: *synthesis*.

Moreover, the connection between self-preservation and the modern inversion of the Scholastic formula *factibilis neque possibilis* comes into view. In its Scholastic interpretation, the possible was equivalent to the

feasible, where the ‘making’ of the latter has been assimilated to *creatio ex nihilo*. For this reason, the *possibile logicum* preceded existence. In Kant’s essay, to the contrary, the possible is assimilated to the thinkable, that is to say, a feasibility wherein ‘making’ depends on a given material—synthesis. For this reason, possibility presupposes existence. In a nutshell, the inversion of the formula *factibilis neque possibilis* takes place by transforming the meaning of its first term—‘making’, while leaving intact the meaning of possible-being—non-contradiction. To be sure, neither technique nor practice are the subject matter of Kant’s pre-critical essay; nonetheless, the relation between thinking and ‘inner possibility’ it unfolds already anticipates what was to be the technical and practical relation of the actual to the possible in the modern era. Indeed, albeit in an inarticulate and inchoate manner, ‘inner possibility’ already appears as the *terminus ad quem* of a ‘making’, the realizable of a realizing activity: real possibility. Whereas this novel determination of reason, as well as its sweeping implications for the modern era, still remains veiled to the author of “The Only Possible Argument for the Demonstration of the Existence of God”, it provides the insight that the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was relentlessly to push through to its end. It is nothing other than the cogito principle. In an expression the two words of which exactly reflect the continuity and discontinuity of modern rationality with what goes before it, the *Kritik* was to call the cogito principle *dependent spontaneity*.

§28. Enlightenment: The Self-Preservation of Reason

At the end of this second genealogy of modern rationality, an observation by Kant comes to mind. It is concealed in a footnote appended to the closing pages of the essay “What is Orienting Oneself in Thinking?” There, in a formulation that stands very close to the *sapere aude!* of another well-known essay, Kant indicates that Enlightenment is the maxim of always thinking for oneself. For, he adds, who serves himself of his own reason does nothing other than avail himself of the “maxim of the self-preservation of reason.”²⁷ Enlightenment: the self-preservation of reason. In light of the reflections unfolded in Parts I and II hitherto, Kant’s assertion reveals a radicality belied by its immediate textual context.

In its two most accepted and general determinations, *Aufklärung* is taken to mean either a transpired ‘phase’ in the history of modernity or an ‘attitude’. According to the former, the Age of Enlightenment corresponds to a particular century—the 18th, and which could be characterized, in contrast with, say, Romanticism, by a certain spiritual identity embodied in manifold cultural domains and interests. Our own century, in this sense, is

27. Immanuel Kant, “Was heißt: Sich im Denken Orientieren?”, in *Werke*, Vol. 5, A.329.

post-Enlightenment; its signature and interests are different to those which animated the cultural life of that century. In its second determination, and to which Kant's references to *sapere aude!* and the maxim of thinking for oneself seems to stand closer, Enlightenment designates an attitude. Having lost its fixed chronological bounds in this other meaning, one speaks of *persons* as 'enlightened' or 'unenlightened', hence as characterizing a way of thinking and acting that can take place even today. But Kant's observation says more, and more essentially: *Enlightenment is reason interpreted as self-preservation*. Let me sharpen this formulation: *Aufklärung is the cogito principle, modern rationality itself*. Only when this properly *epochal* determination of its concept has been uncovered, does Enlightenment come to characterize the essence of the modern era as such, and not merely a phase in its internal development or a personal attitude amongst others. Only from this moment on can the concept of Enlightenment function *descriptively*, as the articulation of the most intimate and self-evident presuppositions of the era, and *prescriptively*, that is to say, as the norm of an historical process.

The reference to description and prescription allows us to introduce the problem-field to be discussed in Part III in a manner that shows its internal connection with Parts I and II. Indeed, Part I takes up the general title 'Welfare and Enlightenment' in view of exhibiting the ambiguity of the copula 'and'. On the one hand, it queries in what way the welfare state might *already* be a concrete figure of Enlightenment. This question concerns the *identity* between welfare and Enlightenment. Such an identity is to be found in the relation between technique and economics. In its economic foundations, the welfare state is Enlightened. Hence, the articulation of the self-evident presuppositions at the base of Keynes's *General Theory* yields the properly *descriptive* moment of our analysis of the rational foundations of the welfare state. On the other hand, the copula 'and' breaks the simple identity, leading over to the problem in what way Enlightenment could be *different* from welfare. Here, the question is how the rational foundations of the welfare state fall short of Enlightenment, namely, how they are a *restriction* of the more original rational possibilities envisaged by Enlightenment. This second perspective is critical of the welfare state, and utopian in intention. As such, it unfolds a *prescriptive* approach: it compares the political practice effectively unfolded in the welfare state with the *concept* of practice implied in the cogito principle, and finds the former wanting. Such is the burden of Habermas's critique of technique in advanced capitalism. From the viewpoint of Enlightenment, the balance seems to be clear: whereas economic technique in the welfare state already fully embodies the modern concept of rationality, its political practice remains immature. The outcome of Part I can be summarized as follows: technique and practice are modes of a single concept of rationality insofar as the difference between means-

and end-oriented action come into its own right only by reference to the general determination of reason as a setting-a-given-in-order. This rationality and its corresponding concept of reality have been qualified as *modern*.

The problem-field of Part II enters on the stage at this point. What is the peculiar modernity of the concept of rationality implied in the economic functions of the welfare state and in the Enlightened critique of advanced capitalism? Whereas Part I examines 'Welfare and Enlightenment' analytically, Part II considers this topic *genealogically*. What is the origin of the cogito principle? In what manner are the foundations of welfare economics laid in Keynes's *General Theory*, or the critiques of capitalism contained in Marx's *Das Kapital* and Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis*, only comprehensible by reference to the continuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity? And what *discontinuities* give account of the peculiar modernity of the cogito principle? Here, the cogito principle is what comes *earlier* than the welfare state in the sense of its *temporal precedence*, i.e. as the index of the changes in Western history that condition the possibility of its institutionalization in the course of this century.

This brings me to the problem to be addressed in Part III. For the cogito is 'earlier' in a second sense, namely, as the *a priori* of Welfare and Enlightenment. If the concept of rationality entailed by Enlightened political practice is, *essentially* considered, the same as that already operant in the economic technique of the welfare state, then the cogito principle marks the *limit* within which other social variations on Enlightenment are at all possible. Viewed as an historical project, Enlightenment consists in the effort to *radicalize* the concept of rationality effectual in welfare economics, extending it to the domain of political practice. 'Radical' is what lies at the root of something, what comes 'earlier' in the manner of a determining principle. If radicalization implies difference, the alteration of a given state of affairs, it also implies identity, in the sense of accentuating and bringing to completion what the given state of affairs already owes to its principle. To assert that the critique of the welfare state available to Enlightened thinking is limited, is to argue that such a critique, and the kind of society it could imagine as an alternative to the welfare state, is governed by certain presuppositions which it cannot renounce without relinquishing its very claim to rationality. What are those presuppositions?

Explicitly or implicitly, their spores have already been encountered in the course of Parts I and II:

(1) When modern rationality interprets the human relation to reality as productive, this does not simply say something about technique and practice, but first and foremost about human being itself, namely, the historically determinate interpretation of human being called *subjectivity*.

(2) But together with the interpretation of human being as a subject goes the interpretation of *reality* as a product, that is, as the achievement of

subjectivity. If Chapters 1 through 3 have sketched out its contours, it remains for us to show how the cogito principle offers the philosophical grounding of this concept of reality.

(3) On the other hand, the suspension of the binding character of the existent social world, be it in the technical mode of the economic system (Keynes) or the practical mode of the principle of organization of society (Marx *et. al.*), indicates that the subject no longer understands the existent as being the sole measure of his activity and of his original possibilities. To the contrary, the recognition that it can be levelled down to the status of a contingent fact in view of its technical/practical transformation hides the insight that, in a certain sense, man becomes the measure of reality. In what sense this could be the case remains as yet undetermined; important, for now, is to note that the concept of measure introduces the fundamental problem of *truth*.

(4) It has been noted that the critical reduction of the existent to a given in view of the realization of the possible discloses the future as the privileged mode of temporality. This is as much the case for the economic functions of the welfare state, as it is for the utopian aspiration of Enlightened political practice. Consequently, setting-a-given-in-order implies a specific concept and experience of *time*.

(5) But together with the problem of time appears that of *history*. The productivity of man's technical and practical relation to reality in the modern era manifests itself, most originally, in the transformed understanding it brings about of history as the achievement of subjectivity. One can even affirm that the concept of history achieves the integration of the four earlier concepts.

My thesis is that Enlightenment not only 'refers to', but *is* this set of presuppositions, grasped in their systematic unity.

Consequently, the question I will be addressing hereafter is not whether and how it might be possible to radicalize the project of Enlightenment beyond the stage it has attained in the welfare state; my aim is to explicate the *a priori* of that possible historical process, that is to say, *the basic presuppositions which would necessarily go in advance of and determine its course if such a radicalization were at all possible*. If I speak about a 'radicalization', it is because these presuppositions are already effectual in the welfare state, at least in what regards its economic foundations. As this hypothetical problem-formulation makes clear, a shift of analytical perspective is required. In keeping with its *descriptive* claim, the movement of thinking developed in Part I led from the *General Theory*, which provides the groundwork of economic technique in the welfare state, to the cogito principle. In Part III, however, the question is no longer empirical but *a priori*; it does not focus specifically on the welfare state, conceived as a figure of Enlightenment, but on the cogito principle as such, hence on what governs all imaginable social mutations within

Enlightenment (including the economic foundations of the welfare state). Instead of providing the philosophical basis of a project for social change that could lead out from the welfare state, what interests me in the forthcoming pages are the *conditions of possibility* of such a project. In short, my main aim in Part III will be to sketch out the concepts of human being, reality, truth, time, and history which define the a priori of any and all social variations on Enlightenment.

Now, to establish the content of these five concepts, the following chapters will principally concentrate on an analysis of the book in which the cogito principle reaches its mature expression, namely, Kant's *Kritik d.r. Vernunft*. This may seem a surprising choice at first sight, for one immediately associates the cogito with Descartes. Philosophically, however, in contrast with the *Meditations*, which still remain too caught up in the conceptual framework of Scholastic philosophy, it was Kant who first succeeded in presenting the full breadth, originality and radicality of the principle of modern rationality. From the standpoint of our foregoing exposition, moreover, this choice is not coincidental. In effect, it has been argued that setting-a-given-in-order is the concept of rationality implied *both* in economic technique in the welfare state *and* in the Enlightened concept of political practice. Such is the synthetic concept of rationality at the heart of the first *Critique*. This suggests that the significance of this text for an understanding of the modern era surpasses by far its avowed aim of providing a philosophical grounding for the modern concept of *theory*; it also grounds the modern concepts of technique and political practice. In short, I view Kant's masterwork as being decisive because, in laying out the synthetic concept of rationality implied in the cogito principle, it yields access to the concepts of human being, reality, truth, time, and history constitutive for Enlightenment.

In summary, whereas Part I examines the relation between the welfare state and Enlightenment in its *present* situation, and Part II takes it up from the viewpoint of its *past*, Part III will consider its *future*.

PART III: ENLIGHTENMENT

CHAPTER 6. SUBJECTIVITY

Part III has as its task elucidating the cogito principle in view of outlining what has been called the a priori of modern rationality, that is to say, the most basic concepts which go in advance of and determine all possible social variations on Enlightenment. At issue, in other words, are the concepts grounding modern technique and Enlightened political practice. The present chapter addresses the first of these concepts, namely, the concept of human being. That precisely the elaboration of this concept should inaugurate Part III is not coincidental. For, first and foremost, Enlightenment is a response to a question which Kant's *Logic*, published posthumously in 1800, had recognized as being the fundamental problem of philosophy: What is man? If the welfare state moves within the a priori of Enlightenment, this is because it works out, in its own way, the general response which the latter gives to this question: subjectivity. Conversely, the *practical* radicalization of Enlightenment beyond its present confines in the welfare state consists in a radicalization of subjectivity, interpreted as human self-determination.

Now, in seeking to make clear the nature of the continuities and discontinuities wherein modern rationality is born, we have followed Kant's treatment of the concept of 'inner possibility' in a pre-critical essay, showing how thinking and existence, the two elements of the cogito principle, are coordinated in a way that both carries over the Scholastic problem of contingency and resolves it in a novel manner: self-preservation. It was noted, however, that the *sense* of this transformation, as well as its pertinence for the cogito principle, remains inarticulate in the cited passages of this pre-critical text. Moreover, it remained hidden to the author of the precritical text how the relation between thinking and existence, *ego cogito, ego sum*, could be determinative for the modern concept of subjectivity. The one and the other, the sense of the historical transformation leading out from the Middle Ages and the emergence of a novel interpretation of human being in the manner of subjectivity, are at the core of the *Critique of Pure Reason. Enlightenment is the interpretation of human being as a subject.*

Building on the genealogy of modern rationality emerging from the reoccupation of the 'answer-position' left open by Scholastic metaphysics, the task of this chapter is to offer a general formulation of the concept of subjectivity that, barring its interpretation as the secularized prolongation of the Scholastic *causa sui*, explicitly relates it to the concept of self-preservation. The development of this topic is divided into four parts. The first, approached in §29, argues that the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Logic of Kant's first *Critique* in effect provide what we might call an 'analytic of subjectivity', i.e., the exhibition and description of the basic constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity.

Subsequently, §30 analyzes the synthetic concept of critique which emerges from dependent spontaneity, linking it up to the critical import of modern technique and practice. For its part, §31 comes to terms with the thorny question concerning security, developing an interpretation of this concept alternative to Heidegger's secularization of a salvation certainty. Finally, rejecting Heidegger's attempt to see in the analytic of subjectivity a prelude to his analytic of *Dasein*, §32 suggests that self-determination is the insight definitive for the concept of subjectivity.

§29. An 'Analytic of Subjectivity': Dependent Spontaneity

The Introduction to the second edition of the *Critique* lays out the essential groundplan for a transcendental philosophy, when noting that "we have no knowledge antecedent to experience, and with experience all our knowledge begins. But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience." (B.1) This groundplan is itself nothing other than an *analytic of subjectivity*, understanding by this the exhibition and analysis of the basic constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity. From the point of view of the architectonic of the *Critique*, the two elements of this constitution—dependency and spontaneity—are none other than what Kant calls a 'Transcendental Æsthetic' and a 'Transcendental Logic'. The pure forms of sensible intuition—space and time, the pure forms of the understanding—the categories, and the 'union' of sensibility and understanding—the schematism of the pure concepts, are governed by a single, overarching insight: the basic constitution of human being is that of a dependent spontaneity. This insight, rather than its concretion in the Æsthetic and Logic, are of the greatest importance for who wishes to understand the modern concept of subjectivity. This section lays out the essential of Kant's insight.

Intuitus originarius and intuitus derivativus

In comparing the transcendental deductions of the pure concepts of the understanding put forth in the first and second editions of Kant's first *Critique*, the reader is struck by the latter's reasoned emphasis on a theme that had played a more low-keyed, though equally decisive, role in the first edition. I mean the stark contrast between the intellectual and sensible intuitions.¹ Moreover, bringing this disjunction into relief seemed sufficiently important to the author to merit discussion in two of the three new general observations appended to paragraph 8 of the Transcendental

1. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.135, 139, 145, 147, 158n, 159.

Æsthetic. The distinction makes its first apparition as a reflection on self-knowledge: “the subject, which is the object of the [inner] sense, can be represented through it only as appearance, not as that subject would judge of itself if its intuition were self-activity only (*bloße Selbsttätigkeit*), that is, were intellectual.” (B.68). Intellectual intuition is further specified as “immediate self-activity” (B.69) and as what “can itself give [itself] the existence of its object.” (B.72) Kant closes the general observations to the Æsthetic by remarking “intellectual intuition seems to belong solely to the primordial being, and can never be ascribed to a dependent being, dependent in its existence as well as in its intuition, and which through that intuition determines its existence solely in relation to given objects.” (B.72)

These preliminary remarks have a programmatic function for the Analytic, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. A transcendental investigation into the a priori conditions of possibility of objective knowledge—the subject matter of a critique of pure reason, resolves itself into examining how a spontaneity operating on an antecedently given material, i.e. a *dependent spontaneity*, is possible. Entering the complexities of the transcendental deduction presents no interest for our own questioning. I will be satisfied with underscoring two main implications of the contrast between intellectual and sensible intuition regarding knowledge, namely, its immanent yet a priori status and its productive character.

Kant’s description of intellectual intuition or pure spontaneity as an understanding capable of giving itself from itself the objects of its representations, sets that faculty in a *transcendent* relation to its creations. Over against intellectual intuition, synthesis, the spontaneous activity of human understanding, attests to a faculty that “merely combines and arranges the material of knowledge... which must be given to it by the object.” (B.145). In this perspective, the categories and the manifold of sensations, ‘function’ and ‘material’, are inseparable and prove to be abstractions analyzed from experience. Notice what is being said by Kant: inasmuch as the knowing subject cannot give itself the objects of its representations, but relies on a material that must be given as the condition for its activity, it stands in an *immanent*, rather than transcendent relation to empirical knowledge. Otherwise stated, the ‘I think’ principle evidences the peculiar lot of the subject of having to realize itself *in and through* the result of its activity. And yet, while immanent to its product, human self-activity is not thereby dissolved or absorbed into it, conserving its distinctiveness in respect of the material conditions of sensible intuition.

The second implication, closely bound up with the former, concerns experience, empirical knowledge. In effect, it is a *product*. “Experience is, beyond all doubt, the first product to which our understanding gives rise, in working up the raw material of sensible intuitions.” (A.1) In the light of

the genealogy of modern rationality unfolded in Chapter 5, the significance of what Kant is doing becomes quite clear, for pure spontaneity functions as the boundary concept by reference to which the concept of dependent spontaneity is defined. On the one hand, human or mediate self-activity is determined, over against immediate self-activity, as *non-creative*, i.e. by contrast with an understanding capable of supplying its productions entirely out of itself (*ex nihilo*). On the other hand, human spontaneity or self-activity is positively defined as productive. Empirical knowledge is the result of the synthesis of the manifold of sensations by the understanding. Inasmuch as synthetic unity is not given in or through objects, experience is a product that finds *one* of its conditions of possibility in human spontaneity, the 'I think'. "Combination does not... lie in the objects, and cannot be borrowed from them... On the contrary, it is an affair of the understanding alone, which itself is nothing but the faculty of combining a priori, and of bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception." (B.134-135) Synthesis relates to experience as does an immanent productive activity to its product.

Passivity and Activity

Hence, the transcendental deduction carried out in the *Kritik* brings to culmination the program of an enquiry into the conditions of possibility of knowledge by situating these in *the activity of a self immanently producing something new from a given material*. We must pause to consider this result, for it relinquishes the blueprint to the concept of *self-preservation*. In effect, the expression 'self-activity' (*Selbsttätigkeit*) does not merely designate one or the other of the self's activities, but makes plain their essential intransitivity. But what constitutes the peculiar intransitivity of self-activity? Kant: "If the *receptivity* of our mind, its power of receiving representations in so far as it is in any wise affected, is to be entitled sensibility, then the mind's power of producing representations from itself, the *spontaneity* of knowledge, should be called the understanding." (A.51=B.75) This passage makes clear that self-activity in general, thus both 'immediate' and 'mediate' spontaneity, designates an *absolute beginning* in respect of causation, and of the production of representations in particular. It will be noticed that I have not spoken of 'independent', instead of 'absolute', when referring to self-activity in general, nor have these been equated, inasmuch as a subtle but decisive difference distinguishes the one and the other. Whereas immediate self-activity or spontaneity is *absolute and independent*, mediate self-activity is *absolute but dependent*. The former is cause in the sense of a *causa secundum esse*; although the 'I think' precedes experience as an absolute beginning, the understanding depends on, is conditioned by, an object that *affects*

sensibility, in a word, is a *causa formalis*.²

The expression 'dependent spontaneity' indicates that self-activity—intransitive conservation—can only take place on the basis of a radical passivity: *autonomy and heterogeneity in a constitutive and co-original relation*. Prior to self-activity, a passivity discloses itself at the heart of the 'I think' principle, for which existence is always and already encountered as given to the ego and its *cogitare*. The entire movement of the *Kritik* leading from the Transcendental *Æsthetic* up to and culminating in the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding, thinks through and generalizes this, the founding insight of the modern era. Indeed, although "it must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all", representations must be given to intuition in the manifold of sensations such that thinking is to be possible: "all thought must... relate ultimately to intuitions, and therefore, with us, to sensibility, because in no other way can an object be given to us." (A.19=B.33) Nevertheless, the recognition of the radical dependency implied in dependent spontaneity shuts out any relapse into transitive conservation. *Sensible intuition discloses the deficit of human reason, only to better make of this lack the condition of, and the opportunity for, human self-activity.*

In a decisive reinterpretation of the cogito principle appended to the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, and to which we shall devote extended attention when considering the modern concept of security, Kant notes that "Without some empirical representation to supply the material for thought, the *actus*, 'I think', would not, indeed, take place; but the empirical is only the condition of the application, or of the employment, of the pure intellectual faculty." (B.423n) Therewith, reference to *intuitus originarius* has lost the function of maximizing God's power at humankind's expense, acquiring, instead, the role of a contrastive concept whereby the positive alternatives available to a finite being can be more fully explored and consolidated. The precipitate of the Transcendental Deduction surrenders the elements for the concept of subjectivity, namely, *an identity in a productive activity related to an empirical component understood as the condition of possibility of its activity*. Stated more briefly, I take it that dependent spontaneity, the immanent absolute, defines the content of the modern concept of subjectivity. The further working out of this concept concentrates on exploring the meaning of the *relation* between its two terms, spontaneity and dependency, *cogito* and *sum*. This relation delivers the key, I will suggest, to the modern concepts of freedom and security.

2. "Our mode of intuition is dependent on the existence of the object, and is therefore possible only if the subject's faculty of representation is affected by that object." (B.72)

§30. The Concept of Critique

The modern concept of *mimesis* acquires its specificity by reference to the productive relation of human being to reality. If, in *techne*, the artist or the artisan is the 'first cause of movement', such that the poetic production owes nothing of its reality (the substantial unity of form and matter) to the poetic production, modern man recognizes himself in the products of his exertions, both technical and practical, as their *formal* cause. Only then can *mimesis* come to embody modern man's awareness of his original ontological productivity. Nonetheless, it was pointed out that together with this ontological productivity, modern rationality understands itself to be exposed to a two-fold danger, and precisely as the *implication* of modern rationality's mimetic structure. These two dangers are self-empowerment and self-loss. Whereas the former implies the forgetfulness of the conditioned character of man's ontological productivity, its necessary relation to a given material that conditions said activity, self-loss implies the forfeiture of man's ontological productivity, such that reality takes on an autonomous and self-sufficient standing over against human being. Whereas in self-empowerment man becomes oblivious to the (material) *difference* between himself and reality, in self-loss it is the (formal) *identity* between man and reality which has been surrendered.

The decisive point is that self-empowerment and self-loss are the object of critique by modern rationality, and this precisely as its deviations. Deviations of *what?* The answer lies at hand: deviations in respect of the basic constitution of the subject as a *dependent spontaneity*. When human being is interpreted as a dependent spontaneity, self-empowerment is the implication of forgetfulness concerning the subject's dependent condition, and self-loss the implication of obliviousness to its spontaneity or productivity. Both are the dangers implied in the precarious and unstable constitution of human being as a subject, and both are the object of critique. But what is *critique*? The philosophical work we are considering dubs itself a 'critique'. What does the concept of critique implied in a 'critique of pure reason' have to do with dependent spontaneity? Could it be the case that the concept of critique is *itself* determined in an essential manner by dependent spontaneity? Would subjectivity lie at the base of a properly *modern* concept of critique, and by reference to which the critical import of modern technique and practice first becomes comprehensible?

Critique as Restriction

It is a remarkable feature of Kant's thinking on the concept of critique that it admits of a negative and a positive formulation. The first, negative concept of critique is already announced in the Preface to the first edition,

whereby Kant means not “a critique of books and systems, but of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all knowledge after which it may strive *independently of all experience*. It will therefore decide as to the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, and determine its sources, its extent, and its limits—all in accordance with principles.” (A.xii) The outcome of Kant’s enterprise is well-known: the restriction of the metaphysical endeavor to an ontology of appearances, that is to say, to the concepts giving account of the objectivity of objects. Speculative reason, a thinking that oversteps the boundaries of the empirical, cannot deliver knowledge. In its negative sense, then, critique has a *restrictive* function; it limits knowledge to experience, hence to the bounds of sensibility.³ The task of critique is to expose the finitude of human knowledge. But what is the significance of this negative function of critique in the light of the concept of subjectivity? This, namely, that *the very constitution of human being as a dependent being is the presupposition of the concept of critique, in its restrictive function*. In effect, the restriction of knowledge to possible experience recognizes that a priori synthetic judgments are based on intuition, but “intuition takes place only in so far as the object is given to us.” The reference “to us”, i.e. to human being, already encloses the recognition of the ground-structure of subjectivity as a dependent spontaneity. Hence, if we return to the modern concept of *mimesis*, the rational metaphysics which Kant combats is a figure of self-empowerment, of the forgetfulness of the finitude of human reason, of its dependency on a given material for the unfolding of its ontological productivity. That self-empowerment is the object of critique means that the structure of dependent spontaneity determines the concept of critique as *restriction*.

Critique as Judgment

Together with its negative function, Kant ascribes a positive operation to critique. By limiting knowledge, hence the domain of *theoretical* reason, to the conditions of possible experience, a domain is reserved for practical rationality *beyond* the limits of sensibility.⁴ This is not, however, the positive function of the concept of critique I have in mind. What I am looking for lies elsewhere. For if its negative meaning is bound up to the *dependency* of dependent spontaneity, could one not surmise that a positive function of critique lies hidden in the *Kritik*, a function related to the

3. “What is the value of the metaphysics that is alleged to be thus purified by criticism and established once and for all? On a cursory view of the present work it may seem that its results are merely *negative*, warning us that we must never venture with speculative reason beyond the limits of experience.” (B.xxiv)

4. “There is an absolutely necessary *practical* employment of pure reason—the moral—in which it inevitably goes beyond the limits of sensibility.” (B.xxv).

spontaneity of the subject? But where would one have to look for this concealed meaning of critique?

In a broad sense, of course, critique is the art of judgment; literary and art criticism consists in the judgment of works according to aesthetic criteria. A criterion, in turn, designates a standard on which an evaluative judgment or decision may be based. This concept of critique, with its reference to evaluative judgment, is employed by Kant to explain what he means by a critique of pure reason: “a science of the mere judgment of pure reason, of its sources and limits...”⁵ Its special, even unique object notwithstanding, the *Critique of Pure Reason* remains a ‘critique’ in the broad sense of this term, namely, the passing of judgment. Now the acute problem raised by the critical enterprise, when understood in this way, focuses on a certain difficulty that, in my view, is not the fact that reason judges of *reason*, hence that reason is both the subject and object of critique. Instead, it concerns the concept of *judgment* itself: “what here constitutes our subject-matter is not the nature of things, which is inexhaustible, but the understanding which passes judgment upon the nature of things...” (A.12=B.26) That is to say, the object of criticism is understanding’s activity proper: judgment, thinking. This immediately creates a perplexity, because the heart of Kant’s masterwork is none other than a new determination of the concept of judgment, namely, *synthesis*.⁶ “All thought must... relate ultimately to intuitions and therefore, with us, to sensibility...” (A.19=B.33) ‘With us’, says Kant; judgment, i.e. *the relation of thought to intuition*, acquires its human specificity by reference to the structure of dependent spontaneity. A new concept of judgment emerges from the *Kritik*—synthesis—the novelty of which stands in an internal connection with the novel determination of the ground-structure of human being as a dependent spontaneity. Whence the difficulty: *if the decisive contribution of the Kritik is a novel determination of the concept of judgment, how does it impinge on the concept of judgment implied in a ‘critique’ (of pure reason)?* In the response to this problem one finds, I believe, the key to the positive function of critique concealed in Kant’s masterwork.

The “Critique of the Third Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology” in the first edition provides a decisive clue. Having divided objections into

5. (A.11=B.25). I have modified Kemp Smith’s “a science of the mere *examination* of pure reason...” (my italics), because the German edition employs the word *Beurteilung*, inaccurately rendered by the word ‘examination’.

6. Heidegger has correctly noted this in his discussion on Kant in *Die Frage nach dem Ding*. “When Kant... once and again draws attention to the fundamental significance of the new distinction he sets up between analytic and synthetic judgments, this means nothing other than that the essence of judgment as such has been determined in a new way... Here, judgment as such is not only related to intuition and object, but its essence is determined from this relation, and even as this relation.” (*Op. cit.*, pgs. 118, 123) See further pgs. 119-140.

dogmatic, critical, and skeptical, Kant notes: "So long as we hold to the ordinary concepts of our reason with regard to the communion in which our thinking subject stands with the things outside us, we are dogmatic; looking upon them as real objects existing independently of us... [and do] not assign these outer appearances to the subject as representations..." (A.389) Dogmatism, in a word, takes the objectivity of objects, their *reality*, to be independent of the subject, and ascribes to appearances an autonomous character. Critical thinking, to the contrary, leads the objectivity of objects back to subjectivity, that is, discovers in subjectivity the source of the *rules* according to which experience is possible, or what means the same, which formally determine the objectivity of objects. In short, *a critical objection unmasks as the formal achievement of subjectivity the reality which the subject had taken to possess an independent and autonomous standing over against him*. One might even want to call this destructive employment of critique, that aims at laying bare the constructed character of objectivity, 'deconstruction'. The second danger to which the modern concept of *mimesis* is exposed comes into view, and precisely as the butt of critique: *self-loss*. If, in the problem-field of the *Kritik*, a rational metaphysics corresponds to the moment of reason's self-empowerment, dogmatism is that of its self-loss.

But does what Kant calls a 'critical objection' exhaust the significance of the concept of critique we are searching for? Or is it, to the contrary, its first and preliminary phase? Criticism in general passes judgment on something. But to pass judgment on something a criterion or standard, a rule, is required. Now, because in the traditional concept of critique the norm functions as a criterion and cannot itself be called into question, it in effect typifies what Kant calls *dogmatism*. Otherwise stated, dogmatism implies a certain understanding of the concept of judgment, namely, *norm-application*. Whereas dogmatism defines the kind of judgment that simply applies the rules given to it, leaving untouched the question concerning their title to validity, that is, to their binding character, the Kantian concept of critique transfers attention from the judgment's object to the rules of judgment: the criticized are the *rules themselves*. In effect, critique judges of rules. Now, a rule, in Kant's usage of the term, defines what admits not exception to itself. That is to say, it demarcates the realm of the mandatory or compulsory, in a word, necessity. If dogmatic judgment merely applies given rules or standards without calling these into question, this occurs because dogmatism, most fundamentally, takes the given to be necessary, the standard or measure compulsory for human activity (judgment). The destructive moment implied in the critical objection to dogmatism suspends, *negates*, the mandatory character of given rules.

With this one reaches the crux of the problem. For what could 'judgment' mean here if it cannot have recourse to a higher given rule by

which to judge? Only one possibility remains open: *critique (judgment) is the productive process whereby a new rule is produced from a given material (the criticized rules)*. Therein lies the key to the *modern* concept of critique. Overcoming the traditional concept of critique requires that the relation of (critical) judgment to the norm be reinterpreted in a radical manner, such that critique no longer means merely norm-application but *norm-production*.⁷ Only thus can the concept of critical judgment avoid the trap of dogmatism. The destructive moment of critique, whereby it negates the binding character of given rules, prepares the way for its constructive moment, namely, *synthesis*.

The Age of Criticism

If we now turn to the well-known footnote in the preface to the first edition of the *Kritik* it comes to stand in a new light. "Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit." (A.xiiin) Over against dogmatism, says Kant, critique typifies modernity as an *era*; taken in all its radicality, this assertion implies that critique is constitutive for the epoch's central manifestations and precisely in their epochal character. What profound insight might this observation conceal? The discussion of the modern concepts of technique and practice in Chapters 1 through 3 has brought into focus their *critical* import. I have argued that the productive relation to reality unfolded in technique and practice is critical of the existent in a precise sense, namely, a 'distancing-that-negates-the-binding-character-of-the-given.' Critique reveals the existent as *facticity*, as a non-binding fact amenable to human transformation. The 'negativity' of technique and practice, whereby the existent is disclosed as a fact, prepares and clears the way for a 'positive' moment, namely, the unfolding of man's original ontological productivity. Could we not say that the concept of critique emerging from the *Kritik's* reformulation of judgment as synthesis provides the blueprint for the critical essence of technique and practice in the modern era? For isn't synthesis, setting-a-given-in-order, the essence of the modern concept of rationality? And isn't modern rationality, in turn, the implication of the basic constitution of the subject as a dependent spontaneity?

I will close this section on the concept of critique by drawing attention to the illuminating assertion of a modern philosopher whose entire thinking

7. I find confirmation for my interpretation of the concept of critique in the definition essayed by Kurt Röttgers: "Kant's concept of critique is that of a radical critique, because critique does not borrow its norms from the systems of competing valid norms. Yet it does not merely abstractly posit a new norm either, but, to the contrary, norm-positing takes place in the process of criticism." *Kritik und Praxis. Zur Geschichte des Kritikbegriffs von Kant bis Marx* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), pg. 39.

stands under the exacting requirement of critique. Theodor Adorno has maintained that “Little exaggerates who equates the modern concept of reason with critique.”⁸ In the forthcoming it must remain an open question whether this general assertion, contained in an essay titled *Kritik* (1969), is representative for the philosophical position developed earlier in *Negative Dialectics*. My interest here is exclusively to explore the significance of Adorno’s assertion in the perspective of the concept of modern rationality developed heretofore. And it is precisely at this level of generality that Adorno presents his thesis: critique = *modern* reason. In my opinion, his appreciation is correct if, and only if, one admits two provisos: the first, that the modern concept of reason is *self-preservation*, possessed of the peculiar structure set out heretofore; the second, that self-preservation—the cogito principle—entails a novel concept of critique: *synthesis*. Modern reason = modern critique. That such is the gist of the equation defended by Adorno becomes clear, it seems to me, when one examines the concept of critique he pairs with reason: “opposition against given opinions and, therewith, also against existent, seemingly necessary institutions, against everything merely posited that legitimates itself with its existence.”⁹ Adorno’s formula effectively assigns an ontological ranking to critique. For opposition to everything that would legitimate itself merely with its existence takes place on the presupposition that what exists, *as* existence, has no binding character of its own, that the existent *is* in the manner of *facticity*. The expression “existent, seemingly necessary institutions” makes clear that negating the compelling character of the existent, thereby revealed as a non-binding fact, constitutes the presupposition of what it means to exercise critique: a distancing-that-negates-the-binding-character-of-the-existent. But none other than this was the presupposition of Keynes, the economist, when he indicated that the existent economic system was a “fact of observation, and not a necessary state of affairs” in view of its technical transformation. Certainly, Adorno’s concept of critique does not envisage the technical transformation of society. Nevertheless, a more fundamental identity is visible. For there where the mere existence of a ‘bad reality’ has been the title for its continued existence, the critical disclosure of its facticity becomes the indispensable precondition for legitimation, i.e. the question concerning the conditions under which institutions and opinions can be made binding.

But does anything in Adorno’s concept of critique authorize us to assimilate it to self-preservation? Although he explicitly indicates that the modern concept of rationality *is* critique, is there any basis for the

8. Theodor W. Adorno, “*Kritik*” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), vol. 10.2 *Stichworte*, pg. 785-786.

9. *Op. cit.*, pg. 785. The German expression “*Das ist nun einmal so*”, approximately “That’s how it is (and nothing can be done about it)”, clarifies what Adorno means when speaking of “*nun einmal vorhanden Institutionen...*”

assumption that the concept of rationality implied in Adorno's concept of critique is the cogito principle, i.e. *conservatio sui*? In view of this question, an apparently minuscule detail draws our attention. That existence does not legitimate of itself means that it is the "merely posited", where the latter signifies what precedes and requires legitimation, i.e. the exercise of reason. A question arises: why does Adorno equate the existent with the "merely posited"? And what light does this seemingly trivial assimilation shed on the modern concept of rationality Adorno does not hesitate to equate with that of critique?

It seems to me that Kant's reflections on the concept of 'inner possibility', which have been earlier covered in exploring the sense of the reoccupation of the 'answer-position' left open by Scholastic metaphysics, reveal the key to this question. Indeed, an observation in "The Only Possible Argument for a Demonstration of the Existence of God" makes clear that Adorno's choice of words is not coincidental, nor simply a philological matter. Says Kant: "If all existence is suspended, thus nothing is simply posited (*slechtsin gesetzt*), nothing at all is given, no material for something thinkable, [then] all possibility ceases."¹⁰ Adorno: existence is the "merely posited" (*bloß Gesetzte*). The superposition of these two citations is not arbitrary, and their resemblance is more than a purely nominal affair. Together with the qualification of existence as the posited is implied its *contrary*, namely, a state that precedes the posited, such that existence is what requires and is the outcome of a positing. Concealed in the determination of existence as the posited, even if only as its implicit and virtual counterpole, is its other in a radical sense: the *nihil*. The posited—the caused, leads back to a positing—a cause in the sense of a *causa secundum esse*. Kant's formulation still makes explicit what has become implicit in Adorno: the counterpole to the "simply posited" is the "suspension of all existence", nothingness. The birth of a new answer to a historically motivated problem, and the subsequent blending out of the historical framework in which it was born, can be accurately delineated if one traces the movement of thinking that begins with Descartes and goes to Adorno. In the *Meditations*, first published in 1641, the *nihil* appears in its explicitly *Scholastic* formulation as the problem to which rationality, in the form of the cogito principle, is a response. In Kant's precritical essay of 1763, published some 120 years later, the *nihil* remains the overt problem to which rationality is a solution, although it has lost its reference to the metaphysical framework of Scholastic philosophy which it still possessed in Descartes. And in the essay of 1969, published some 330 years after the *Meditations*, the *nihil* has faded into the implicit and inarticulate counterpole of existence—the merely posited, and in response

10. Kant, *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*, in *Werke*, Vol. 2, A18-19.

to which Adorno equates critique with rationality. It is hardly necessary to point out that when Habermas, in his polemic with Itling's non-cognitivist ethics, refuses to recognize validity to "mere existence" (*bloße Existenz*), here, once again, the *nihil* and the Christian prehistory of modern rationality makes itself heard.

The progressive fading out of remembrance of its historical origins leaves intact, however, the essential inversion of direction that contrasts modern rationality with the Scholastic answer to contingency. Indeed, the significance of the parallel between the citations of Kant and Adorno does not cease in the recurrence of the *nihil*, but in its reoccupation with a new content. For Adorno, as for Kant before him, *that* something must be posited as the condition for the exercise of rationality (legitimation, thinking) does not lead over to an enquiry into the positing of the posited, into the *cause of existence*. This latter route of investigation is precisely that which leads Scholastic metaphysics from existence—the posited, to *causa sui*—the self-positing 'positor' of the posited, i.e. to *transitive conservation* (from the *nihil*). For modern metaphysics, to the contrary, an enquiry concerning the cause of existence is not merely questionable, but even 'metaphysical' in the highest degree. The other path, the path followed by Adorno, Kant, and the entire philosophical tradition that has its founding act in Descartes' *ego cogito sum*, makes of existence the 'merely' or 'simply' posited, that is to say, the material condition of and the incitation to human activity: *intransitive conservation*, self-preservation.

No, one does not have to believe Max Horkheimer when he asserts that "The ancient bourgeois definition of reason as self-preservation was already its restriction."¹¹ The definition of reason as self-preservation is neither ancient, nor its bourgeois restriction. Not ancient in any philosophically or historically relevant sense because self-preservation is the principle of modern rationality as such. Not its bourgeois restriction, where by this is meant "the skeptical separation of thinking and object" (pg. 327), because self-preservation—the cogito principle—is the presupposition of the *relation* between human activity and objectivity, and precisely as *productive*, that governs Kant's critical objection to dogmatism, Marx's critique of fetishism, Horkheimer's own critical theory, Adorno's critique of culture and Habermas's critique of technique in advanced capitalism.

But a recurrent question crops up once again. Isn't the outcome of an analytic of subjectivity, even though the latter is grasped as dependent spontaneity, as self-preservation rather than as a secularized *causa sui*, precisely the apotheosis of the subject's power? Doesn't the subject

11. Max Horkheimer, "Vernunft und Selbsterhaltung", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. A. Schmidt and G. S. Noerr, 18 vols. (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987), vol. 5, 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' und *Schriften 1940-1950*, pg. 348.

arrogate for itself a position of power over against the existent? Further reflection on this basic objection confronting modern rationality will be pursued in two complementary directions, both of which have the relation between dependency and spontaneity as their focal point. The first, discussed in §31, regards the modern concept of security; the second, approached in §32, envisages the concept of self-determination.

§31. Security

In the process of undermining Heidegger's genealogy of modern rationality, in particular the emergence of self-certainty as the secularization of the certainty of salvation, two general elements have come to the fore which need to be retained and reflected upon. (1) The modern concept of security is closely bound up with an historically determinate interpretation of human being, namely, subjectivity; (2) the concept of security apposite to the subject is intelligible by reference to the sharpening of human contingency which took place in Scholastic philosophy. Certainly, developing this alternative interpretation does not have a merely polemic interest, but obeys a more systematic motivation. In effect, from the point of view of our general topic, reconstructing the concept of security implied in subjectivity is of paramount importance. This is not to suggest, however, that the concept of the subject, or that of security, will be built up or abstracted from empirical data concerning the welfare state. My intention, to the contrary, is to make visible the presuppositions that, giving rise to modern rationality, go in advance of, and determine, the possible empirical content of the concept of security at work in the welfare state.

The following thesis will be our guideline: if self-certainty, in Heidegger's understanding of the term, cannot account, either genealogically or analytically, for the concept of security appropriate to modern rationality, then what is required is further enquiry into the peculiar dependency characterizing the subject as a *dependent* spontaneity. As has been noted, in the course of applying the reoccupation theorem to his analyses of the history of Western philosophy, it has been Blumenberg's chief contribution to highlight the significance of the Scholastic doctrine of contingency for the inception of modern rationality. Building on this reoccupation, my own interest consists in showing how the Kantian formulation of the subject—dependent spontaneity—might shed light on the concept of security constitutive for modernity.

Continual Creation

To gain an adequate point of departure, one does well in returning to examine afresh the decisive footnote to the Paralogisms of Pure Reason in the second edition of the *Kritik*. The entire passage is a sustained reflection on the cogito principle. More concretely, Kant attempts to clarify the precise nature of the *relation* between the two propositions, *ego cogito* and *ego sum*. The footnote is polemical in character, inasmuch as Kant understands himself to be settling accounts with Descartes' original interpretation of the relation's meaning: *cogito ergo sum*. Indeed, the critique carried out in the footnote is unexceptionable if one takes the central tracts of the Second Meditation as definitive for Descartes' exposition of the cogito: "*I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."¹² "Put forward" or "conceived" determine the *cogitare* as a positing; but what sort of a positing is implied here? Descartes: "... were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist." (AT-VII-27) At face value, then, *ego cogito* is a *self*-positing in existence, if not necessarily in respect of its beginning, certainly in regard to its continuation. Heidegger's critique is at hand: in the 'I think' is concealed an *ego me cogitare*, in the manner of a self-grounding fundament, a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*. In the self-positing of the ego's existence by thinking would lie enclosed its claim to an unconditioned security.

But Heidegger is not the first to have criticized this exposition of the cogito. Already Kant, in the footnote to which we are referring, notes that existence cannot be inferred from thought without thereby presupposing the major premiss 'Everything which thinks, exists', effectively making of thought the attribute of a necessary being. But is this Descartes' final word on the significance of the cogito? *Quod non*. As the Replies to the Second Objections make clear, when someone utters the proposition 'I think, therefore I am', "... in fact he learns it from experiencing in his own case that it is impossible that he should think without existing." (AT-VII-140) This coincides substantially with Kant's observation to the effect that the 'I think' is an empirical proposition or, as he also put it, *ego cogito sum* says no more than 'I exist thinking'. Consequently, the relation between thinking and existence, in a way yet to be considered, is conditional; *existence is not implied in the concept of thinking, but is its presupposition*. In developing this idea, and relating it to Kant's reformulation of the subject as a dependent spontaneity, I will attempt to show, against Heidegger, that the finitude of human being is already contained, even if inarticulately, in *Descartes'* elaboration of the cogito principle. In other

12. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), vol. 2, pg. 17 (AT-VII-25).

words, dependent spontaneity more fully works out the finite constitution of the subject that already reaches expression in Descartes' *cogito sum*. These considerations are of importance, I feel, in view of the relation Heidegger has set up between 'self-certainty' and a teleology of unconditioned self-empowerment. For it would then be possible to assert that the modern concept of security is bound up with the *opposite* of what Heidegger asserts, namely, the recognition that the subject is *powerless* in a decisive manner.

In any case, two correlated implications can be drawn from the insight concerning the conditionality of the relation between thinking and existence. Firstly, it follows that if the concept of security proper to the *cogito* cannot be searched for in its claim to unconditionality (*causa sui*: absolute and independent spontaneity), it is precisely to the subject's peculiar dependency or conditionedness that we must turn. Secondly, inasmuch as dependency finds its specific locus in the subject's existence, reconstructing the precise nature of the relation between thinking and existence, between *ego cogito* and *ego sum*, also clarifies the concept of security constitutive for the modern era. The problem, then, can be formulated as follows: in what manner does the subject's existence function as a *condition*? And, coupled to this, how does the concept of *security* relate to the conditional character of human existence?

The Commencement and Continuity of Self-Activity

When, these questions in hand, one examines anew the closing sentence of the footnote to the Paralogisms, a certain ambiguity becomes apparent, and which, by comparison, had remained latent in Descartes' reply to Mersenne cited heretofore: "Without some empirical representation to supply the material for thought, the actus, 'I think', would not, indeed, take place; but the empirical is only the condition of the application, or of the employment, of the pure intellectual faculty." (B.423n) For, on the one hand, existence functions *positively*, namely, as the condition which makes possible self-activity, thinking. This signals the first manner in which the propositions *ego cogito* and *ego sum* are related. On the other hand, existence operates *negatively*, not only as that without which self-activity cannot occur, for this merely inverts the positive meaning of 'condition', but as what thinking cannot supply of itself. Existence, in this sense, is given, rather than self-bestowed: "something real... is given, given indeed to thought in general." (B.423n) That which enables thinking cannot be procured by thinking itself. Such is the second meaning of the relation between *cogito* and *sum*. But this negative connotation of 'condition' bears yet further perusal. For the conditioned character of the subject not only regards the *commencement* of self-activity, such that the thinking *ego*

would thereafter be capable of supplying its existence of and from itself. To the contrary, the dependency implied in dependent spontaneity consists in that, no less than its commencement, also the *continuation* of self-activity, ‘thinking’, is conditioned by an existence the ego cannot supply from itself. If in the *ego cogito*—I am thinking—something is signified “which actually (*in der Tat*) exists” (B.423n), it does so in the *present* tense only. That, in the future, a manifold of sensations will be given to thought, cannot be concluded from what is implied in the proposition ‘I think’. Precisely for this reason, Kant calls it an ‘empirical proposition’.¹³

The significance of this last insight, namely, the suspension of the distinction between the commencement and continuation of spontaneity, becomes clearer when compared with the third of Descartes’ *Meditations*. The passages which interest us center on the exploration into the possible causes of the ego’s existence. In assessing the question of whether the reflecting ego can derive its existence from itself, Descartes develops a theory of time that allows him to answer the question in the negative. “A lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment—that is, which preserves me.” (AT-VII-49) Pressing further his exploration into the fragmentation of time, Descartes adds that from reflection on what is implied in the idea of thinking, nothing can be established with respect to the ego’s future existence, hence that the ego’s continued preservation in being requires God’s active concursion.

In his review of the third Meditation, Gassendi was to object that Descartes failed to distinguish effects that, to persist, need the continued activity of the cause, from those that continue when their cause is no longer active. Exemplary for the former is the light of the sun; for the second, the house in respect of the architect, or the child in respect of the parent. As human existence falls under the second type of effect, Gassendi can then go ahead and sharpen his objection in the following terms: “You say that from the fact that you existed a little while ago it does not follow that you must exist now. I agree; but this is not because a cause is needed to create you anew, but because there is no guarantee that there is not some cause present which might destroy you...” (AT-VII-301)

13. It will be our task in Chapter 8 to more fully draw out the implications of the concept of time apposite to subjectivity.

A Merely Conceptual Distinction

The manner in which Descartes parries the objection is entirely characteristic: “When you deny that in order to be kept in existence we need the continual action of the original cause, you are disputing something which all metaphysicians affirm as a manifest truth— although the uneducated often fail to think of it because they pay attention only to the causes of *coming into being* and not the causes of *being itself*.” (AT-VII-369) Descartes can then argue that, while there are indeed effects which no longer rely on the continued action of the efficient cause, this only concerns the effect as coming into being (*secundum fieri*) and not the cause of being itself (*secundum esse*). By implication, Gassendi’s objection that the intervention of a destructive cause is required to end existence, can be inverted to state that it suffices for God to withdraw his preserving activity for existence to cease immediately. A certain symmetry becomes apparent: there where creation extricates the created being from the *nihil*, the being’s incapacity to preserve itself in existence means that only the active preservation by God—transitive preservation— guarantees it from slipping back into nothingness. It is no more difficult to “emerge out of nothing” (AT-VII-48) than to continue in existence, that is, be preserved against the *nihil*. The ‘geometrical’ exposition following the Second Replies expresses this point in a particularly forceful manner: “it is not a greater thing to create something than to preserve it...” (AT-VII-166) In this acute priority of nothingness over existence, and which Blumenberg has accurately characterized as the “normal metaphysical state of affairs”, Descartes does nothing other than move within the implications of the Scholastic doctrine of continual creation. To this extent at least, his reproach to Gassendi that the latter disputes what all metaphysicians accept without question, is entirely correct.

But Gassendi’s objections bring into sharp focus the exorbitant requirements raised by the doctrine of continual creation on human being, and against which the cogito principle was to react. Descartes succeeded in compressing the doctrine’s extended development during the course of Scholastic philosophy into a short formula: “the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one.” (AT-VII-49) From the human perspective, this meant that not only the commencement of existence, but also its continuation, was dependent on divine concursion. Here, dependency entails that human existence requires a *continuous guarantee*, a guarantee, furthermore, that preserves existence from nothingness. In contrast with the transitive preservation of human being, Descartes can go ahead and equate *causa sui* with self-preservation, precisely where *self*-preservation denotes a being for which the very problem of a guarantee of existence cannot arise because its essence entails existence.¹⁴ Burdened by the load of Scholastic metaphysics, it escaped

Descartes that his *own* formulation of the cogito principle, wherein is implied that "... it is impossible that [one] should think without existing", requires neither the Scholastic solution of *transitive* conservation for a contingent being, nor the equivalence between *intransitive* conservation and self-causation. In a word, the cogito—*self*-preservation presupposes human contingency, to deal with it in a new way.

Neither Transitive Preservation Nor Ancient Indubitability

For the explicit working out of the insight that the cogito makes possible another concept of self-preservation, one that does not require its assimilation to *causa sui*, we have to wait until Kant. If we return, once again, to the closing sentence of the footnote to the Paralogisms, wherein the dependency apposite to dependent spontaneity is rendered thematic, the nature of the reaction contained in the cogito principle becomes patent. Reaction, not rejection, because, speaking in Blumenberg's terminology, the very structure of dependent spontaneity 'reoccupies' the problem inherited from the doctrine of continual creation. *Ego cogito sum*: if, positively considered, existence is the condition enabling spontaneity, negatively, the commencement and continuation of existence, hence of spontaneity, is a condition thinking cannot supply from itself. In an observation set down in his handwritten posthumous work, Kant was to formulate this in an emphatic manner: "It is not necessary that we exist."¹⁵ One notices that contingency admits here of two interpretations, namely, that we exist *at all* and that we *continue* to exist. Reformulated from the point of view of the structure of the cogito principle, Kant's observation means that the distinction between commencement and continuation is 'purely conceptual'. That God no longer serves, nor need serve, as a reliable guarantor of human existence, is compatible with the subject's thoroughgoing contingency. Conversely, the passage from transitive to intransitive conservation does not simply lead over to the interpretation of the subject as a self-guarantor.

Retrospectively, i.e. seen from the perspective of the development of the cogito principle that reaches completion in the concept of dependent spontaneity, Gassendi's critique of continual creation is most interesting by what it does *not* succeed in doing. In effect, his alternative, "you will

14. "Although God has always existed, since it is he who in fact preserves himself, it seems not too inappropriate to call him 'the cause of himself'. It should however be noted that 'preservation' here must not be understood to be the kind of preservation that comes about by the positive influence of an efficient cause; all that is implied is that the essence of God is such that he must always exist." Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, AT-VII-109.

15. Kant, *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß*, XIX, 644, cited in Manfred Sommer, *Identität im Übergang: Kant* (Suhrkamp Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1988), pg. 150.

continue to exist, not because you have some power which creates you anew, but because you have a power sufficient to ensure that you will continue unless some destructive cause intervenes" (AT-VII-302), in fact proposes to turn the clock of Western metaphysics back to the interpretation of the human relation to the world and itself holding *prior* to the development of the *creatio continua* doctrine. In effect, none of the examples Gassendi provides of efficient causes that must be continuously present for the continuation of their effects appeals to the Scholastic distinction between existence and nothingness. This is most forcefully brought out in the daring comment "You cannot prove that such an infinite regress is absurd unless you also prove that the world began at some time..." (AT-VII-302) Not surprisingly, Gassendi appeals to Aristotle to defend the thesis that an infinite causal regress is not absurd if by 'causes' one means those whose effects subsist after their extinction. In contrast with this view, that expresses an elementary confidence in the human relation to the world, the formula 'dependent spontaneity' gives voice to a form of intransitive preservation (self-activity) that cannot, of itself, guarantee either its commencement or its continuation. If one wants to draw out the peculiarity of the modern age with respect to the Middle Ages and antiquity, one could say that the cogito principle raises to philosophical concepts the self-understanding of an era that denies itself recourse to *either* a reliable cause sufficient for the transitive preservation of existence, *or* the ancient confidence in the world, wherein the Scholastic distinction between the causes of 'coming into being' and of 'being itself', hence between *esse* and *nihil*, finds no place. The positive possibilities available to modernity are shaped by what it must react to. Whence a decisive implication for our immediate interest: *the contours of the modern concepts of subjectivity and security are the outcome of this double denial.* We are justified in speaking about a modern concept of security because it refers immediately to an historically determinate human self-interpretation: subjectivity.

Self-Consciousness and Self-Preservation

Before turning to a closer examination of the concept of security, I wish to spell out more fully the implications of the reoccupation of continual creation for the modern concepts of self-preservation and self-consciousness. With these reflections I aim to finally bring to a head the difference in the concept of subjectivity which emerges from the reoccupation of the 'answer-position' to Scholastic contingency, with that endorsed by Heidegger. As a consequence of this difference, it will be possible to disjoin the equation Heidegger has set up between security and unconditioned self-empowerment.

These implications are already apparent in Descartes' atomistic account of human temporality. In effect, this theory is developed in response to a possible objection against the transitive preservation of human existence by *causa sui*. Descartes had anticipated the view, according to which "[if] I have always existed as I do now... it [would follow] from this that there was no need to look for an author of my existence." (AT-VII-48) The significance of this remark considerably exceeds its own problem-set. For, once modern rationality has done away with the problem of *causa sui* and the *nihil*, it remains the case that, even under the hypothesis of an indefinitely long previous existence, such that no commencement of self-activity need be postulated, *intransitive* preservation rests on a condition—existence—it does not supply of itself. By suspending the obvious dependency implied in the idea that human existence has a beginning for which the subject is not responsible, it serves to focus attention on a far more radical dependency that subsists even in the case of that hypothesis: self-activity (self-preservation) cannot guarantee its own continuity. *The power for self-preservation cannot be derived from self-preservation.*¹⁶ To this extent, Descartes' formula, according to which the distinction between creation and preservation is merely conceptual, remains in vigor there where the concept of self-preservation has been purged of its assimilation to *causa sui*.

This insight finds its correlate in self-consciousness, which, Kant had noted, is "the simple representation of the 'I'." (B.68) Paraphrasing Descartes, no less than self-preservation, the distinction between the commencement and continuity of self-consciousness is purely conceptual. "In man this [self-]consciousness demands inner perception of the manifold which is *antecedently* given in the subject..." (B.68, my italics) "Antecedently" does not have the meaning of a purely temporal precedence, but indicates that consciousness of the self presupposes sensibility. In other words, the 'affection' of the mind by the 'manifold of sensations' formulates, in Kantian terminology, the insight constitutive for modern man's self-interpretation in general: *self-consciousness always and already finds itself on this side of a happening or occurrence for which the subject is not responsible, without which it cannot sustain itself, and which it cannot explain or render intelligible from itself.* This insight, it must be emphasized, neither does away with, nor 'relativizes' subjectivity; it is the expression of the finitude implied in the modern concept of the subject.

This view stands in the sharpest of contrasts with an earlier cited assertion of Heidegger, according to which "consciousness of things and objects is essentially and fundamentally first self-consciousness and only

16. Dieter Henrich has argued at length in the same direction. See his essays "Die Grundstruktur der modernen Philosophie", *op. cit.*, pgs. 109-115, especially pg. 112, and "Selbstbewußtsein und seine Selbstdeutungen" in *Fluchtlinien: Philosophische Essays* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), pgs. 99-124.

as such is consciousness of objects possible.”¹⁷ In Heidegger’s interpretation, it would have been precisely Descartes’ view that self-consciousness makes possible the consciousness of objects, which assures for the subject the status of a self-positing ground of the existent, in a word, a position of unconditioned power. When the reoccupation of Scholastic contingency is the point of reference of a genealogy of the subject, and not the unconditioned *agere* of *actus purus*, this interpretation of the significance of presentation, *cogitare*, no longer is tenable. *In the concept of self-consciousness is implied neither the commencement of self-consciousness nor its continuation.* In this specific sense, the relation to the self implied in self-consciousness is not one of self-empowerment.

On the other hand, this modern insight does not simply invert the self’s situation, such that the self could be interpreted either as a simple derivate of existence or were ‘given over’ (*ausgeliefert*) to existence. We come here, I believe, to an important, perhaps the essential, difference between the subject and *Dasein*. The constitution of dependent spontaneity is such that it *already includes* self-activity, hence consciousness of the self, and this as an element irreducible to existence.¹⁸ It is the paradoxical condition of the subject to be aware of its essential dependency *and* of the difference between the I and the world. In this difference lies concealed the self’s possibility of actively taking up a position in respect of its own contingency and conditionedness, that is, of determining its existence: *self-determination*. Such, in my understanding, might be the significance of the enigmatic relation between *ego cogito* and *ego sum*.

Insecurity

We can now exhibit the sense of the relation between security and subjectivity. The problem can best be approached by inverting its formulation: in what manner or manners is the subject *insecure*? The inversion is suggested by the nature of the problem itself. Securing the self comes second, not only in the form of a response to a more original condition of insecurity, but because the meaning and possibilities open to self-security are determined by the latter. To be sure, this is not a psychological question. As its formulation anticipates, the problem concerns the *subject*, hence an historically determinate interpretation of the basic constitution of human being. At issue is establishing in what manner insecurity constitutes an essential moment of modern rationality. Now,

17. See §18.

18. “When I have called the proposition ‘I think’ an empirical proposition, I do not mean to say thereby that the ‘I’ in this proposition is an empirical representation. On the contrary, it is purely intellectual, because belonging to thought in general.” *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.423n.

most broadly, insecurity consists in exposure to danger. Danger reveals something as lacking in firmness, as susceptible to loss. That insecurity regards a transcendental, rather than empirical, condition of the subject, that is, a condition of its very constitution *as* a subject, implies that the nature of the danger, and what is thereby imperiled, can be established by reference to the constitution of dependent spontaneity.

Here, once again, reference to Gassendi proves illuminating. The thrust of his objection against the third Meditation aims at dissolving Descartes' equation between intransitive preservation and *causa sui*. In other words, self-preservation does not necessitate the stronger condition of *causa sui*. To this extent, at least, his effort runs parallel to the genesis of modern rationality in the cogito. But there is a decisive difference as well. Gassendi's solution rests on two interrelated assumptions: (1) only a cause of coming into being is required, such that the power to preserve the ego in existence can be derived directly from the ego itself; (2) for this reason, an exogenous cause is required for the ego's annihilation. Death, the destruction of the ego, is *essentially* alien to intransitive preservation in Gassendi's formulation, inasmuch as its concept implies the ego's power to continue of itself in existence. This does not mean, to be sure, that the ego is unexpugnable, for "there is no guarantee that there is not some cause present which might destroy you, or that you may not have some weakness within you which may now finally bring about your demise." (AT-VII-301)

But these causes of the ego's destruction are exogenous in that the concept of the thinking ego implies the *stability* of existence. Therefore, not the continuity of existence, but a disruption in its continuity, requires a cause. From this perspective, no fundamental insecurity could be ascribed to Gassendi's ego, in the sense of a constitutive instability. For the same reason, the need for a guarantee and a guarantor of existence can be exposed as pseudo-problems. All in all, Gassendi's effort to disengage self-preservation from *causa sui* effectively *reverses* the Scholastic thesis that the *nihil* is the normal metaphysical state of affairs: security, and not insecurity, is the basic human condition. Here, once again, Gassendi's solution consists in recovering the indubitability holding prior to the emergence of the abyss of contingency in Christian metaphysics.

The Modern Concept of Security

If we now return to dependent spontaneity in the *Kritik*, a quite different picture emerges. For if here, like with Gassendi, self-preservation is not equivalent to self-creation, nonetheless the "merely conceptual" distinction between creation and preservation is retained, albeit in a transformed manner. The abandonment of transitive conservation, hence of the *nihil* as

the normal state from which the existent must be conserved by a self-causing cause, is compatible with an interpretation where the commencement of spontaneity does not suffice to guarantee its own continuation, not merely in the sense of Gassendi that an exogenous cause is required for its *cessation*, but, to the contrary, that a 'manifold of sensations' must be given for it to *subsist*. With this precise meaning, *Selbsttätigkeit* is irreducible to Gassendi's interpretation of intransitivity, according to which "you have a power sufficient to ensure that you will continue unless some destructive cause intervenes." (AT-VII-302) The subject reveals a *constitutive instability*: the annihilation of the ego does not require a cause that overwhelms or overpowers what would, otherwise, subsist of itself. It suffices that the material for synthesis not be given: "Without some empirical material to supply the material for thought, the actus, 'I think', would not, indeed, take place..." Thus, no less than a reflection on life, the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic of the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft* contain a meditation on death, not as a peripheral or secondary moment of modern rationality, but as co-original with self-activity. For, in its reaction against the *nihil*, the cogito principle takes over death as a constitutive moment of modern rationality. "Constitutive", in so far as death finds a place in the basic constitution of the subject. In effect, existence concentrates in itself not only the positive condition for spontaneity, but also the moment of danger for the subject. *In existence, the third element of the constitution of dependent spontaneity, the subject encounters death, its own death, as a continuous possibility.*

It had been noted earlier that insecurity denotes the state of not being adequately guarded or protected against a hazard. The key word, here, is 'adequately'. For if Gassendi's interpretation of intransitive conservation does not efface the ultimate danger to which life is exposed—death, the self-sustaining power he ascribes to the ego can be understood as mitigating that danger to an adequate level. Metaphysically, this is expressed by saying that, in the same way an efficient cause is required for bringing something into existence, an efficient cause is required for its cessation. It was just this minimal sense of adequate protection that the Scholastic idea of 'a cause of being itself' destroyed. When appraised from the perspective of the concept of rationality that achieves completion in the first *Kritik*, continual creation can be interpreted as having raised the *threshold* that had to be met, such that the criterion of adequate protection could be satisfied. For if the inevitability of the ultimate destruction of the self-sustaining ego by an intervening cause (Gassendi) only raises the relatively weak problem of how that event could be postponed, the modern reoccupation of continual creation inverts the problem and renders it acute by asking how it might be possible to prolong existence. This is the decisive point: *the continuity of self-activity becomes the proper object of security.*

One can scarcely overestimate the significance of this insight for the

modern era. Against Gassendi, the formula dependent spontaneity shows in what manner *conservatio sui* is compatible with the thesis that insecurity could come to define modernity's understanding of the basic human condition. *Securing the subject, i.e. creating and maintaining the natural and social conditions required for continued self-activity, becomes the elemental response of modern rationality to this original condition.* In my opinion, this concept of security, intimately bound up with the emergence of the subject in the continuities and discontinuities leading over the epochal threshold into modernity, governs the unfolding of its 'empirical' content in the security and social security of the welfare state. It makes comprehensible, amongst others, why securing the future as the domain of self-realization of the members of society could become the elemental task of the welfare state. Dealing in a new way with contingency is at the heart of the modern concept of security.

§32. Self-Determination

To better understand the specificity of the subject, one does well in contrasting it with the two interpretations of this concept developed by Heidegger in the course of his reflections on modern philosophy. The first coincides with the genealogy of modern rationality we have documented in Chapter 4. Only the briefest of references is necessary at this point. The passage from the Middle Ages to modernity would have ushered in a radical transformation in man's self-interpretation: in the metaphysical theft of self-causation from the Scholastic God, man assures for himself the status of the *subjectum* of all beings. Only on the basis of this premise was it possible for Heidegger to assert of the subject that "Man knows himself unconditionally certain as that being whose being is most certain. Man becomes the self-positing ground and measure for all certainty and truth."¹⁹

Once this initial step has been taken, two implications follow in its wake. (1) For the one, the "self-unfolding of all of mankind's capacities", the concrete content Heidegger assigns to 'self-certainty', becomes the exercise of a prerogative accruing to the secularized *causa sui*. That is to say, in the same movement by which the cogito assures a self-grounding for the subject, it assures for the subject the possibility of positing ends for itself. More sharply worded, *because* self-grounding, the subject poses ends for itself. As a consequence, not only does self-positing purposivity become illegitimate by unthinkingly repeating what goes before it in history, but, more gravely, can only be justified by reference to the arrogation of a title which is not mankind's own. The outcome of

19. "Der europäische Nihilismus", *op. cit.*, pg. 134.

Heidegger's analysis is clear: *rejecting the usurpation of self-causation eo ipse disqualifies the subject's claim to posing ends for itself.* (2) For the other, inasmuch as modern man "knows himself to be unconditionally certain", subjectivity raises a further claim in respect of the purposes it sets itself: the human relation to power concealed in the *cogito me cogitare necessitates* a process of unlimited self-empowerment. In other words, in the subject's claim to setting purposes for itself lies hidden a teleology of progressive self-aggrandisement. How does this compare with the analytic of subjectivity we have been at pains to reconstruct? If one wished to resume the interpretation of the subject that goes from "The Era of the World-Image" (1938) to "Metaphysics as the History of Being" (1941) by contrast with dependent spontaneity, it could be said that Heidegger has *deprived spontaneity of dependency*, assimilating it to pure or immediate spontaneity, i.e. to the Scholastic *causa sui*.

If one then turns to the chronologically earlier interpretation of subjectivity that Heidegger unfolds in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, first published in 1929, just two years after the apparition of *Being and Time*, then the opposite picture delineates itself: *spontaneity has been sacrificed to dependency*. If the later interpretation forces subjectivity into the straitjacket of the secularization theorem, the earlier imposes on it the stricture of anticipating an Analytic of *Dasein*. As a consequence, neither of Heidegger's two interpretations of subjectivity succeeds in doing justice to the relation of tension that holds between its two terms, dependency and spontaneity, and which Kant had explicitly recognized when asserting that "To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought." (A.51=B.75)

Dasein: A Secularization?

Before passing over to the kernel of the concept of subjectivity—self-determination—I would like to consecrate, albeit briefly, some attention to the interpretation of subjectivity contained in Heidegger's Kant book. Its opening sentence reads: "The following investigation is devoted to the task of interpreting Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a laying of the ground for metaphysics and thus of placing the problem of metaphysics before us as a fundamental Ontology."²⁰ Reading back from *Being and Time*, the analytic of subjectivity unfolded in the *Kritik* would have prepared the way for the analytic of human finitude that reaches completion in a metaphysics of *Dasein* or fundamental ontology.

20. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pg. 1.

Whether such is indeed the case, or whether Heidegger's reading distorts and even disfigures Kant's work, comes second; more fundamental are the three theses guiding that reading, and which I take to be fundamentally correct: (1) transcendental philosophy must primarily be construed as an *ontological* enquiry; (2) the working out of an ontology in the first *Critique* is one and the same process with exhibiting the elemental *constitution* of human being; (3) the relation between pure intuition and pure reason regards the problem of *time*, and more specifically, the temporal constitution of human being. Disagreement rests on the ground of this more basic agreement concerning the significance of Kant's masterwork, which it has been Heidegger's great merit to point out.

But, conversely, because these theses define a common interpretative *orientation*, disagreement focuses on the concrete *interpretation* of each thesis. For the moment we can disregard (3)—the concept of time—as it will receive extended attention in Chapter 8, albeit in a direction entirely different to that proposed by Heidegger. In respect to (1), whereas Heidegger sees in the *Kritik* the anticipation of a 'fundamental ontology', I view the work as the extended development of an 'ontology of appearances', that is, of the most general concepts giving account of appearances as appearances. On the other hand, and this takes us to (2), the most general concepts of an ontology of appearances coincide with those governing the constitution of subjectivity as a dependent spontaneity. The irreducibility of an 'ontology of appearances' to a 'fundamental ontology' rests on the irreducibility of the subject to *Dasein*. My opinion is that in the effort to approximate the finitude of dependent spontaneity to *Dasein*, Heidegger forfeits the moment of *self*-preservation co-constitutive for the subject. In other words, to reconcile the subject with *Dasein*, Heidegger is forced to omit the *intransitivity* implicit in *Selbsttätigkeit*.²¹

Already from the very beginning of the Kant book, in his interpretation of the basic constitution of subjectivity as the domain for the laying of the ground of a metaphysics, Heidegger relinquishes the intransitivity of

21. Although working out this problem greatly exceeds the scope of our enquiry, it may be surmised that in exploring human finitude under the general title of *Geworfenheit*, 'thrownness into being', an Analytic of *Dasein* is determined by, and takes up, the Scholastic problem of contingency. Such, in effect, seems to be the thesis of Blumenberg. In contrast with its function as the privileged category of *world*-interpretation, contingency can also function as an "index of *inner* experience", such that "the contingency of the human self-experience grows to pure facticity and 'thrownness into being'." (Hans Blumenberg, "*Kontingenz*", *op. cit.*, pg. 1794) But whereas modern rationality reoccupies the answer-position to the problem of the *nihil* by resolving it in a new way—*intransitive* conservation, I suggest that an analytic of *Dasein* 'takes up', rather than 'reoccupies', the answer-position left over by Scholastic metaphysics, because it prolongs *transitive* conservation, although now in the guise of a 'fundamental ontology'. An interesting development of this problem would be to ascertain whether the modern reaction to contingency, hence the concept of subjectivity in the sense I have indicated, is at the core of the critique Adorno addresses against Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* in *Negative Dialectics* and *The Jargon of Authenticity*.

self-preservation, reading into the *Critique* the transitive conservation of *Dasein* announced in *Being and Time*. Waiving Kant's explicit stricture that neither dependency nor spontaneity could be given preference, Heidegger asserts: "... we must maintain that intuition constitutes the real essence of knowledge and that, despite the reciprocity of the relationship between intuition and thinking, [intuition] possesses the real importance."²² Drawing attention to Kant's distinction between *intuitus originarius* and *intuitus derivativus*, thus to the finitude constitution of the subject as the basis for the finitude of human knowledge, Heidegger suggests that, for Kant, the essence of knowledge lies 'primarily' in intuition. The subject, in other words, is a 'thinking intuiting', where the first term functions as the qualifier of the second, the truly decisive element of the subject's constitution. The conclusion is at hand: "Our *Dasein* is finite—existing in the midst of beings that already are, [beings to which it has been delivered over (*ausgeliefert*)...]" (pg. 18) If the first part of this sentence still fits within an analytic of the subject, the second part, which I have placed between brackets, belongs to an analytic of *Dasein*. The apparently effortless flow from the one to the other is justified by the idea that thinking is 'secondary' to intuition in the sense of a faculty placed at the 'service' of intuition.²³ Its 'serviceability' (*Dienststellung*) consists in "mak[ing] the being itself as revealed accessible with respect to both what and how it is for everyone at all times." (pg. 18) More harshly worded, Heidegger wants us to believe that the task of reason, in Kant's eyes, was to proclaim and divulge 'Being', to function as its herald. Consequently, the finite constitution of the subject, as per the *Critique of Pure Reason*, would have prefigured the transitive conservation of man by 'Being' announced in a 'fundamental ontology', and which so clearly comes to the fore in Heidegger's discussion of the second volume of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*: "In 'thrownness into being' lies a being-delivered-over of *Dasein* to the world in such a manner that this being-in-the-world is overwhelmed by that to which it is delivered over... In that assignment (*Angewiesenheit*) to the all-powerful, *Dasein* is occupied by it and can only experience itself as belonging to and kindred with this real."²⁴ Perhaps the concept of *Dasein* is no less historically determined than that of subjectivity; could it be the case that if it is possible to speak about a secularization going from the Middle Ages to modernity, then it is precisely in respect of the transitive

22. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pg. 16. I have slightly modified the translation.

23. "All thinking is merely in the service of intuition. Thinking is not simply alongside intuition, 'also' at hand; instead, according to its own inherent structure, it serves that to which intuition is primarily and constantly directed", i.e. Being. (pg. 15)

24. Martin Heidegger: "*Besprechung: Ernst Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. 2. Teil: Das mythische Denken.*", in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), pg. 267.

conservation of man reenacted by Heidegger's fundamental ontology?

Intransitive Conservation

Over against this interpretation of subjectivity stand Kant's own words, and precisely those in which he attempts to draw out the implications of the finite constitution of the subject in contrast with *intuitus originarius*: "intellectual intuition... can never be ascribed to a dependent being, dependent in its existence as well as in its intuition, and which through that intuition determines its existence solely in relation to given objects." (B.72) The finitude of human being, announced in the dependency of the subject on existence—an occurrence for which it is not responsible, without which it cannot sustain itself, and which it cannot explain or render intelligible from itself—leaves open the possibility of *determining* that existence: intransitive conservation, *self-determination*. The inner connection and congruency between Heidegger's two interpretations of subjectivity becomes visible. If it was still possible to sympathize with the philosopher from Königsberg in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* because subjectivity was supposed to have prefigured the secularization of transitive conservation propounded in an Analytic of *Dasein*, insight into the subject's claim to intransitivity must be disqualified as the forgetfulness of man's finitude because intransitivity only corresponds to the 'all-powerful'—*das Übermächtige*. Retrospectively, perhaps it is anything but coincidental that Heidegger should have employed the secularization theorem in giving account of the modern subject; could a secularization of the Scholastic distinction between the transitive conservation of a created world and intransitive conservation (= *causa sui*) be at the core of his critique of the cogito principle?

Be it as it may, self-determination, the claim of the subject to posit purposes for itself, is not the historical implication of the secularization of *causa sui*. To the contrary, it defines a being that is *not* self-grounding, hence finite, inasmuch as the range of purposive opportunities open to it are limited by its historical situation, or as Kant says, that "determines its existence solely in relation to given objects." Rather than overcoming finitude, modernity's original insight—expressed in the formula *cogito sum*—was to recognize that everything turns on what the subject makes of its historically conditioned existence. *That* the subject can actively take up a position in respect of his own situation; herein lies the moment of power proper to subjectivity. *This elemental experience defines, in my opinion, the modern concept of freedom, of autonomy.* But the teleology this suggests is certainly not equivalent to an 'unconditioned self-empowerment'. Historically concrete, emerging as the modern response to Scholastic philosophy's progressive sharpening of contingency, self-deter-

mination *inverts* the latter's value, making of it the opportunity for a human achievement.

I would like to conclude this chapter distilling what, it seems to me, is the central finding of the analytic of subjectivity outlined in the *Kritik d.r. Vernunft*:

1) In its historical conditioning and concretion, human existence is a given, hence the expression of finitude;

2) Human existence is determinability, i.e. the self relates to its existence as the condition of and opportunity for self-activity;

3) Self-activity means the determination of an existence, that is, the self finds its peculiar fulfillment in giving itself ends and realizing these from the range of opportunities opened up by its historically conditioned existence.

CHAPTER 7. REALITY AND TRUTH

Enlightenment, argues the foregoing chapter, is an historically concrete response to the fundamental question: What is man? This question, in my opinion, is the hard core of the *Kritik*. The previous pages have concentrated on exhibiting the connection linking the programmatic distinction between *intuitus derivativus* and *intuitus originarius* to the analytic of subjectivity outlined in the *Æsthetic and Logic*, i.e. the exhibition and description of the fundamental constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity. The claim to a practical radicalization of Enlightenment beyond the stage it has achieved in the welfare state not only presupposes that subjectivity is the basic constitution of human being, but envisages human self-determination as the finality proper to political practice. The issue now at hand consists in developing this initial formulation of subjectivity in the direction of its *ontological* implications. Together with subjectivity, I will argue, determinate concepts of reality and truth belong to the a priori of Enlightenment.

The introduction of these two new concepts is not arbitrary, and responds to insights gained in the course of Part I. On the one hand, both when exploring the concept of technique presupposed in Keynes's *General Theory*, and when uncovering the concept of political practice to which Habermas has recourse in his critique of advanced capitalism, we have come across the concept of *mimesis* which lies at their base. The cogito principle unfolds a *mimetic* relation to reality, but wherein *mimesis* signifies *production*, rather than reproduction. This, properly, is what comes to the fore in the metaphor of 'making'. Consequently, the first contribution of the *Critique* will be to provide a philosophical grounding for the productive concept of reality inherent to Enlightenment. In particular, I aim to show that an analytic of subjectivity is connected to an *ontology of appearances*, that is to say, with the most general concepts giving account of the real *as* real in modernity. In effect, the *Kritik* is the philosophical work wherein modern rationality obtains its mature formulation under the comprehensive rubric of an ontology of appearances.

But also, and intimately bound up with the explication of the concept of reality, emerges the concept of *truth* apposite to modern rationality. *Mimesis* brings into focus the *relation* between man and reality; truth, in its traditional meaning, is that relation conceived in terms of its *adequateness*. Whereas the reproductive concept of *mimesis* posits a pre-given and autonomous reality as the sole 'measure' of truth, Enlightenment's productive interpretation of *mimesis* signifies that this self-evidence has been broken, and that the concept of truth needs to be elaborated in a new manner. The second contribution of the *Kritik* comes therewith into view. The radicality of Kant's thinking consists in having recognized that a

philosophical grounding of the productive concept of reality only reaches completion in the working out of a novel truth-concept. For this reason, he will call the Transcendental Analytic, that sets out the rules of the understanding accounting for the objectivity of objects, a “logic of truth.” In this way, the *Kritik* yields access to the third a priori of Enlightenment, namely, that in the sense to be determined hereafter, man is a measure of reality.

This chapter deals with this problem-set in three sections. The first (§33) sets out the basic configuration of Kant’s ontology of appearances, integrating it into our findings concerning the concepts of reality implied in Keynes’s *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* and Habermas’s critique of ideological consciousness in advanced capitalism. Subsequently, §34 introduces the problem of a cogito-bound truth concept, situating it in the epistemological framework proper to the *Kritik*. Finally, §35 transfers the modern concept of truth to its more original ontological source, namely, the subject’s synthetic relation to reality.

§33. An Ontology of Appearances

The reading I will essay of the *Critique of Pure Reason* aims at (1) evidencing that its ontology of appearances makes explicit the productive interpretation of the human relation to reality inherent to modern rationality, and (2) showing that this novel concept of reality is paired to the interpretation of human being as a subject. To succeed, however, this interpretation must break an equation underlying the entire architectonic of the *Kritik*, transferring the work’s center of gravity from the metaphysics of nature to the idea of transcendental philosophy. Not *endorsing* the idea of transcendental philosophy, with the sense Kant gives this expression, but how it provides the *philosophical grounding* of the concept of reality presupposed in Enlightenment, will be my concern in the forthcoming pages. In particular, only with the emergence of the ‘idea of transcendental philosophy’ do the concepts of form and matter acquire their constitutive significance for the interpretation of modern rationality as a setting-a-given-in-order.

The Middle of the Kritik: A Metaphysics of Nature

In effect, at the very outset of our endeavor, a certain difficulty presents itself to us. The leading question of the *Kritik*—How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?—announces a problem and a task apparently different to that which we have set ourselves, namely, providing a grounding for the modern concept of *theory*. There is no reference in the *Kritik*, either explicit or implicit, to the problem of a grounding for either *technique* or

practice. That this work provides a grounding for modern science means it stipulates an equivalence between an ontology of appearances and a metaphysics of nature. In exhibiting and interconnecting the constitutive features of that ontology, Kant does nothing other than raise to philosophical concepts the ultimate presuppositions governing the inception and development of modern science. Precisely this restrictive equivalence prescribed by Kant hinders any attempt to make clear the *general* grounding the cogito principle might be capable of providing for the productive concept of reality constitutive for modern rationality. Breaking that equivalence is, consequently, the necessary condition for gaining this encompassing perspective. A caveat is in order at this point. In undoing the equivalence between an ontology of appearances and a metaphysics of nature, I am not attempting to secure the paradigmatic character of modern science for modern rationality (something Kant himself accepted), in the sense of a methodological ideal to be approximated by the other branches of knowledge in varying degrees of rigor, the *Geisteswissenschaften* in particular. The generality of the rational grounding which the cogito might be capable of dispensing is not methodological in character, nor does the polemic between ‘explanation’ and ‘understanding’ have a place here; our interest moves in the direction of ascertaining the scope of the ontology that reaches expression in Kant’s attempt to provide a grounding for modern natural science.

Our question can be formulated as follows: would the cogito principle, as elicited from the *Critique*, be capable of providing a grounding for modern technique and practice? The implicit contention, of course, is that the scope of the cogito principle is *general*, rather than restricted to modern science/theory. But as no indication of this broader scope is forthcoming in Kant’s masterwork, how must one go about securing such an amplification? Does the *Kritik* authorize such a breach of its own stipulations? And how could one certify that this extension does not merely warp or disfigure the *Kritik*?

Let us, to begin with, briefly retrace the path followed by Kant’s critical endeavor in its own terms. The exhibition of nature as “the connection of appearances as regards their existence according to necessary rules” (A.216=B.263) marks the outcome of the movement of thinking initiated with the question ‘How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?’, that is to say, ‘How is pure knowledge possible in mathematics and physics?’ Rather than calling into question or transforming the concept of nature deployed in classical physics, Kant’s work explores the conditions of possibility of that concept, tracing these back to their subjective a priori sources. Consequently, in terms of its own intentions, the ontology of appearances unfolded in transcendental philosophy obtains completion in the “System of all Principles of Pure Understanding.” Indeed, the Principles satisfy the two-fold demand implied in the concept of synthetic

a priori judgments to reveal both the *subjective* constitution of objects and that which constitutes an object as such, that is, the most general features making up the *objectivity* of objects for human knowledge.¹ Evidencing *that* the objectivity of objects is constituted by subjective (a priori) conditions, and *what* accrues to the “concept of an object in general” (A.108), defines the self-prescribed task of an ontology of appearances. Its completion coincides with the exhibition of nature as an *order*, i.e. the thoroughgoing interconnection of appearances or metaphysics of nature. Only *after* the exposition of the analogies of experience can Kant vouchsafe that “there are certain laws which first make a nature possible, and these laws are a priori. Empirical laws can exist and be discovered only through experience, and indeed in consequence of those original laws through which experience itself first becomes possible.” (A.216=B.263).

When viewed from the perspective of the problem-set defined by Kant, it is certainly correct to consider the System of Principles as the ‘middle’ of the *Kritik*.² In other words, the System is the section wherein the *equivalence* between an ontology of appearances and a metaphysics of nature is cemented. But everything turns on whether a metaphysics of nature exhausts the ontological scope of the work, hence whether the *center* of the *Kritik* is to be found in the Second Chapter of the Analytic of Principles. My thesis is the following: while a metaphysics of nature works out the scientific (theoretical) implications of an ontology of appearances, the scope of the latter exceeds the properly theoretical domain of modern science to encompass the concept of reality implied in modern technique and practice. At stake, then, is a radicalization of the *Kritik*, and this in the sense of a generalization: *an ontology of appearances is more encompassing than a metaphysics of nature*.

The Center of the Kritik: The Idea of Transcendental Philosophy

To remain faithful to the first *Critique*, such a reading must submit itself to the most stringent of requirements: it must eschew everything but what is implied in “The Idea of Transcendental Philosophy”, as Kant titled the Introduction to the first edition. Not only the System of Principles, but the Schematism of the Pure Concepts, the Analytic of Concepts, and the

1. For this reason, Kant informs his readers in the opening paragraph of the System that “Our task now is to exhibit, in systematic connection, the judgments which understanding... *actually* achieves a priori.” (A.148=B.187, my italics)

2. “The question arises whether for Kant himself and for the manner in which he understood his work, precisely this section [the System of Principles] had such a marked significance, whether we speak in Kant’s sense when we call this section the middle of the work. This question must be answered affirmatively, since in the disposition and unified grounding of this system of principles Kant gains the bedrock on which the truth of the knowledge of things is grounded.” Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, pg. 97.

Transcendental Aesthetic as a whole must be jettisoned. Even the leading question of the work, 'How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?' must remain foreign to our attempt to make clear the general implications of an ontology of appearances. As soon as one is prepared to take this step, however, a certain *conceptual hierarchy* becomes apparent in the work. In effect, the *Critique* reveals a two-tier development or, if you wish, a set of fundamental concepts and another that is founded on, and unfolds, the former. If the grounding of modern science in a metaphysics of nature finds its terminus in the identification and exhibition of the basic constitution of subjectivity, namely, (1) an identity, (2) in a productive activity, (3) related to a given material as the condition of said activity, then the two conceptual levels to which I am pointing become apparent. Highest are those concepts giving account of the constitution of dependent spontaneity as such; subordinated to these, and developing their content, are those proper to a metaphysics of nature. In this manner, for example, the 'I think' principle belongs to the former; the individual categories, such as causality, unity, etc., to the latter. The same applies to the concepts of product in respect of nature or experience; to matter in respect of the manifold of sensations; to form in respect of the extensive or intensive magnitudes of objects, or of their interconnection according to the temporal laws of duration, succession, and coexistence. For each of these pairs, its first term, not the second, constitutes the conceptual domain pertaining to the idea of transcendental philosophy in general. In other words, *what remains open to consideration is nothing more than the cogito principle and the concepts Kant employs to exhibit and interconnect its basic constitution. This alone is the center, and not merely the 'middle', of the Kritik.*

In terms of our original problem, only when we have isolated this kernel will we be in a position to understand how Kant's masterwork provides the philosophical grounding for the concept of reality presupposed in Keynes's *General Theory*, on the one hand, and the practical presupposition of modernity that man 'makes' history, on the other. Otherwise expressed, *the idea of transcendental philosophy, in the sense Kant uses this expression, delivers the key to the productive concept of mimesis at the base of modern technique and the Enlightened concept of political practice.* When, on the one hand, a state of full employment appears as the realized of a realizing activity operating on a given, and, on the other, Habermas enquires what possibilities exist for the practical transformation of advanced capitalism into a classless society, the one and the other, technique and political practice, presuppose the concept of reality which first obtained its mature philosophical expression in Kant's ontology of appearances.

Form and Matter

The task now at hand consists in showing *that* and *how* an ontology of appearances is essentially related to the concept of subjectivity buttressing the entire critical edifice. The concept of the 'transcendental' outlined in the first edition of the *Kritik* can be read as the broad interpretation of its meaning, and where it is most closely associated with an ontological enquiry in general: "I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with *our* a priori *concepts* of objects in general." (A.12) Here, the question regarding the reality of the real, posed in the manner of an interrogating into the objectivity of objects in general, announces the basic problem contained in the idea of transcendental philosophy. The second edition, to the contrary, offers the restricted interpretation of what is meant by 'transcendental', more closely expounding the specificity of transcendental philosophy within the broader scope of an ontological investigation: "I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the *mode of our knowledge* of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori." (B.25) From an enquiry into the objectivity of objects in general, the second edition's shift towards the conditions of an a priori knowledge of objects highlights and anticipates the result of the transcendental deduction, namely, the understanding as *constituting* the objectivity of objects, i.e. an ontology of appearances.³ It follows that the most general concepts giving account of appearances as *appearances* yield the properly ontological concepts emanating from transcendental philosophy.

We must now exhibit the connection between the ontology of appearances in the first critique and the structure of dependent spontaneity at its base. At issue is showing that the most general concepts giving account of appearances as appearances are *one and the same* as those governing the basic constitution of subjectivity. Otherwise stated, an analytic of subjectivity is connected with an ontology of appearances. In the perspective of the reoccupation of Scholastic contingency, it is clear why Kant emphasizes that transcendental philosophy is concerned with 'our' mode of knowledge, a mode that, as opposed to intellectual intuition, requires "thought, which always involves limitations." (B.71). In contrast with immediate spontaneity, capable of supplying the objects of its representations entirely from itself, the productivity of human self-activity must be viewed as a *causa formalis* in a constitutive and co-original relation with a *causa materialis* as its necessary condition. *In subjectivity,*

3. The principles of the understanding "are merely rules for the exposition of appearances; and the proud name of an Ontology that presumptuously claims to supply, in systematic doctrinal form, synthetic a priori knowledge of things in general, must, therefore, give place to the modest title of a mere Analytic of pure understanding." (A.247=B.303)

spontaneity relates to a given material (dependency) as does form to matter. Hence, these are the most general concepts giving account of an identity productively active in a constitutive and co-original relation to a given material, that is, self-preservation.

Yet, on the other hand, “that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation I term its *matter*; but that which so determines the manifold of appearance that it allows of being ordered in certain relations, I term the *form* of appearance.” (A.20=B.34) Now, a metaphysics of nature comes down to the interpretation of nature as a *product*, the achievement ensuing from a productive activity operating on a given material. For this reason, Kant distinguishes between *natura formaliter spectata* and *natura materialiter spectata*. Here again, form and matter are the most general concepts giving account of appearances as appearances, namely, the fundamental concepts of an ontology of appearances. The reality of the real, the objectivity of objects, is conceptualized as the union of form and matter. *The critical restriction of the metaphysical endeavor to an ontology of appearances is equivalent to the exhibition and analysis of the basic constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity, i.e. an analytic of subjectivity.*

Determination and Determinability

Yet, although decisive for assuring the interconnection between subjectivity and an ontology of appearances, reference to form and matter still remains insufficient. For what do form and matter mean? Of these concepts, Kant had said they “underlie all other reflection, so inseparably are they bound up with all employment of the understanding. The one [matter] signifies the determinable in general, the other [form] its determination—both in a transcendental sense...”⁴ It is difficult to find a philosophical formulation more pregnant for an understanding of modern rationality. In effect, the *facticity* of the existent, at the heart of the modern concepts of technique and practice, obtains here its philosophical expression as *determinability*. Otherwise stated, determinability raises to concepts the ontological status of the existent for modern rationality, and this prior to the ontic differentiation of nature and society. Kant’s ontology of appearances makes clear that *the existent is the determinable, or better, the undetermined determinability, for the (rational) activities we call modern practice and technique.* When Marx’s analyses in *Das Kapital* disclose capitalism as *naturwüchsig* or ‘nature-like’, and when Keynes proclaims that the existent state of the economic system is a ‘fact’ open to technical control, the one and the other already move on the ground of the

4. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.266=B.322.

materialization of the natural and social world to which the cogito principle gives expression.

But what is the nature of these activities? Wherein lies their rationality? With this question we pass to the second of the two most basic concepts of an ontology of appearances, *form*, further specified as *determination*. The center of gravity of Kant's analyses rests on the concept of 'presentation', and which corresponds to *cogitare* with the broad meaning indicated earlier. In the Kantian sense, a representation is a taking up and working through of what is given or presents itself. "To this act [of combination] the general title 'synthesis' may be assigned, as indicating that we cannot represent to ourselves anything as combined in the object which we have not ourselves previously combined." (B.130) The taking up and working through determines, in the sense of orders, an undetermined determinability: *setting-a-given-in-order*. Therewith, Kant not only delivers the basic characterization of order in modernity, but does so in a way that exhibits the internal connection between order and reality. As he notes in the *Anthropology*, "to bring order into the manifold" is to "combine [the manifold] according to a rule of thinking."⁵ Although Kant's observation is limited to the order of *experience*, hence to a metaphysics of nature, the concept of order it encloses is broader and is bound up with modernity's *productive* concept of reality in general.

The Philosophical Speculum of Modernity

In the continuation of the genealogy of modern rationality that takes its point of departure in the Cartesian *ræpresentatio*, Heidegger asks: "What, then, does Kant's 'I think' mean? So much as: I pre-sent something as something."⁶ When the meaning of the continuities and discontinuities leading over from theology to modern philosophy have been fixed in advanced, such that the subject's relation to objectivity is condemned to repeat, in a new guise, the position of *causa sui* in respect of a created world, what Kant allegedly means is unconditioned production. But is this interpretation of the Kantian meaning of 'presentation' correct? Isn't it rather the case that the productive relation to reality of modern rationality implies, first and foremost, that spontaneity signifies a *causa formalis*? Self-activity conceals a concept of making, hence an understanding of the relation between the made and the making, irreducible to either the *agere* of *actus purus* (a *causa secundum esse*), or the making of poetic production in *techne* (a 'cause of first movement').

5. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, in *Werke*, Vol. 10, (BA.31).

6. Martin Heidegger, "Entwürfe zur Geschichte des Seins als Metaphysik", *Nietzsche*, Vol. II, pg. 461.

It is fashionable to reproach Kantian philosophy for its dualisms, none of which is more pervasive or thoroughgoing in its implications than that of form and matter. For whom seeks to understand the general configuration of modern rationality by recourse to Kantian philosophy, at issue in the first instance is neither defending nor attacking that dualism, but rather attempting to uncover its peculiar significance. In its most concentrated manner, form and matter, determination and determinability, *explicate* the modern age's understanding of the relation between reality and reason, where 'explication' means identifying and exhibiting the elemental concepts whereby the suspension of the existent's obligatory status opens up the opportunity for relating to nature and society according to criteria having their source in reason itself. "All necessity, without exception, is grounded in a transcendental condition." (A.106) This extremely compact formula could well hold as the leitmotif of modern rationality, and makes of the transcendental enterprise, in the sense ascribed to it by Kant, the modern age's philosophical speculum. Indeed, a transcendental enquiry is only thinkable when the existent has been deprived of its binding or obligatory character, when the existent has lost its persuasive grip on man, and consequently, when relating to the real according to standards having their source in humanity itself becomes the most elementary expression of rationality. Transcendental philosophy accurately 'speculates' or reflects this two-fold movement: simultaneous with the loss of the compulsory character of the existent (in the sense of a mandatory character it possesses out of itself) comes the discovery and analysis of legislative reason, a reason that finds in itself the law of its employment. One could say that the Transcendental Deduction contained in the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft* is the 'deduction' of modern rationality at large.

§34. Truth and Epistemology

There is scarcely any topic which has attracted greater philosophical attention than the concept of truth. The disproportion between the scope of this issue and what can be achieved here hardly needs to be mentioned. In the face of the enormous variety of meanings attributed to this concept throughout the history of Western philosophy, it is indispensable to establish, in advance, in what manner the concept of truth is both relevant to, and determined by, our topic.

We are attempting to exhibit and analyze the most basic concepts of Enlightenment, the concepts that mark the limits of any and all social variations on modern rationality. Together with subjectivity and reality, I will argue in this and the following section, Enlightenment is a determinate concept of truth. When faced with this proposition, the reader's immediate reaction is probably one of disconcertment. For even if one grants that the

welfare state, in what concerns its economic foundations, already embodies the rationality proper to Enlightenment, what could it possibly mean that economic technique in the welfare state is guided by a concept of 'truth'? No matter how painstakingly one combs through Keynes's *General Theory*, no such thing as an economic reflection on truth is to be found. Nor, for that matter, do his theoretical elaborations make mention of a concept of truth which Keynes were then to employ as something that goes of itself and that requires no special consideration. Where, if at all, is a concept of truth to be found in the *General Theory*? And in what sense can one say that the technique of welfare economics only is imaginable within the a priori of Enlightenment's truth-concept? On the other hand, in what sense could one say that the concept of political practice endorsed by Enlightenment also presupposes a concept of truth? In what way does a concept of truth condition the possibility of the critique of (advanced) capitalism and the utopian vocation of Enlightened political practice? Isn't truth, after all, a *theoretical* rather than a practical concept?

'Reason is the Measure of the Positive'

My thesis will be that the truth concept we are looking for obtains its general formulation in the *Kritik d.r. Vernunft*. The terms in which it is presented are, however, highly abstract. If, then, one immediately begins by attempting to unpack the *Kritik*, the relevance of its truth concept for technique and practice will remain unperceptible. Therefore, before embarking on a consideration of Kant's masterwork, I want to outline, in a preliminary and more tangible manner, the basic contours of a response to these questions, drawing attention to an early newspaper article by Marx, published in the *Rheinische Zeitung* under the title "The Philosophical Manifesto of the Historical School of Law". This scathing critique of the Historical School contests Gustav Hugo's claim that the natural law endorsed by the latter is an 'offshoot' of Kantian philosophy: "Hugo *misinterprets* his teacher *Kant* by supposing that because we cannot know what is *true*, we consequently allow the *untrue*, merely because it *exists*, to pass as *fully valid*."⁷ Not simply the reference to the true and the false, but the fact that these are presented in the framework of the disjunction between existence and validity, is illuminating for our purposes. For this disjunction lies at the very kernel of the modern concept of critique which we have explored in §30. Indeed, Marx further unmasks the significance of Hugo's reasoning as follows: "If the positive is supposed to be valid because it is *positive*, then I have to prove that the positive is not valid

7. Karl Marx, "The Philosophical Manifesto of the Historical School of Law", *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), vol. 1. pg. 204. I have slightly modified the translation's rendering of the original's "wenn es nur *existiert*."

because it is *rational*... If reason were the measure of the positive, the positive would not be the measure of reason.” (pg. 204) As the irony makes patent, the burden of Marx’s contention is that *reason* is the measure of the positive, *not vice-versa*. Here, it seems to me, we come to stand on the bedrock of Enlightenment’s truth-concept. For the recognition that the positive is not valid (true) merely because the *positive*, already implies a distantiating from the given world, whereby it has lost its overwhelming persuasive hold over man, its claim to being true *of itself*. The loss of persuasivity of the existent world, and its discovery as the ‘merely’ positive, is the other side of the coin of having recognized that reason has become a measure of truth. The distancing-that-negates-the-binding-character-of-what-is, in view of making room for the exercise of reason, not only encloses the modern concept of critique, but also, and even primarily, the truth concept constitutive for Enlightenment. Inverting Marx’s observation, the positive is valid (true) if and when it is *rational*.

This formula is the purest expression of the truth concept presupposed in Enlightened political practice; the practical transformation of the given social world is required where and when it is *false*, irrational. Certainly, the question immediately arises what ‘counts’ as rational (true) or irrational (false). Further specifying Enlightenment’s truth concept entails clarifying the criteria according to which the existent social world is irrational or rational. Herein lies Kant’s contribution. To have worked out these criteria of the Enlightened concept of truth, and to have grounded them in the novel concept of reality emerging with the cogito principle, is, as we shall see, the great achievement of the *Kritik*.

But before passing to examine this text, if we now turn to the *General Theory*, the concept of truth which we were looking for becomes visible. It is not an ‘economic’ concept of truth, but rather the self-evident presupposition which goes in advance of and gives meaning to economic theory and technique. In effect, when Keynes observes that “the world as it is or has been” is a “fact of observation”, not a necessary state of affairs, he moves within the *a priori* of Enlightenment that man is the measure of the given world. With the critique of the postulates of classical economics, the trade cycle of short-lived prosperity and long bouts of severe unemployment loses its persuasive hold over man as that to which he must accommodate himself, as that which gives him his measure, to become the ‘merely positive’, ‘what is’, and on which man can impose his own measure of a rational society—full employment—by way of its technical transformation. The discovery of the thoroughgoing irrationality (falsehood) of the existent economic system clears the ground for its rationalization. However far removed from the kind of problems addressed in the *General Theory*, Marx’s critique of the Historical School of Law voices the self-evident presupposition governing Keynes’s theoretical enquiries: “reason [is] the measure of the positive.” *Allocation, dis-*

tribution, and stabilization, the economic functions of the welfare state, are conditioned in their possibility by this concept of truth.

A Cogito-Bound Concept of Truth

In short, I take Kant's *Critique* to be the work wherein Enlightenment's presupposition that man is the measure of truth obtains its accomplished philosophical grounding. This insight simultaneously *opens up* a perspective from which to deal with the vast problem of the concept of truth, and *restricts* the framework in which it can be analyzed. Some anticipatory words on this two-fold development are in order.

On the one hand, the possibility of working out an Enlightened concept of truth is rooted in an analytic of subjectivity and an ontology of appearances. The novel interpretation of human being as a dependent spontaneity inaugurates a new understanding of the human relation to truth, in a word, a *modern* truth concept. That, however, this novel concept of truth must be outlined *after* an ontology of appearances, rather than before it, is not coincidental, but responds to the very essence of the truth concept itself. As I shall argue, *to articulate a concept of truth is to raise to concepts a specific understanding of the human relation to reality.* The relation to being, *as a relation*, is at the core of the question 'What is truth?' Significantly, this very question explicitly inaugurates the Transcendental Logic of the *Critique*. Kant's ontology of appearances, wherein the modern concept of reality reaches its definitive philosophical articulation, *necessarily* leads over into an examination of the concept of truth. The *Kritik* sets forward, in its own way, what had been said much earlier by the author of the *Metaphysics*: "as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth."⁸ But the ontological foundations of this novel truth concept rest on the concept of human being worked out in an analytic of subjectivity. Ultimately, the response available to Kant when asking 'What is truth?' is given in advance by his response to the more fundamental question 'What is man?' Enlightenment, then, implies a specific concept of truth insofar as it already contains a determinate interpretation of human being (as subject) and of reality (as a product). Conversely, in sketching out the concept of truth apposite to Enlightenment, one draws out the implications of an analytic of subjectivity and an ontology of appearances.

On the other hand, in the very movement by which Enlightenment clears itself a path for dealing with this concept, it also *restricts* the possibilities available to analysis. At issue here is nothing other nor more than the concept of truth pertinent to the self-preservation of reason. In

8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 993b30.

other words, we are concerned with sketching out a *cogito-bound* concept of truth, and this in a strict sense: the boundaries of the latter are those of the cogito principle itself. But *what* are the bounds of a truth concept anchored in the cogito principle? Is its scope strictly *epistemological*? Does, in other words, the concept of truth rooted in the cogito principle raise a purely cognitive problem? Such, in effect, is the explicit project Kant envisages in the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft*. The grounding of modern science effected by this work would seem to have raised the problem of truth (and falsehood) from a strictly *theoretical* perspective, hence as a feature of *knowledge*. The question, however, is whether it would not be possible to uncover in the *Kritik* a more radical understanding of the concept of truth, one which by far surpasses its purely epistemological problem-field, and which coincides with the concept of reality as such and in general. If this were the case, the cognitive significance of truth, although first in the order of exposition, comes second in the order of foundation. This, indeed, is the tenor of the argument to be presented hereafter. Higher than the different meanings that can be taken over by *cogitare*, hence of the different relations that can be enacted between the *ego* and its *cogitata*, stands the relation *as such* between subjectivity and objectivity. Otherwise stated, if truth, most generally considered, raises to concepts the interpretation of the human *relation* to reality, then a consideration of that relation, in abstraction from the specific modalities it can take on, is the principal task of an investigation into the cogito-bound truth concept. *Only secondarily, in the different manners of actualizing the general relation to reality constitutive for modernity, are the different modalities of its truth concept adumbrated.*

Its epistemological variant, which Kant explicitly envisages in the *Kritik*, would already be a restriction of this more encompassing concept of truth, inasmuch as the former renders thematic the *theoretical* relation of the subject to reality. But it does not mean that the concept of truth worked out in Kant's masterwork is circumscribed, in its essential characterization, to theory. To the contrary: whereas the theoretical concept of truth pertains to what Kant calls a 'metaphysics of nature', the general concept of truth, to which the first is subordinated, pertains to the idea of transcendental philosophy. By implication, and this will prove decisive for the modern concept of history, *truth (and falsehood) become possible attributes of the subject's practical and technical relations to reality.* A cogito-bound concept of truth, in short, brings into focus the vicissitudes of the relation between subjectivity and reality, and in respect of which theory, practice, and technique are its particular relational modalities.

Consequently, to prepare the way for an analysis of the modern truth concept, it is necessary to begin at a more local level, reconstructing the problem to which the concept of truth formulated in the *Kritik* is a response. In other words, a *regressive* approach is required, that takes us

from a metaphysics of nature to the idea of transcendental philosophy, hence from the theoretical truth concept to the most general concept of truth implied in the cogito principle.

Adæquatio rei et intellectus

The passage of the Preface to the second edition of the *Kritik* is well-known: “while reason must seek in nature, not fictitiously ascribe to it, whatever as not being knowable through reason’s own resources has to be learnt, if learnt at all, only from nature, it must adopt as its guide, in so seeking, that which it has itself put into nature.” (B.xiv) One does not exaggerate when asserting that the entire metaphysics of nature worked out in the Transcendental *Æsthetic* and *Analytic* is the philosophical response to this fundamental transformation of science and scientific knowledge. But what, one may ask, is the peculiar status of the transformation, as outlined in the cited passage, in respect of the reflections carried out in the *Critique*? And what sort of a philosophical response does it make possible? Examination reveals that the import of the prefatory remark is *prescriptive*, rather than descriptive. Kant is pointing to a transformation in the *definition* of science and, above all, of *knowledge*. Kant’s problem is a philosophical reflection on what modernity *calls* knowledge, not merely what *is* knowledge. Paraphrasing Wittgenstein, a metaphysics of nature can be said to show not merely *how* modernity practices science, but also *what* the era calls ‘science’.⁹ The sort of philosophical response available to the *Kritik* is, from this perspective, exclusively clarifying in scope.

What is ‘called’ knowledge? Kant’s schematic observation contains all that is essential: (scientific) knowledge is the outcome of an explanatory projection continuously confronted with, tested against, the experimental findings yielded by nature. This formulation has lost none of its actuality. Knowledge counts as, is called, the achievement relating a theoretical activity (projecting a design concerning the possible interconnection of natural phenomenæ) to experimental data. How does the problem of truth come into its own here? Evidently, in that truth is the basic feature of knowledge. While trivial, this assertion has an implication of cardinal importance for the concept of truth. For if the apparition of modern science transforms the concept of knowledge, then the concept of truth itself requires a comparable reelaboration. But what sort of a reformulation? Knowledge, it was pointed out, counts as or is ‘called’ the achievement relating a theoretical activity to experimental data. With this, of course,

9. “The laws of logic... can be said to shew: how human beings think, and also *what* human beings call ‘thinking’.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. by G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees, and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), Part I, §131.

one has not yet said whether scientific knowledge is true or false; *but one has indicated under what conditions it can be either true or false*. To put it once again in Wittgenstein's words, the problem Kant has before himself concerns the 'rule' of theoretical truth, rather than its 'extensions', that is to say, what is 'called' theoretical truth, rather than what 'is' true or false. And here, once again, the sole task open to philosophical thinking is clarification, rather than explanation.

These preliminary reflections shed light on the manner in which the *Kritik* first introduces the problem of truth in the preliminary section to the Transcendental Logic called the "Division of General Logic into Analytic and Dialectic." Kant: "The question, famed of old, by which logicians were supposed to be driven into a corner... is the question: What is truth? The nominal definition of truth, that it is the agreement of knowledge with its object, is assumed as granted; the question asked is as to what is the general and sure criterion of the truth of any and every knowledge."¹⁰ Kant's response offers a definition: what is called truth is the agreement of knowledge with something other than itself, the object. In several opportunities throughout the course of the *Kritik*, Kant underlines that this, in effect, is the concept of truth to which he subscribes.

This definition seems disappointing on two counts. Firstly, the transformation in the concept of truth brought about by science seems to have been forgotten and put aside, only to repeat what was already its traditional conceptualization. In the classical definition of Aquinas, *veritas est adæquatio rei et intellectus*. Both the concept of adequateness and its manifold variations—convenience, correspondence, conformity—presuppose the relational character of truth. If one returns to Kant, precisely this relationality is retained: truth is "the agreement of knowledge with its object." And secondly, the modern reformulation of the concept of truth was to have been the outcome of the transformation in the concept of knowledge. Nonetheless, as was the case with his predecessors, Kant takes *judgment* to be the seat of knowledge: "Judgment is... the mediate knowledge of an object..." (A.68=B.93) Consequently, truth and falsehood are attributes of judgment. As was already the presupposition of the philosophical tradition before him, also the philosopher of Königsberg takes judgment to be what agrees or disagrees with the object: "Truth and error... are only to be found in the judgment..." (A.293=B.350) In conclusion, rather than explicating in a new way the 'rules' of knowledge and truth, Kant's definition of truth as adæquation appears to be a consequence of the retention of the traditional concept of knowledge as judgment. Nevertheless, another possibility is thinkable: would this continuity hide an essential *discontinuity*? Could it be the case that Kant's formula "the agreement between knowledge and its object" conceals a

10. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.57=B.82.

fundamental rupture with the traditional *adæquatio* formula because the concepts of knowledge and judgment have, meanwhile, been drastically revised?

Truth and Knowledge

An initial reference to Kant's revision of the basic structure of judgment has already been made in the context of the modern concept of critique. At issue here, however, is how it contributes to re-elaborating the concept of truth, *theoretical* truth in the first instance. This revision is already anticipated in the cited definition of judgment as "mediate knowledge" or, as Kant immediately adds, a "representation of a representation." That knowledge is mediate means that judgment is *synthetic*, i.e. that the subject can cognize and recognize an object, can *relate* to it, only in so far as it already in advance announces and gives itself to him as a manifold of sensations. Kant expresses this by saying "If knowledge is to have objective reality, that is, to relate to an object... the object must be capable of being in some manner given." (A.155=B.194) In contrast with an understanding that could give itself its objects from itself, thereby relating *directly* to them, the relation of human understanding to objects and objectivity is indirect, mediate. This has two initial consequences for the concept of (theoretical) truth, namely, (1) that the adequacy or inadequacy of the relation between thinking and its objects is governed by the indirectness of that relation itself, that is, it expresses, in a manner as yet undetermined, the *indirect* access human thinking has to objects in general; (2) the working out of a (theoretical) truth concept must build on the prior decision concerning the basic constitution of the subject as a dependent spontaneity. Kant formulates this second point in a particularly forceful manner in the Transcendental Deduction of the second edition: "We cannot think an object save through categories; we cannot *know* an object so thought save through intuitions corresponding to these concepts. Now all our intuitions are sensible..." (B.165) The reference to 'we' regards human beings, hence *human* knowledge. The truth or falsehood of knowledge is rooted in the finite structure of subjectivity.

In short, subjectivity only secures a relation to objectivity with knowledge; that relation is none other than the relation of thinking to the manifold of sensations, and for which Kant reserves the expression 'synthesis'. Human knowledge, the knowledge of a finite being, possesses a synthetic structure; in it, an object is represented, but is represented as the union of form and matter. Consequently, to determine whether knowledge of an object is true or false, the *two* constituents going into the (indirect) relation to the object must be taken into consideration, and not merely thinking. Such is the tenor of Kant's argument: "the mere form of

knowledge... is far from being sufficient to determine the material (objective) truth of knowledge..." (A.60=B.85) Another way of putting it is that knowledge—an objective (indirect) relation—is composed of formal and material elements, which yield the two aspects in respect of which truth-criteria must be sought. The relevance of form and matter to the novel 'rules' of knowledge and truth organizing modern science is at hand: "We must first, independently of logic, obtain reliable information; only then are we in a position to enquire, in accordance with logical laws, into the use of this information and its connection in a coherent whole, or rather to test it by these laws." (A.60=B.85) Nonetheless, the essential has already escaped us if one simply follows Kant in the effortlessness with which he introduces the distinction between the material and formal criteria of truth. For the very possibility of the distinction is preceded by a new interpretation of the constitution of human being and its manner of relating to the real. *Not because truth has formal and material criteria is knowledge the combination of form and matter; to the contrary, because judgment has received an essentially new determination—synthesis, it then becomes necessary to distinguish between the material and formal criteria of truth.*

'A Logic of Truth'

Once the *Kritik* has taken this initial step, the path is definitely cleared for the further unfolding of the concept of truth in view of a 'metaphysics of nature'. Although the central task stipulated in the question 'How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?', and which reaches completion in the grounding of modern natural science in the System of Principles, its restriction to a *theoretical* concept of truth runs in a direction contrary to our interest. Therefore, the briefest of references will suffice for our purposes.

Given that the ontic domains of knowledge are manifold, no general standard of the material condition of truth can be either demanded or supplied. In what regards the form of knowledge, to the contrary, "logic, in so far as it expounds the universal and necessary rules of the understanding, must in these rules furnish criteria of truth." (A.59=B.84) The Kant reader will immediately recognize the ambiguity of the concept "rules of the understanding", so fruitfully exploited in the *Kritik*. On the one hand, they can be taken to mean the laws of logic in the traditional sense. As such, these rules are the subject matter of general logic, which abstracts from all relations to objectivity. On the other hand, and this is precisely the route Kant will pursue, one can take the rules of the understanding to supply the "form of the thought of an object in general" (A.51=B.75), that is, the "transcendental content" provided by thinking and

constitutive of the objectivity of objects. These rules are the subject matter of a transcendental logic, and deliver a transcendental, albeit formal, truth-criterion. The "Logic of Truth", as Kant also calls the transcendental analytic, can then lay out the groundplan for a metaphysics of nature. Looking back on the System of Principles, where the transcendental content subjectivity introduces into objects has been exhaustively presented and interconnected, Kant can then say that "these rules of the understanding are not only true a priori, but are indeed the source of all truth (that is, of the agreement of our knowledge with objects), inasmuch as they contain in themselves the ground of the possibility of experience viewed as the sum of all knowledge wherein objects can be given to us..." (A.237=B.296)

§35. Truth and Ontology

Nevertheless, from the point of view of modern rationality, this preliminary purview of the concept of theoretical truth has not succeeded in penetrating into and establishing itself within the circle of what is essential in Kant's thinking on truth. Although it was indispensable to trace the manner in which Kant singles out the formal and material criteria of truth, leading them back to the indirect or mediate relation of subjectivity to objectivity, we still remain far removed from our initial task, namely, exhibiting the *epochal* significance of the concept of truth laid out in the *Kritik*. In particular, the cognitive interpretation of truth elaborated thus far gets us no closer to an understanding of how Kant's text could yield the blueprint for the claim to truth raised by modern technique and Enlightened political practice. The relevance of the *Kritik* to these domains only comes into view when one succeeds in linking up truth with the modern concept of reality. Thus, leaving behind the problem-field which is decisive for a grounding of *theoretical* (scientific) knowledge and truth, a grounding which Kant took to be the principal enterprise of his book, we must now enter the more fundamental set of problems raised by the modern concept of truth in general. In short, we abandon epistemology in favor of ontology.

Although indispensable if we are to understand concretely what it could mean that both economic technique in the welfare state and the Enlightened concept of political practice rely on a cogito-bound concept of truth, the immediate difficulty presented by this new domain is its inordinate abstractness. As soon as an analysis is announced of 'the modern concept of truth in general', the reader is liable to shy away from such an endeavor, asking whether he or she is not being invited to embark on a one-way journey leading into an 'ideal' sphere of conceptual entities detached from the concrete experiences of everyday life. In the face of this

unsavory prospect, I would ask the reader to muster up enough patience to follow the course of the coming analyses, resting assured that a concretization in respect of welfare economics and Enlightened political practice *will* be shortly forthcoming.

Thinking - Things

We return to the traditional definition of truth, *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. To the essence of truth belongs adequateness. The adequateness of what and to what? Aquinas's formula says it: of thought to things. Truth stands for a relation, in the mode of adequateness, between thinking and the object of thought. It follows, then, that the concept of adequateness or inadequateness is determined by the meaning ascribed to the relation as such. In other words, the concepts of truth and falsehood are subordinated to what goes in advance of either, namely, the relation between thinking and things. This relation as a relation, thus the 'thingness' of things and the essential features pertaining to thinking as a thinking of things, is the ultimate source whence the concept of truth draws its meaning as *adaequatio*.

The basic transformation brought about by Kant in the interpretation of this relation postulates, as we have seen, its indirectness. Human knowledge is *mediate*. In contrast with *intuitus originarius*, thinking is the expression of an understanding "which by itself knows nothing whatsoever, but merely combines and arranges the material of knowledge, that is, the intuition, which must be given it by the object." (B.145) But what is the significance of this change? What modification does it introduce into the traditional concept of truth? This, that knowledge is a *product*. In other words, *objectivity is the achievement of subjectivity*. If we now return to Aquinas's *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the sense of the transformation in the relation between thinking and things can be clarified. The *adaequatio* formula remains caught up in "a certain transcendental dualism which does not assign these outer appearances to the subject as representations, but sets them, just as they are given us in sensible intuition, as objects outside us, completely separating them from the thinking subject." (A.389) The thingness of things, their *reality*, is given in advance as entirely autonomous of thinking. And, *inasmuch as the reality of things is independent of thinking, things, and things alone, are the measure of truth*. The formula *adaequatio rei et intellectus* expresses the idea that thinking is adequate *to* things. But what is expressed when noting that the *intellectus* finds its measure in *rei*, such that it adjusts itself to these as its measure? That the relation between thinking and things, as a relation, is *reproductive*. When the real is an autonomous entity, *veritas* designates reproductive fidelity, an accurate repetition of what in advance

gives itself of itself as the real. The *Kritik* calls this dogmatism. A distinction such as that introduced by Kant between the formal and material criteria of truth make no sense for the *adaequatio* formula because the sense of the relation between thinking and things is entirely different. If also here truth designates the relation of human being to reality from the point of view of its adequate- or inadequateness, the criterion of truth must be established by reference to the traditional meaning of *mimesis*: imitation, repetition.

Over against the “transcendental dualism” implied in the traditional definition of truth, the possibility of a modern concept of truth rests on the synthetic determination of judgment. The thingness of things comes to be determined as objectivity, i.e. as a *product*, and the relation between thinking and things as *productive*. The possibility and even the necessity of a radical reformulation of the concept of truth emerges when *mimesis* comes to be viewed as production, rather than reproduction. Together with this stands the insight that the relation between thinking and things is a whole from which only by abstraction ‘thinking’, ‘relation’, and ‘things’ can be isolated.

Nonetheless, although this initial finding already enters the domain of what is essential in Kant’s thinking on truth, one must treat it with caution. If reconstructed in terms of the problem-set proper to the *Kritik*, one still would not have attained the generality which lies hidden in the cogito-bound truth concept. For although the nature of the *relation* has been revised, Kant’s development of the truth concept shares with the *adaequatio* formula the *terms* of the relation: *rei et intellectus*, things and thinking, in a word, knowledge. Even there where it revolutionizes the concept of judgment and the sense of the relation between its two terms, the *Kritik* takes over and furthers the framework within which the metaphysical tradition envisages the concept of truth. For, as worked out in Kant’s masterwork, the question of truth remains fastened to the domain of *theory*: under what conditions is *knowledge* possible? Otherwise stated, under what conditions are *true judgments* possible? It remains the case that for Kant judgment is the seat of truth, hence that the scope of the truth concept is strictly *epistemological* in character. What is now required, then, is that we take the modern concept of truth to its more original source, the domain of the human relation to reality as such and in general, and for which theory is but one of its modalities.

Subjectivity - Objectivity

To this effect, we can fall back on a thesis extensively defended in §33. A metaphysics of nature is included in, but does not exhaust, an ontology of appearances. It should be possible to derive a general concept of truth

directly from the idea of transcendental philosophy, namely, the cogito principle. To do so, the following insight is decisive: whereas Kant's move was to determine judgment as synthesis, one can invert the direction of this determination, noting that judgment is one amongst the possible synthetic activities in which the subject can engage. The concept of synthesis is broader and falls together with ontological productivity as such; judgment is but one of its modalities. As a consequence of this shift, *truth and falsehood become possible attributes pertaining to a synthetic product in general*. Knowledge involves the latter's theoretical restriction.

Now, truth and falsehood not merely imply relationality—the relation between human being and reality—but render it thematic in a specific manner, namely, in the mode of adequacy or inadequacy. Consequently, in the perspective of the cogito principle, these attributes are henceforth determined by reference to the specific relationality implied in the concept of a product as such and in general. Indeed, the relation between thinking and things grounding the *adaequatio* formula reappears, in terms of the idea of transcendental philosophy, purely as the relation between a productive activity (subjectivity) and its product (objectivity). These preparatory considerations help us to formulate the *status quaestionis* with the requisite sharpness and generality: if a cogito-bound concept of truth hinges on the relation between a productive activity and its product, *in what manner would it still be possible to speak of the adequateness or inadequateness of the productive activity to its product?* If one relinquishes the transcendental dualism implicit in the traditional doctrine of truth, and wherein the complete separation of things from thinking allowed the former to provide the independent measure for truth, what measure of truth is available when the object is a subjective achievement? If, against the *adaequatio* formula, the concept of a product is incompatible with a reality completely separate from a realizing activity, how to avoid the *opposite* move, namely, entirely subordinating the product to the productive activity, such that the latter would be the sole measure and criterium of truth?

That this move occurs with the advent of the subject is, of course, Heidegger's contention. "Man gives the existent the measure, insofar as he, from himself and for himself, determines what is permitted to hold as existent."¹¹ From the point of view of the genealogical account underpinning this claim, not only the inversion's metaphysical significance, but its very necessity is evident. The secularization of the *agere* of *actus purus* into the *cogitare* of the *ego* would entail that the subject takes over the position of God as the measure of the existent; the passage to modern rationality effects a simple transfer or displacement of the standard of truth to the subject as its sole bearer. Or, to put it another way, the secularized *summum ens* is also the secularized *summum verum*.

11. Heidegger, "Der europäische Nihilismus", *op. cit.*, pg. 171.

Now, it must be conceded to Heidegger that the productive, rather than reproductive, relation to reality implied in synthesis inverts, in a certain sense, the relation of measure holding in the *adaequatio* formula of truth. The modern concept of truth discovers in subjectivity the formal measure of the real. A measure, rather than *the* measure. The rupture with transcendental dualism means that, in opposition to the complete separation of the terms of the truth relation, a cogito-bound concept of truth interprets human spontaneity ('thinking') as a principle of *formal* causality, but no more than that: the product cannot be entirely subordinated to the productive activity as its comprehensive measure because the latter only supplies its form. Against the secularization theorem, it must be said that the real is irreducible to the subject's productive activity, although not completely separate from it. Only on this condition, moreover, does the possibility subsist that truth denote a *relation*, a connection between *two* terms, subjectivity and objectivity. If the object is entirely subordinated to the subject, as is the *ens creatum* to the *summum ens*, then inadequateness no longer is a relevant problem. Precisely because it precludes such a move, the cogito-bound concept of truth presents a special difficulty that can best be formulated as the juxtaposition of two requirements: (1) the real is always and already the achievement of a productive activity; and (2) the achievement may or may not be adequate to, consistent with, what is implied in the concept of reality.

Truth in Technique and Practice

Having come this far along in what was announced as an analysis of the 'modern concept of truth in general', the reader will now expect a concretization of what has been developed heretofore. In shifting from an epistemological to an ontological perspective, we have (1) formulated the concept of truth as an attribute of a 'synthetic product in general', and (2) asserted that, together with the recognition of man's productive relation to reality, an certain inversion takes place in the traditional *adaequatio* formula of truth, such that man becomes the formal measure of the real. When one reads the *Kritik*, hoping to find in this text the blueprint for the basic concepts of Enlightenment, the elemental question that must be posed to Kant is whether these highly abstract characterizations of truth could in any way render more comprehensible what is going on in either Keynes's *General Theory* or an Enlightened critique of advanced capitalism.

How, then, is the cogito-bound truth concept relevant to economic technique in the welfare state? Here, as so often, it is not the complicated details but the most massive and simple of features which are essential, yet also those which tend to escape one's attention. What the economic

theoretician does in the welfare state is to set up a model wherein the aggregate supply and demand can be charted along a series of possible points of equilibrium. To do so, certain factors, e.g. the skill and quantity of labor and equipment, the tastes and habits of the consumer, are separated and held to be 'given'. On the other hand, aggregate supply and demand are then defined as *functions* in a mathematical sense, i.e. as the product of certain 'independent variables' such as the propensity to consume, the schedule of the marginal efficiency of capital, and the rate of interest. By quantifying these functions, it then becomes possible to infer the quantities of the 'dependent variables', e.g. the volume of employment and the national income, along a series of different equilibrium points.

What is of overriding, even sole importance to the theoretical enterprise of the economist are decisions concerning which variables are relevant to supply or demand, which mathematical formulas account for their influence on either, which factors are given, which unit of quantity is suitable, and so forth. Nonetheless, if one searches for the cogito-bound concept of truth in these, the kinds of considerations which interest the economist, one has already gone too far afield. Because regardless of the formulas and instruments at the disposition of the economic theoretician, what he *does* most essentially is to *compare* the given world with a measure he himself has set up, namely, the measure he calls a 'state of full employment'. Precisely insofar as the given world does not meet the measure, is *inadequate* to it, the task of economic technique is to intervene in the independent variables of the economic system, such that a relation of *adequation* can be brought about: 'theoretical' full employment = 'actual' full employment.

Bringing about this state of full employment, as what defines his very task and competence as a theoretician and technocrat, is a self-evidence which the economist does not dream of questioning, and which he cannot question without pulling out from under his feet the very ground on which he stands. And yet only here does the concept of truth governing economic technique in the welfare state make itself known. *For the equation 'actual full employment = theoretical full employment' is nothing but a technical concretization of how Kant's Kritik understands the formula adæquatio rei et intellectus.* In other words, it makes concretely comprehensible what it means that, with the productive relation to reality implied in modern technique, Enlightenment inverts the sense of the Scholastic formula, such that, to use Marx's formula once more, "reason is the [formal] measure of the positive." A state of full employment induced by the technical manipulation of the economic system is 'true' insofar as man projects a 'measure' onto the given social world, transforming the latter in such a way that it comes to be adequate to, in conformity with, that human measure. Correspondingly, the transformation of the economic system into a state of actual full employment is the bringing into being of a state of

affairs which owes its reality (truth), that is, its status as a state of full employment, to technique. For the measure of full employment is not derived from experience but is projected onto it as what guides its technical transformation. Modern *mimesis* is productive, rather than reproductive. This elucidates, in respect of welfare economics, what it could mean, in the language of the *Kritik d.r. Vernunft*, that truth is the attribute of a 'synthetic product'.

Certainly, the theoretical model at the core of the *General Theory* may require reelaboration or may have to be ultimately discarded, in the same way that Keynes could only lay the foundations for welfare economics by overturning the postulates of classical economics. In the process, it may well be that 'full employment' or 'national income' no longer are the relevant dependent variables of the economic system and are substituted by other 'measures' drafted by the economist. Yet, from the point of view of the cogito-bound concept of truth, nothing will have changed; all these possible adjustments or revisions, however much they might revolutionize economic theory and its corresponding technical application, leave intact the modern manner of interpreting the adequation between 'thinking' and 'things' or, to use the vocabulary of modern rationality, between subjectivity and objectivity.

We can be briefer in our account of the relevance of the cogito-bound concept of truth to the modern concept of political practice and its relation to *history*, as we shall dedicate closer attention to it in Chapter 9. The issue gravitates toward the modern concept of *utopia*. In effect, one can say that the Enlightened concept of political practice is such insofar as it measures the existent society by a standard or measure—*utopia*—that is not drawn from experience, but that guides its possible practical transformation. To define *utopia* as a *social project* is not yet to have delivered its essential characterization and significance for the modern concept of political practice. To the contrary, its 'projective' character is determined by the modern presupposition that reason is the formal measure of the positive. Certainly, the critique of capitalism elaborated by Marx in *Das Kapital*, or its later variants in a 'critical theory', is nothing 'mathematical', not a numerical model such as that of a state of full employment, and with which the given world is compared in the modes of adequateness or inadequateness. But this variance is not essential; in its critical intention, utopian thinking measures given social arrangements by what is implied in a rational organization of society (*utopia*) and finds the former inadequate. What it could mean that a utopian organization of society is 'rational' need not concern us for the moment. The sole point to which I want to draw attention is that Enlightened political practice aims at transforming given society, such that 'actual' society = 'utopian' society. From the point of view of critical theory, this is a triviality. And yet, in all its self-evidence, it is determined by Enlightenment's inversion of the formula *adæquatio rei*

et intellectus. The utopian aspiration of Enlightenment is the *practical* concretization of the cogito-bound concept of truth outlined in the *Kritik*. In advance of critical thinking in modernity goes the presupposition that the transformation of existent society brings a society into being that owes its reality (truth), its status as a utopian society, to practice. This is what it means, practically speaking, that truth is an attribute of a 'synthetic product'.

Truth and Freedom

The technical and practical concretization of the concept of truth afforded by the cogito principle brings a general thesis into view: *freedom is the essence of truth*. That is to say, the modern concept of truth is grounded in a novel interpretation of the concept of freedom; only when the latter has been understood in its peculiar features does the significance of a cogito-bound truth concept become clear. In spite of its apparent abstruseness and strongly metaphysical flavor, this thesis is but the precipitate of our foregoing analyses, and can be shown to be the core of modern theory, (economic) technique and the Enlightened concept of political practice.

Indeed, in its fundamental meaning, freedom is not synonymous with the absence of obstacles, with arbitrariness or with an activity that knows no bounds or shackles. To the contrary, the concept of freedom comports a prior understanding of what is mandatory for human being. Descartes had already recognized this when noting in the fourth Meditation that indifference is the lowest grade of freedom. Not the absence of determination, but its *source*, is constitutive for freedom. Keynes's *General Theory*, for the one, and Marx's *Das Kapital* or Habermas's critique of advanced capitalism, for the other, can only deploy the concept of truth sketched out heretofore insofar as they enclose an interpretation of what is compelling or binding for human activity, and to which it must submit. In this, its basic meaning, the modern concept of freedom is not merely rooted in, but *is* the two-fold movement of *destruction and construction* constitutive for modern technique and the Enlightened concept of political practice. In its first, destructive moment, modern rationality levels down what initially presents itself as objective and necessary, be it unemployment or capitalism, to the status of facticity. The second, constructive moment, coincides with the 'realization' of a state of affairs, whether the technical transformation of the economic system into a state of stable full employment, or the practical transformation of society in view of an utopian project. This elementary logic of destruction and construction gives expression to modernity's understanding of freedom inasmuch as the loss of the compelling character of the existent goes hand in hand with the

discovery of a legislative reason, of reason as the source of what is binding for man.

That freedom stands in a constitutive relation to determination comes to a fore in the text wherein this concept attains its mature philosophical expression in modernity, namely, the third chapter of the *Groundwork of a Metaphysic of Morals*. In effect, referring to the will as a kind of causality, Kant notes that “the concept of causality carries with it that of *laws* in accordance with which, because of something we call a cause, something else—namely, its effect—must be posited.”¹² ‘Natural necessity’ and ‘freedom’ are included in this general characterization of lawfulness. In the first, efficient causality is heteronomous, inasmuch as “something else determines the efficient cause to causal action.” Freedom, on the other hand, implies autonomy. In other words, the will, conceived as efficient causality, is a *first* cause, an absolute beginning of (practical) “effects” or action. This initial, highly concise account is further fleshed out in the double meaning, negative and positive, Kant assigns to freedom. Negatively, it is defined as the power of the will to be “able to work independently of determination by alien causes.” (BA.97) Positively, freedom is the power of the will to be the source of its own principles, or as Kant puts it, “a power so to act that the principle of our actions may accord... with the condition that the maxim of these actions should have the validity of a universal law.” (BA.119) Although Kant assigns the positive meaning of freedom a certain priority, it is related to, and even presupposes, negative freedom. That is to say, although the latter cannot stand on its own, inasmuch as it leaves unexplained what is essential to freedom’s concept, namely, the source of what is binding for man, no *self*-legislation—freedom’s positive definition—is conceivable if the original capacity of the will *not* to be determined by “alien causes” is not postulated in advance.

It would be pointless to either embark on an extended analysis of the concept of freedom set out in the difficult third chapter of this ethical masterwork or to essay situating it within the whole of Kantian philosophy. Of sole interest is to explore in what manner Kant’s dense and quite abstract account of the concept of freedom could be relevant to our own consideration of economics in the welfare state in particular, and to the concept of Enlightenment in general. Isn’t the sort of philosophical elucidation of the concept of freedom, as set out in the *Groundwork*, far removed from the kind of thinking giving rise to books such as Keynes’s *General Theory* and Marx’s *Das Kapital*? To be fruitful, this general problem must be disjoined into two interconnected questions: (a) If Kant’s reflections explicitly focus on freedom as a *practical* concept, how, if at all, do they shed light on the modern concepts of *theory* and *technique*? In

12. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, (BA.97).

other words, in what manner does its concept, as expounded in the *Groundwork*, outline the interpretation of freedom constitutive for modern rationality *in general*? (b) Granting its applicability to technique and theory, no less than to practice, how could the *Groundwork* vouchsafe the thesis that freedom is the essence of truth?

(a) One gains the required perspective from which to understand the generality of the concept of freedom delineated by Kant if one recognizes that *its two-fold determination, negative and positive, squarely matches the destructive and constructive moments of modern rationality*. For the 'negative' concept of freedom means nothing other than that the existent can be rendered non-binding for reason, that is, does not "determine" it, whereas its positive definition falls together with the constructive or determinative moment of rationality. These two moments are clearly present in modern *theory*. When referring to the essence of theory as a "mathematical project", Heidegger notes that modern science "speaks about a thing that does not exist. It aspires to a basic representation of things that contradicts the ordinary[: ...] the mathematical, i.e. the application of a determination of the thing that is not experientially shaped beginning from the thing itself, and that, at the same time, finds all determinations of things, making these possible and only then making room for them."¹³ The 'mathematical project', in which modern theory deploys the *constructive* moment of freedom, must initially have "contradicted the ordinary" by suspending the validity of the natural experience in which things first show themselves to us. The modern presupposition that things can be experienced otherwise than as they are in everyday life, namely, according to a schema that finds its source in theoretical activity itself, already voices the *destructive* element of modern theory, its essential negativity, wherein natural experience no longer is determinant for that activity. In this sense, the theoretical determination of things is already a form of *self-legislation* or autonomy. This basic two-fold movement is also the heart of economics as a theoretical enterprise, and of its *technical* extension in the welfare state, when the critical gaze of the economist negates-the-binding-character-of-the-existent, reducing what initially presents itself with an objective and necessary character to the status of a fact, in view of its "determination" by monetary and fiscal instruments. In short, the dissolution of the heteronomy of reason, its determination by the existent (economic system/organization of society), clears the way for autonomy, the technical/practical determination of the existent (economic system/organization of society).¹⁴ The *Faktum* of

13. Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, pg. 69.

14. The concept of practical discourse, as Habermas understands it, is particularly illuminating for our purposes, inasmuch as the paradigm-shift brought about by a communication-centered conception of rationality presupposes, without modifying, the two moments inherent to the modern concept of freedom. In a first movement, according to

freedom, in its negative and positive connotations, is as much the presupposition of the concept of technique unfolded in Keynes's *General Theory*, as of the concept of practice endorsed by Marx, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas.

(b) We can now turn to the second question, namely, the relation between freedom and truth. Kant notes that the positive, not the negative, concept of freedom grasps its essence, for it identifies reason in its *legislative* or binding function. It follows that it is to freedom's own essence to which we must turn if we are to understand what it could mean for modernity that freedom is the essence of truth. Now, the positive definition of freedom, indicates the *Groundwork*, is self-legislation. What does it mean that reason 'legislates', and this in the special manner of a *self-legislation*? In the language of metaphysics, it means that reason is an absolute beginning in respect of efficient causality. More particularly, positive freedom denotes a principle of *formal* causality. Here again, the practical domain of formal causality is already a restriction of freedom's more general significance. Although no longer expressed in metaphysical terminology, one illustrates the epochal significance of Kant's insight by saying that *reason legislates when it projects a measure it calls 'full employment' or 'utopia' in view of the technical or practical transformation of society*. That freedom is a principle of formal causality means that, for modernity, man's theoretical, technical and practical activity is *itself* the source of the (formal) measure or standard of truth. Positive freedom "determines" the existent by giving it the measure to which it must conform, be it 'full employment' or 'utopia': *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Only for an era wherein freedom has come to acquire the negative and positive connotations which it was the task of the *Groundwork* to explicate, can it be affirmed that "reason is the measure of the positive." The essence of truth is freedom.

A Practical Problem

The reference to formal causality, in its two-fold relation to positive freedom and truth, serves to introduce a *practical* difficulty which can be

Habermas, practical discourse suspends or virtualizes the immediate, spontaneous motivations of action, hence their associated validity claims, i.e. subjects these to a "reservation of existence"; in a second movement, justificatory arguments are provided in view of attaining a discursively guaranteed consensus. The essential, for our purposes, is that the concept of practical discourse exactly reproduces the negative and positive definitions of freedom as set forth by Kant. That only the rationally motivated recognition of norms grounds their claim to validity, makes them binding, means that existent norms and institutions, as *existent*, can make no claim to a "determining" character of their own. Motivation and justification (construction) first become the manifestation of rational behavior when critique has exposed the facticity of existent norms and institutions (destruction).

formulated from either of those two standpoints:

(a) The critical thinking on society that takes its point of departure in Marx was the first to recognize that practice has not changed the world in the way enjoined by the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach. The advent of a classless society, coupled to the utopian aspiration of Enlightened political practice, seems to be indefinitely postponed. In terms of the rational foundations of the welfare state, whereas economic technique effectively rests on its capacity to level down the economic system to the status of a non-binding fact in view of its transformation, no comparable process can be observed in the domain of political practice. Indeed, the welfare state consolidates, rather than transforms, capitalism as a form of social organization. From the point of view of the double movement we have indicated as constitutive for *freedom*, the difficulty presents itself in its preliminary, namely, destructive or negative, phase: existent society, and precisely as *existent*, resists being levelled down to a fact in view of its thoroughgoing practical transformation. In spite of critical attempts to suspend the dualism between subjectivity and objectivity, existent social structures retain an objectivity, a determinant character of their own, that effectively opposes change by way of political practice. The problem, then, concerns freedom itself: if practice has not changed society in conformity with what is implied by modern freedom, what is this concept's status in its relation to political practice?

(b) Kant's definition of the positive (formal) concept of freedom leads over to the second approach to the problem. In effect, autonomy implies that practice should conform with the maxim of "universalizability", namely, non-contradiction. From the standpoint of critical theory, the emergence of the welfare state and advanced capitalism defines an historical situation wherein a self-contradictory form of social organization is solidified, rather than dissolved and overcome. Habermas interprets the 'crises' of advanced capitalism within the framework of what he calls the "fundamental contradiction" of class societies, namely, that "its organizational principle necessitates that individuals and groups repeatedly confront one another with claims and intentions that are, in the long run, incompatible."¹⁵ In a word, the organization of society in advanced capitalism does not satisfy the formal requirement of truth, namely, non-contradiction or universalizability. Nonetheless, for reasons which we shall immediately turn to consider, it is precisely the perdurability of this contradictory state of society, rather than non-contradiction, which requires explanation from the standpoint of the cogito principle. Thus, the practical problem also questions the modern concept of *truth*: how is *disconformity* between man and (social) reality, rather than only conformity or adequateness, at all possible?

15. *Legitimation Crisis*, pg. 27.

Appearance and Reality

Let us address these problems beginning with (b). Putting to a side the *material* criterion of truth, for which, says Kant, there is no general criterion of conformity, the question concerning the possibility of inadequateness or falsehood becomes acute in respect of its *formal* criterion. This, properly speaking, is the nodal point of the modern concept of truth. For here it designates the conformity, formally considered, of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity. But precisely therein also lies the greatest difficulty: if the subject is responsible for the form of reality, that is to say, is the real from the point of view of the latter's form, isn't there only *one* term—subjectivity—rather than two? Doesn't the 'Subject - Object' relation collapse, formally speaking, into a tautology: Subject \equiv Subject? The answer, quite briefly, is yes. To *what* is the subject adequate? To *itself*. To what is the subject inadequate? To itself. One does not need to search far afield to find the reasons for this remarkable tautology. The traditional *adaequatio* formula of truth understood *mimesis* as reproduction, whereby thinking imitates things. The productivity of the cogito's mimetic relation to reality leads in another direction: subjectivity \equiv objectivity, *formally* speaking.

It now becomes clearer, I believe, what Kant means when, after having rejecting the possibility of a general material criterion of truth, he adds the following: "... as regards knowledge in respect of its mere form (leaving aside all content), it is evident that logic, in so far as it expounds the universal and necessary rules of the understanding, must in these rules furnish criteria of truth. Whatever contradicts these rules is false. For the understanding would thereby be made to contradict its own general rules of thought, and so to contradict itself."¹⁶ The observation says more, and more essentially than that the principles of the understanding provide the transcendental content of objects. It explicates the tautology, indicating that *the subject is adequate or inadequate to itself in the non-contradiction or contradiction of the form of reality*. Such is the consequence when *mimesis* becomes production, rather than reproduction.

Yet this only serves to sharpen our initial problem, without resolving it. If the two terms of a tautology, how could the subject be *inadequate* to itself? How is formal falsehood at all possible? Kant himself recognized that this was the essential difficulty of the modern concept of truth. The Introduction to his *Logik* contains the following observation: "The opposite of truth is *falsehood*, which, in so far as it is held to be the truth, is called error (*Irrtum*)."¹⁷ And Kant adds: "*How truth might be possible*: that is

16. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.59=B.84.

17. Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kants Logik. Ein Handbuch zu Vorlesungen*, in *Werke*, Vol. 5, *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik*, pg. 480 (A.77).

easy to understand, insofar as here the understanding operates according to its essential laws. *How, on the other hand, error in the formal meaning of the word, i.e. the contradictory form of thinking (verstandeswidrige Form des Denkens), is at all possible: this is difficult to understand...*¹⁸ Returning to our practical problem, how is a self-contradictory organization of society possible? Or, to put it in a somewhat different way, *how is it possible that the historically given forms of social organization do not immediately satisfy the formal truth-criterion of universalizability?*

To be sure, the very title of the book, a 'Logic', guarantees that Kant must deal with this question in the framework of judgment and cognition. "An erroneous judgment—since error as well as truth is only to be found in judgment—is therefore such when it takes the appearance (*Schein*) of truth for truth itself." (A.77) As such, the concept of falsehood, no less than that of truth, is once again ensnared in an epistemological problem-field. But the scope of his interrogation, although not formulated by him in these terms, goes deeper and touches the fundamental problem of how a finite being relates synthetically to reality. Indeed, *to take the semblance of truth for the true is to take appearance for reality*. What had been true—the real, becomes false—appearance. Non-contradiction gives way to contradiction. All-important, however, is that *the banishing of reality into its mere semblance coincides with the emergence of contradiction in subjectivity itself*. Were the form bestowed on reality contradictory, "the understanding would... contradict itself." The discovery of contradiction in reality falls together with the disclosure of *self-contradiction* in the subject. In this self-contradiction, the subject no longer is *one*, no longer an *identity*, but a split self. Falsehood—the resolution of reality into contradiction and irreality, goes paired with the breakdown of subjective identity into its semblance—fracture, non-identity. *Restoring in their inner connection the non-contradiction of the world and the lost identity of the subject becomes the elemental response to the metamorphosis of truth into falsehood, of reality into appearance*. Precisely this implication of the cogito-bound truth concept lies at the base, it seems to me, of what Marx was to say in the third Thesis on Feuerbach: "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice."¹⁹

18. *Op. cit.*, (A.77) *Verstandeswidrig* is broader than the concept of self-contradiction, insofar as it includes the possibility of perplexity, surprise, and being-at-loss.

19. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach", *op. cit.*, pg. 6. I have slightly modified the translation, restituting the German text's reference to 'self-change' (*Selbstveränderung*) that was omitted in the translation.

Ideology

But the underlying problem still has not been addressed: how is formal falsehood at all possible? How can it be that what had been taken to be real, non-contradictory, was, in fact, appearance, contradiction? If the subject relates to objectivity as its formal principle, how can form *at all* be self-contradictory? In any case, the solution Kant proposes in his *Logic* is not convincing. "The origin of all error must be looked for... only and exclusively in the unobserved influence of sensibility on the understanding or, to speak more precisely, on *judgment*. This influence determines that in judging we take purely *subjective* for *objective* grounds..." (A.77) The reference to "unobserved influences" shifts to an empirical level what, in Kantian terminology, is a transcendental problem. On a transcendental level, the explanation is entirely unsatisfactory. For isn't it the task of an idea of transcendental philosophy to show that without a material being given to spontaneity, no synthetic production is possible? Rather than Kant, it is perhaps Marx who first furnishes materials for a response to this most perplexing and pressing of problems. Falsehood, as a possible modality of the subject's practical relation to history, is essentially bound up with *ideology*. Conversely, it would be possible to see in the development of the concept of ideology the attempt to solve the problem raised by the cogito-bound truth concept: how can contradiction in history not be perceived as being such? By concealing contradiction, ideology 'sets the world on its head', positing as real what is appearance. *The possibility of falsehood in man's practical relation to history can only be understood if, together with the "self-preservation of reason", one postulates a co-original tendency toward "self-delusion."*²⁰ This takes us back to Habermas and the critique of advanced capitalism. From the point of view of modern rationality, that technique has taken over an ideological function in advanced capitalism must be attributed to this tendency toward 'self-delusion'; the critique of ideology aims at dissolving these processes of self-delusion in view of reason's self-preservation.

These reflections are also pertinent to the question concerning the practical status of the concept of freedom. In effect, the resistance of existent social forms to practical transformation can be attributed to the

20. Such, it seems to me, is the thesis advanced by Hans Ebeling in his review of the concept of self-preservation: "The principle of human self-preservation runs up against a theoretically unmastered and perhaps unmasterable difficulty. Only when freedom, as freedom of the will, is taken to be free of contradiction, can *self-preservation* be conceived and held to be a principle of the human power of achievement, through intransitive preservation processes independent of natural fixations... If it is meanwhile evidenced that freedom as the freedom of the will cannot in any way be taken for granted as being free of contradiction... then self-deluding processes (*Prozesse der Selbstillusionierung*) must be assumed for the possibility of a self-conserving subjectivity." (Hans Ebeling, "Das neuere Prinzip der Selbsterhaltung und seine Bedeutung für die Theorie der Subjektivität" in *Subjektivität und Selbsterhaltung*, pgs. 13-14.)

functioning of ideology, which lends those social forms their apparent 'objectivity' and 'necessity'. In the face of this state of affairs, persevering in the *critique of ideology*, wherever the latter crops up, that is, continuing to exercise, albeit theoretically, the destructive or negative moment of freedom, seems to be the sole alternative open to Enlightened thinking in contemporary society. From the latter's perspective, this critique remains meaningful because the resistance of existent society to change only possesses an *empirical* status.

What does 'empirical' mean here? In raising this question, one arrives at what Kant, in the *Groundwork*, calls "The Extreme Limit of Practical Philosophy." "This freedom is no concept of experience, nor can it be such, since it continues to hold although experience shows the opposite of those requirements which are regarded as necessary under the presupposition of freedom." (BA.113) The resistance presented by advanced capitalism to its reduction to the status of a non-binding given is merely empirical because the *possibility* in principle of effecting that reduction is postulated together with the *Faktum* of freedom. Rather than a concept of experience, as is already the case with theory and technique, freedom is the "necessary presupposition" of political practice. (BA.120) The point, nevertheless, is that this grounding of practical rationality in the *Faktum* of freedom does not provide a further, more basic reason for the two-fold movement of destruction and construction constitutive for the modern concept of political practice; *it only indicates that this double movement is what counts as political Enlightenment*. The *Faktum* of freedom is an "extreme limit" because how it could be possible cannot be *explained*, but only postulated, as defining practical rationality itself: the self-preservation of reason. Paradoxically, if, as Blumenberg shows, the secularization theorem must be criticized because it brings "a theoretical process to an end, where on different premises it might still be possible to inquire further..."²¹, the same critique must now be brought to bear on the reoccupation theorem's interpretation of the *practical* subject as self-preservation. Like the 'constants' of secularization, the *Faktum* of freedom brings enquiry into the Enlightened concept of (political) practice to an end.

21. See §26.

CHAPTER 8. TIME

The foregoing chapters successively provide an analytic of subjectivity, an ontology of appearances, and a cogito-bound concept of truth. The three concepts emerging from this analysis—subjectivity, reality, truth—are part of what has been called the a priori of Enlightenment, that is to say, the most basic presuppositions going in advance of, and determining, all possible forms of social life that could be considered ‘Enlightened’. I now want to pass over to the fourth of the elements making up the a priori of Enlightenment, namely, its concept of *time*. Before examining how this concept ties in with the preceding analyses on the cogito principle, I want to briefly justify the inclusion of this topic in our discussion by drawing attention to three noteworthy features relevant to our general topic:

1) The first is bound up with the expectation that the welfare state secure the *future* as the essential temporal dimension of its members. The irrationality of state activity, to the contrary, is expressed in the indictment that the members making up a sector of society, or even of society at large, have no possibilities and future. This suggests that the motif of security, which is central to the welfare state, is bound up with a determinate experience of time in its three-fold unity of past, present, and future. But what is that experience of time?

2) When discussing the concept of technique implied in Keynes’s *General Theory*, a comparable situation appears. The world “as it is or has been” is contrasted with the possibility of the world as it ‘can be’, i.e. with the future. The reduction of the former to the status of facticity consolidates the *priority* of the future, inasmuch as the present world, “the world in which we actually live”, is characterized by its provisionality, in the sense of what can be technically transformed. Also here, then, one can surmise that the modern concept of technique unfolds a specific experience of time, and that the latter is determinative for the expectations raised in respect of the welfare state.

3) No less than is the case for economic technique, the Enlightened concept of political practice is closely bound up with the priority of the future. The formulation of the practical question guiding Habermas’s critique of advanced capitalism, namely, how it might be possible to bring about a classless society, is a question wherein the presentness of the present is determined by its reference to the future. By exposing the facticity of given social arrangements, critique discloses these as provisional, as what awaits a setting-in-order. In short, the utopian vocation of Enlightenment, which reaches paradigmatic expression in Kant’s well-known dictum “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity”, seems to be bound up with a specific interpretation of the structure of time in which, the future, rather than the

past, is the privileged dimension of history.

Are these three cases isolated from each other, or are they different manifestations of one and the same concept of time? And if the latter, as seems most plausible, where are we to search for it? What characterization of past and present are implied in this peculiar priority of the future? How could we describe, in other words, the unity and differentiation of past, present, and future?

These questions return us to the basic concepts of Enlightenment discussed in the foregoing chapters. Each of these aspects of Enlightenment has been elaborated by reference to the modern reoccupation of the Scholastic problem of contingency: the "self-preservation of reason." Now, the red thread holding together the different moments of Chapters 6 and 7 has been the *relation* between *cogito* and *sum*. Otherwise expressed, the reoccupation of Scholastic contingency by the cogito principle brings into the foreground the problem of determining the manner in which dependency and spontaneity are interconnected. That the meaning of each term can only be derived from insight into the more original unity in which it stands, entails that the relation, *as a relation*, is the central concern of an analytic of subjectivity, understanding by 'analytic' the exhibition and description of the fundamental constitution of human being.

Our perusal of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* pointed to Heidegger's thesis that the relation between intuition and the understanding conceals the key to the problem of time in subjectivity. But his analyses are governed by the effort to assimilate the subject to *Dasein*. While sharing his interpretive orientation, the course of the following reflections is entirely at variance with Heidegger's manner of working out the temporal significance of this relation in his Kant book. In effect, my view is that the further consideration of the relation between dependency and spontaneity yields a deeper understanding of the *modern* concept of time. Although our investigation into the cogito principle has focused hitherto on an analysis of its *constitution* or elemental structure, elucidating the cogito from the point of view of its *activity in time* will yield the key to the single concept of time presupposed in the three general features which we have signalled at the outset of this chapter. In one and the same stroke by which the cogito principle catalyzes an interpretation of the constitution of human being, it makes patent the concept of time governing modern rationality in its entirety. *Enlightenment is a determinate concept of time.*

The general question, then, can be formulated as follows: what understanding of the concept of time can be drawn from dependent spontaneity (the cogito)? Nonetheless, a significant ambiguity in this manner of presenting this problem requires clarification. For what does it mean to 'draw' a concept of time from the cogito principle? Otherwise expressed: does the concept of time determine the cogito, such that the

cogito principle is itself the implication of the structure of time? Or, to the contrary, does the structure of the cogito principle determine that of time?

Both approaches are possible and even complementary in the elucidation of the relation between the cogito and time. In a word, the cogito and time stand in a *circular* relation to each other. Nonetheless, and this is of crucial importance, the circularity is not simple in the sense that the cogito determines time in the same way that time determines the cogito; two different concepts of 'determination' make up the meaning of the circularity. A fruitful distinction introduced by Kant in the course of a pre-critical essay, the *Nova Dilucidatio*, published in 1755, is useful in clarifying what I mean.¹ In the fourth proposition of the Second Section, Kant discusses both the general concept of determination and the distinction of which it admits. To determine, says Kant, "means to posit a predicate with the exclusion of its contrary. What determines a subject in relation to a predicate is called its *ground (ratio)*." (pg. 423) And he adds immediately: "The ground is distinguished in antecedently and consequentially determinant. *Antecedently* determinant (*ratio antecedenter determinans*) is that, the concept of which precedes the determined, i.e. in the absence of which the determined would not be understandable. *Consequentially* determinant (*ratio consequenter determinans*) is that which would not be posited if the concept it determines were not already posited from elsewhere. One could also call the first ground the *why-ground*, or the ground of being or of coming into being (*rationem essendi vel fiendi*); the second, the *that-ground* or ground of cognition (*cognoscendi*)." (pg. 422) In short, whereas the first institutes or constitutes the second, the latter reveals or exhibits the former. Returning to the circularity between the cogito and time, I wish to argue that: (1) the cogito determines time in the manner of a *ratio antecedenter determinans*, hence that the *modernity* of the concept of time outlined hereafter presupposes the cogito as its *why-ground* or the ground that determines its apparition and essential features; and (2) the modern concept of time determines the cogito in the manner of a *ratio consequenter determinans*, thus that its historically concrete manifestations, namely, modern technique and practice, are the *ratio cognoscendi* of the cogito principle.

This problem shall be addressed in three parts. The first, developed in § 36, reconstructs the conditions under which a modern concept of time could at all be formulated, leading it back, once more, to the Scholastic doctrine of contingency. After this preliminary problem formulation, a specific difficulty arises. Indeed, the effort to derive a concept of time from dependent spontaneity might seem superfluous, inasmuch as the *Kritik*

1. I am grateful to Martin Moors for having brought this passage to my attention. I cite from the German translation of "*Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio*", in Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, vol. 1.

already contains a concept of time, a concept, moreover, that is pertinent to the structure of dependent spontaneity. Hence, §37 has the task of reconstructing the problem to which the Kantian interpretation of time is a solution, demarcating it over against our own questioning and its possible solution. Finally, §38 provides the analytical core of the entire chapter, unfolding a concrete interpretation of the concept of time concealed in the cogito principle.

§36. Human Contingency and the Modern Radicalization of the Concept of Time

Initial access to this problem can be gained by examining anew the theory of time Descartes develops in the third of the *Meditations*. Hitherto, the Cartesian theory of time has been followed up in its argumentative function in respect of continual creation, rather than being examined in its own right. The question, in other words, is whether the atomistic theory of time Descartes develops has a merely expository significance, instrumental to his own reappropriation of the doctrine of continual creation, or whether it prepares the way for a novel interpretation of temporality that reaches expression in the cogito principle. How one approaches this problem is all-important. In effect, an immediate objection against Descartes' atomistic theory of time can be anticipated. When a "lifespan" (Descartes) has been fragmented into an indefinitely long series of independent particles, there is no manner of thinking the *integration* specific to a properly human temporality. By answering in the negative the problem of "whether I possess some power enabling me to bring it about that I who now exist will still exist a little while from now" (AT-VII-49), Descartes only appears to have succeeded in levelling down the present's relation to the future into a sequentiality, where the future is what comes 'after' the present. A similar observation would be applicable to the past in its purely serial relation to the present. In short, its Cartesian desintegration seems directly antithetical to our experience of time. Such is the tenor of Gassendi's objection: "I am tempted to ask if we can think of anything whose parts are more inseparable from one another than your duration. Can we think of anything whose later parts are more inevitable, or more closely tied to the earlier parts, or more dependent on them?" (AT-VII-301) Certainly to this extent, the objection is unassailable.

Nonetheless, one must not lose sight of the fact that this fragmentation is employed to justify the assimilation of creation and preservation. If, argumentatively, Descartes moves from the atomistic theory of time to continuous creation, another, and even inverse, order of interrogation can be envisaged: *how does Scholastic contingency impinge on the concept of time?* For this question, time is no longer the object of a prefabricated theory, but the name of a problem to be addressed. Consequently, a second

line of approach to the concept of time in the third of the *Meditations* can be defended, namely, that the merely conceptual distinction between creation and preservation brings into focus the relation between past, present, and future as a *relation*; a relation, furthermore, that derives its peculiar meaning from the radical *contingency* of human being. In other words, the very nature of the unity of time becomes problematic, inasmuch as the Scholastic (Cartesian) interpretation of contingency implies a more original *unrelatedness* of the three temporal modes, such that, in the absence of divine concursion, the past, present, and future of a *tempus vitae* would immediately fall out of each other. The unity of time comes *second*, in the way of an external guarantee of *causa sui*.

Obviously, this is not merely a theoretical problem, but one of enormous existential interest. For the full pressure of contingency comes to bear in the relation leading from the present into the future. If, to a certain extent, the metaphysical insight that my past existence does not entail my present existence becomes otiose, simply because I do, after all, exist at present, contingency magnifies the future to an enormous extent, not merely as the horizon of death, but because it could no longer be explained as the continuation and fulfillment of my present existence. The question that introduces the cogito in the second Meditation perfectly illustrates this point: "I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long?"² The "how long?" is not merely an indirect acknowledgment of human mortality (hence the tacit avowal that I can reasonably expect to live some time longer simply because I now exist), but the recognition that what requires explanation is that a future *at all* be given to mankind, both individually and collectively. Descartes' reply, "For as long as I am thinking", was to lead, as we have seen, to Kant's objection that this conflates thinking with necessary being. The point, instead, is that the certainty of present existence goes hand in hand with total uncertainty regarding future existence. When attempting to make comprehensible how Scholastic contingency accentuates the future, one does not yet strike the essential by asserting that uncertainty becomes the primordial manner in which the future discloses itself as the future. Closer to the mark lies the insight that the very *possibility* of a future becomes uncertain. Assuring that possibility becomes the elemental demand modern rationality had to meet. A far-reaching implication follows from this: *the modern concept of security is rooted in, and reproduces, a determinate interpretation of time.*

Evidently, the orientation towards the future galvanized by Scholastic contingency is irreducible to that motivated by concern with salvation. In considering the concept of security, it was noted that whereas salvation preoccupies itself with the uncertain *otherworldly* consequences of worldly life, contingency makes the continuation of *worldly* life itself acutely

2. Descartes, *Meditations*, AT-VII-27.

uncertain. This contrast is closely bound up with a parallel difference in the interpretation of the future. If salvation connects the present to a mundane existence, making of the future an eschatological dimension, contingency anchors the future in man's worldly life, where respite from the *nihil* granted by the fact of present existence gives no grounds for expecting that "I who now exist will still exist a little while from now" (Descartes). As with the concept of security, one can hardly overestimate the significance of this Scholastic accentuation of the future for modernity, but precisely because the imperiled horizon of a worldly existence. In effect, if one wants to understand the priority of the future in the modern era, as well as the *sense* of its priority, then one cannot reach back to the account of time laid out in Book XII of Augustine's *City of God*. Here, once again, the secularization of the salvation story can neither understand what is genuinely new in the modern era, nor explain the elements of continuity it shares with the Middle Ages. From the perspective of the transformations that lead over to the modern era, the Scholastic response to this question is of lesser importance than the question itself: *how, given human contingency, are past, present, and future related?*

Contingency and the Three-Fold Unity of Time

Here, yet once more, reference to Gassendi is of interest inasmuch as it serves to illustrate a metaphysical dead-end. In effect, when criticizing the doctrine of continual creation, his rejection of the atomistic theory of time does nothing other than restore the non-problematic relatedness of past, present, and future holding prior to the inception of that doctrine.³ Moreover, as the metaphor of the rock and the river makes clear, the constitution of human being is not seen as determinant for temporality, itself external to the former.

That this path of indubitability in respect of time no longer was open to modern rationality becomes visible when one turns to Kant. As has been evidenced for dependent spontaneity in the *Kritik*, the kernel of historical continuity in the passage operated from continual creation to the cogito principle, from the Middle Ages to the modern era, consists in the latter's reoccupation of the merely 'conceptual' distinction between creation and preservation. Consequently, we can surmise that the modern reappropriation of Scholastic contingency clears the ground for thematizing

3. "... what difference does this dependence or independence of the parts of your duration make to your creation or preservation? Surely these parts are merely external—they follow on without playing any active role. They make no more difference to your creation and preservation than the flow or passage of the particles of water in a river makes to the creation and preservation of some rock past which it flows." *Objections and Replies to the Meditations*, AT-VII-301.

time in such a manner that human being, and more concretely its constitution as a contingent being, can appear as the necessary reference point for the relation of past, present, and future. Nevertheless, the modern reoccupation of continual creation no longer appeals to the Scholastic solution to the problem, namely, transitive conservation by God. From the point of view of the concept of time, this meant that the peculiar relatedness of the three time-modes had to be reexamined. Transitive conservation only allowed of an *external* and purely linear relation between past, present, and future, because human contingency required a divine guarantor to hold together modes of time which are not bonded of themselves; rejecting the appeal to a *causa sui* had to radicalize the problem faced by modern rationality, forcing it to look elsewhere for an explication of time's unity, in particular the relation of the present to the future. But where?

Dependent Spontaneity as the Ground of the Unity and Differentiation of Time

In my opinion, only one alternative was viable, even if neither the problem nor its solution were explicitly developed in modern philosophy. In the absence of divine concursion, the question becomes how the contingent constitution of human being could *itself* provide the basis for the three-fold unity of time, and this in the latter's specific oneness and differentiation. The modern radicalization of the problem of time consists, then, in that the relation of past, present, and future could now only be interpreted as *internal*, and this where Scholastic philosophy, as represented by Descartes, had discovered the index of its externality: human contingency. In short, the question on time becomes *structural* in character. *Inasmuch as it provides an interpretation of the fundamental constitution of human being, the cogito must itself already be a representation of the structure of temporality.* This holds, moreover, not merely in the sense of something superimposed a posteriori on what, of itself, has no necessary reference to time (Gassendi), but in the understanding that subjectivity entails a properly temporal structure. The possible integration of the three temporal modes is determined in advance by the contingency of human being as represented in the subject's basic constitution. In other words, I view the cogito as bringing to concepts the novel experience of time unfolded in modern subjectivity. This principal thesis resolves itself, in turn, into two correlated sub-theses, such that (1) the constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity is a specific structuration of past, present, and future, or, as I have put it earlier, the cogito principle is the 'why-ground' of the modern concept of time, its *ratio antecedenter determinans*. Conversely, (2) the modern technical and practical manner of

understanding the differentiation and unity of past, present, and future, reveals the constitution of the subject as a dependent spontaneity. That is to say, the concept of time they deploy is the *ratio consequenter determinans* of the cogito. These considerations allow us to more narrowly formulate the connection between subjectivity and temporality thus: what relation between past, present, and future is implied in the cogito principle, given that the commencement and continuity of dependent spontaneity cannot be structurally differentiated?

§37. Kant's Approach to the Relation Between the Concept of Time and the Cogito Principle

Before working out these themes, it is indispensable to delimit, however briefly, the line of development they suggest over against Kant's own approach to the concept of time in the *Kritik*. The need for this clear demarcation springs from a two-fold source. For the one, Kant's theory of time is pertinent to the structure of dependent spontaneity, and even derives its general sense in the architectonic of the *Kritik* from its insertion within that structure. For the other, it must be clear that the very formulation of the problem of time, as outlined heretofore, remains entirely foreign to the *orientation* of Kant's own questioning in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Chapter on the "Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding" in the Transcendental Analytic. Access to an understanding of the general relation between an analytic of subjectivity and time, by way of the exposition of the cogito principle unfolded in the first *Critique*, can only be assured if we do *not* take up as our own the problem-set to which the Kantian concept of time is a solution.

Essaying even a summation of the concept of time in the *Kritik* not only exceeds the scope of this investigation but, more importantly, is alien to its own purposes. A single point is of interest, namely, evidencing *that* and *how* time is relevant, in Kant's development of the concept, to the structure of the cogito principle. Negatively, this exposition should serve to establish why it does not offer a solution to our own question.

"Time is... a purely subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, that is, so far as we are affected by objects), and in itself, apart from the subject, is nothing." (A.35-B.51) The essential of Kant's insight is encapsulated in this single sentence, and the entire exposition of the concept of time in the *Kritik* is subordinated to it. That, without exception, things appear (to us) in relations of succession, co-existence and duration, makes plain a subjective condition of receptivity, not an attribute of the things themselves. As a form of *human* intuition, i.e. an intuition that cannot supply its objects from itself (*intuitus derivativus*), time, together with space, attests to the peculiar finitude

implied in self-preservation: a material must be *given* to self-activity, such that synthesis (the production of appearances) is possible. For an independent spontaneity—God—the conditions of sensible intuition, space and time, must be removed: *intuitus originarius*. Viewed, then, from the perspective of the structure of dependent spontaneity, the Kantian concept of time appears as a response to the following problem: *how* are things given to us? What set of conditions must be met, such that a manifold of sensations can at all be given to synthesis? In the event, the solution to this problem comprises both the expositions of time and space in the *Æsthetic*, and the mediating function assigned to time in the chapter on schematism. For at issue is not only how sensation is given (space and time as the pure forms of sensible intuition), but how it is given *to* thinking (the temporal schematizing of the categories), i.e. how sensation can be *subsumed* under pure concepts.

On the basis of these brief and very general remarks, it is safe to conclude that the concept of time Kant develops makes a two-fold contribution to the structure of the cogito. (1) In respect of the third element of its structure—a given material—it contributes to defining the ‘givenness’ of a material: for a material (the manifold of sensations) to be ‘given’ *means* that, in any and all cases, it must appear in time. (2) Furthermore, time is the condition enabling a *relation* between the second element of the structure—a productive activity—and the third: by way of the transcendental schemas, the manifold of sensation is given to synthesis.

Dependent Spontaneity as the Structure of Time

Therefore, when Kant notes that time, “apart from the subject, is nothing”, he recognizes that the finite constitution of human being is the necessary referent of time, but in such a manner that time remains subordinated to explicating the elements, and interconnection of elements, making up dependent spontaneity. A more original possibility remained concealed to Kant, namely, that dependent spontaneity could *itself* be a representation of the structure of time. More specifically, Kant’s overt doctrine makes no room for enquiring how the constitution of the subject could *as such* yield an interpretation of the three-fold unity of time. Consequently, when beginning from the framework within which Kant works out his theory of time, there is no perspicuous passage leading over to our own problem, i.e. uncovering in the cogito a principle of intelligibility for the specific relatedness of past, present, and future in modernity. The consideration of these temporal modes *as* modes of being human; the question concerning the nature of their *unity and differentiation*; and how that unity and differentiation might be rooted in the contingent constitution of the *subject*; these are problems to which

Kant's *explicit* working out of the concept of time is not amenable.

I emphasize 'explicit' in anticipation of a possible objection to our mode of enquiry. For, it may be countered, such an endeavor asks the *Kritik* to deliver something it does not offer. Nonetheless, if, as we have seen, dependent spontaneity reoccupies the Scholastic doctrine of continual creation, and it is human contingency that renders problematic the concept of time, may we not expect to find in the exposition of the cogito, albeit in an inchoate and entirely unreflected manner, the materials for a solution to our own questioning? At the same time, this way of posing the problem of time distinguishes it from Heidegger's interpretation as worked out in in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. In effect, the reading Heidegger proposes of the *Kritik* is placed at the service of the analytic of finitude propounded in his metaphysics of *Dasein* or Fundamental Ontology. Against the effort to see in the subject a prelude to *Dasein*, my own reading of Kant attempts to understand the concept of time by reference to dependent spontaneity, hence to the modern reoccupation of the problem of contingency. Whether this reading is possible or plausible can only be established by way of an analytic of subjectivity. In any case, the question whether it would be possible to broach a passage from Kant's development of the concept of time to that which we shall now outline, will remain open.

§38. The Cogito and the Modern Concept of Time

The cogito seals an internal connection between the constitution of human being and the fundamental structure of time; bringing this connection to light, and precisely as internal, defines the task at hand. Now, no easy 'one-to-one' correspondence is available, whereby one could successively graft past, present, and future onto the three elements of the cogito's constitution. Such a procedure is incapable of establishing how dependent spontaneity, considered in itself, structures time into a differentiated unity. The opposite process is required, namely, reconstructing the three-fold unity of time beginning from an *immanent* analysis of the cogito. Nonetheless, on initial consideration, the endeavor seems stillborn. For there is no perspicuous reference to time in dependent spontaneity—the productive activity of an identity, related to a given material as the condition of said activity. How could we gain a foothold in this direction?

As attested by the footnote to the Paralogisms of Reason, Kant recognized that the proposition *ego cogito, ego sum* summarizes the constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity. Now, by dint of its *present tense*, the proposition bears an immediate reference to time. But what, in Kant's understanding, is the significance of setting 'thinking' and

'existing' in the present tense? Firstly, that actual, in the sense of present, self-activity does not necessitate future self-activity; secondly, and by implication, present self-activity is not necessitated by past self-activity. "The 'I think' is... an empirical proposition, and contains within itself the proposition 'I am'." (B.422n) The empirical character of the proposition reformulates, in Kantian terminology, the radicalization of human contingency that took place in the doctrine of continual creation. In the same movement by which Kant discovers in the cogito principle the index of human contingency—the incapacity of self-activity to ensure its own commencement or continuity—the relation of dependent spontaneity to time finds expression in the present tense of the verbs 'to think' and 'to exist': cogito, sum. Therewith, however, the present acquires a merely punctual character, quite independent of past and future. One must accept that Kant's explicit elaboration of the issue goes no further than the atomization of time Descartes had formulated in a particularly forceful manner in the geometrical exposition appended to the Second Replies: "There is no relation of dependence between the present time and the immediately preceding time..."⁴ The question how dependent spontaneity, *because* the concept of a contingent being, could give account of time's more original three-fold unity, remained veiled to the author of the *Kritik*. The footnote to the Paralogisms points out in the sharpest possible manner where Kant stops short of promoting the investigation into the unity of time opened up by an analytic of subjectivity. We can now enter this hidden domain of the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft*.

How one enters it is of importance. Against the procedure whereby one would arbitrarily 'pick out' any one of the three modes of time, to then successively reconstruct the others, the present tense of *ego cogito, ego sum* can be taken to mean that one must begin and end with the present. Because the full weight of contingency is brought to bear in the present tense formulation of the cogito principle, it must be our task to unearth the relevant concepts of past and future precisely there where contingency seems to most conclusively shut out just that possibility. This suggests that reconstructing the concepts of past and future takes place as the progressive conceptual elaboration of the present and, vice-versa, that the present remains insufficiently determined until both past and future have been conceptually clarified. On an expository level, this heuristic procedure would vouchsafe the conceptual *unity* of time implied in dependent spontaneity.

Our itinerary is as follows. Firstly, it will be necessary to ground the *propositional* present tense in a *structural* consideration of the cogito. With this, I mean that the present implied in the proposition *ego cogito, ego sum* finds its proper concept in the constitution of dependent spontaneity. Given

4. Descartes, Second Set of Replies, *Meditations*, AT-VII-165.

the more original unity of time, the concept of the present that lies within our grasp at this initial stage of the exposition remains forcibly abstract and provisional. Only at the end, after its relations with past and future have been made visible, does it become concrete. In a second step, we shall proceed to exhibit the concept of the past apposite to the cogito. It will be shown, on the one hand, that the concept of the present contains the condition of possibility of a concept of the past, and, on the other hand, that the past, as past, contributes to defining the meaning of the present. With this, an initial step will have been made towards reconstructing the more original unity of time. Thirdly, we shall turn to the future, deriving its concept, once again, from the cogito's constitution. I shall show how the concept of the present enables that of the future, and, conversely, how the future completes the meaning of the present. Only at this stage of the reconstruction do we gain a general overview of the unity of time promoted by the cogito principle. A fourth step returns to the present, redressing the abstraction of its preliminary depiction in a reflection on the modernity of the experience of time represented in dependent spontaneity.

Present

The initial stage, as sketched out heretofore, takes us from the present *tense* to the *concept* of the present. Now, dependent spontaneity is the structure comprising the productive activity of an identity related to a given material. If we now compare this structure with the proposition *ego cogito sum*, it is not difficult to perceive the correspondence between the two. Whereas *ego cogito* denotes its first two elements (the productive activity of an identity), *sum* denotes its third element (a given material). But in what manner is the propositional present tense *grounded* in dependent spontaneity's constitution? In a first approximation to our problem, one could say that the present tense of *ego cogito* expresses the elementary but important fact that to thinking belongs the awareness that I think *now*. Productive activity (synthesis) is accompanied by the awareness that it presently takes place. But, no less importantly, awareness that I am thinking is co-originally awareness that I *now* exist. The 'now' is that whence thinking and existence can be abstracted, but only in such a manner that both bear the mark of their participation in the present: 'I think' is immediately 'I now think'; 'I exist' is 'I now exist'. Consequently, the further development of the concept of the present finds a compass point in its characterization as the 'now', and where its connection with past and future leads over to the relation of the 'now' with the 'no longer' or 'bygone' and with the 'not yet' or 'to come'. Therewith, the cogito becomes the port of entry into the vast field of time-consciousness.

In a certain sense, however, building up the concept of the present in this direction leads us away from our original endeavor. For we are no closer to establishing how a *concept* of the present can be derived from the

constitution of dependent spontaneity. By pressing our questioning in this direction, we aim to reconstruct the properly *modern* experience of time ensuing from the reoccupation of contingency by the cogito principle. Nonetheless, this creates a new perplexity, for how could any concept of the present circumvent its necessary determination as the 'now'? And if the present must be conceptualized in this way, isn't the very idea of a *modern* concept of time either arbitrary or specious? In assessing this difficulty, a second approach to the concept of the present can be envisaged, one which lies much closer to our intentions. Its leading question is this: under what conditions is a 'now' at all possible? Here, the concept of the present resolves itself into the identification and exposition of the conditions of possibility of the 'now'. But where would these conditions have to be searched for? In the cogito principle: I (now) think, I (now) am. A Kantian inversion of perspectives is required at this point. The two-fold appearance of 'now' can then be taken to mean that *both self-activity and a manifold of sensations are conditions of possibility of the present*. The present as 'now' is related to a productive activity and a given material, not merely in the sense of their temporal determination, but, more strongly, as that by which a 'now' can at all manifest itself.

Nevertheless, an adequate exposition of the concept of the present still escapes us. For although we have identified its two constituents, what concept of the present do these afford? I (now) think, I (now) am. The present appears twice; does this mean that there are *two* presents, one for productive activity, the other for a given material? But why, then, *the* present? Further reflection indicates that there is only *one* present, the 'now', whence either my present activity or my present existence can be isolated, but only in such a manner that each immediately implies the other. Thus, on the one hand, the 'now' is more original than either self-activity or a given material; yet, on the other, it has both as its constituents. A single possibility remains open: the present is self-activity *and* a given material, not as the juxtaposition or aggregation of two independent, self-sufficient parts, but as their *relation*. That a single present is implied in I (now) think and I (now) exist means, structurally speaking, that the relation, and not its parts, is primordial. Initial access to the internal connection between the constitution of dependent spontaneity and the differentiated unity of time can be essayed in a preliminary concept of the present: *the relation between a productive activity and a given material*.

Albeit highly abstract, this preliminary concept of the present must suffice at the current stage of our exposition. Suspending its abstraction in favor of greater concretion is one and the same process with gaining an understanding of how dependent spontaneity gives account of the unity of time. Retrospectively, in any event, it secures a first foothold in the problem-set inaugurating this section. It had been asked whether it would

be possible to push further the significance of the *relation* between dependency and spontaneity in the direction of an investigation into the temporal constitution of human being. The foregoing analysis indicates that the relation, *as a relation*, defines the concept of the present. A general question poses itself to us: how, working out from this concept of the present, could we gain access to the concepts of past and future? The present has been taken to mean the relation between self-activity and a given material. But what is this relation as a *relation*? On the one hand, a 'Givenness To'; on the other, a 'Synthesis Of'. From the perspective of the cogito principle, the structure of the present does not resolve itself into 'presence', if by the latter we mean being affected by something that gives itself of itself; co-originally, the present is a taking up and organizing, a 'reaching out towards'. As indicated by the prepositions 'to' and 'of', each of the relation's terms necessarily implies the other: a given material is constitutively a material given *to* synthesis; synthesis, the synthesis *of* a given material. Self-activity and the manifold of sensations are not simply abutted or put together in a second moment; to the contrary, only by abstracting from their more original relation can we disengage the one or the other. This original relation, we have said, is the present: 'now'. Nevertheless, it is endowed with a peculiar complexity, such that it can be envisaged in either of two different manners. Could we not expect to find in these two *modifications* of the same relation ('Givenness To', 'Synthesis Of'), the two remaining *modes* of time, past and future? If so, then one can begin to understand what it could mean that the present is not merely the middle point between a 'before' and an 'after', but the *articulation* of past and future, i.e. what holds these together while keeping them separate.

Past

We first turn to the concept of the past. Structurally, it must be envisaged as a variation on the concept of the present, and more particularly, the relation between a productive activity and a given material in the mode of 'Givenness To': a material is given (to synthesis). Reconstructing the concept of the past apposite to the cogito must deepen, consequently, this essential feature of the present. What, temporally considered, does 'Givenness To' signify?

A comment in the "General Observations on Transcendental *Æsthetic*" gives us the required clue: "if all that is manifold in the subject were given by the activity of the self, the inner intuition would be intellectual. In man this... demands inner perception of the manifold which is *antecedently* given in the subject..."⁵ To be sure, the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft* was to develop

5. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.68 (my italics).

the distinction between the derivative and the original intuition by making of time a form of sensibility. But, in view of our own problem, the comment allows of a second interpretation. In effect, Kant's formulation suggests that, in a certain sense, the given material antecedes self-activity. Would we not find here the most elemental expression of the concept of the past availed by the cogito? Nevertheless, a correct understanding of the subject's relation to its own past is secured only on condition of *not* interpreting 'antecedence' in the sense of a temporal sequence, such that first a material is given, and then, second in time, comes self-activity. That a given material 'antecedes' self-activity indicates the precise measure of how it was possible to reinterpret human contingency in a manner that does not fall back on an external, merely sequential, relation between past and present: *the past, as past, denotes the situation, or even the 'situatedness', of the self, the horizon whence the possibilities available to the subject are opened up to it, and which it does not, and cannot, derive from itself.* It belongs to the essence of the present to be *concrete*, in the sense of the fullness of circumstances in which the subject always and already finds itself immersed. From this perspective, human contingency, in the cogito's reoccupation of continual creation, manifests itself as the insight into the *historicity* of human being.

Consequently, we can say that the concept of the past contributes to defining the meaning of the present, in noting that the present is historical. The past, we have argued, is the relation between a given material and self-activity (the present) in the mode of 'Givenness To'; reformulated, the proposition's meaning is the following: *the past is the historicity of the present.* But historicity is not a supplementary or peripheral attribute accruing to the present, a quality it could just as well have possessed as not possessed; rather, it signals one of the traits constituting it as the *present*. Conversely, the past reveals itself as the past, i.e. as situatedness or concretion, *in* the present. In that sense, the past cannot be levelled down to the 'bygone', to what has flown away and 'no longer is'. The past is present in terms of its enduring effectuality. But that the past can reveal itself as such *to* the present only occurs because, although the present is thoroughly historical, historicity does not exhaust the more complex structure of the present. In the abstract terms of its preliminary concept, the present is not merely 'Givenness To' but also 'Synthesis Of'. A certain distance opens itself up between the subject and its past. Although the representation of a situated being, the cogito also must be taken to mean that such situatedness does not deliver the last word in relation to the subject's most original possibilities. In a word, and with this we pass over to the third of time's modes, the present is also *future*.

Future

Reconstructing the concept of the future pertinent to the cogito completes the process of thinking through to its end the characterization of the present as the relation between a productive activity and a given material; conversely, the result of that reconstructive process—the sense of the internal connection between past and future—makes concrete the concept of the present with which we began. Conceived as the present's second modification, the concept of the future must be derived from the relation's characterization as 'Synthesis Of' (a given material). The historicity saturating the present is, as it were, put between brackets, to shift attention to the productive activity of an identity. What is the *temporal* significance of production?

If, in one way, a given material antecedes self-activity, in another, the order of precedence is inverted. Here, once again, precedence cannot be assigned a 'temporal' meaning, such that first in time one were to encounter a self-activity, and then, following it, a given material. Ethymologically, *pro ducere* means to lead or take forward. Production precedes the manifold of sensations by *anticipating* the "concept of an object in general", that is, the objectivity of objects, to which the manifold of sensations must submit in yielding appearances.⁶ Production, we might say, is a taking-up-and-working-through-*in-view-of*... The anticipative 'in-view-of', wherewith a material can at all be taken up and worked through, is a 'project'. Synthesis, production, 'leads forward' in the sense of a 'taking-up-and-working-through' of a material within the horizon opened up (anticipated) by a project. Therewith we stumble upon the concept of the future concealed in the cogito principle. In effect, *the future is an anticipative project, within the horizon of which the present can appear as a 'moving towards...' in the sense of a fulfilling or accomplishing of the projected*. A complex relation connects present and future. On the one hand, the present constitutes the condition of possibility of the future insofar as the innermost sense of production is to anticipate a project; against its purely serial conceptualization by Descartes as what comes 'after' the 'now', dependent spontaneity discovers in the subject's activity, and as *subjective*, the fundamental makeup of the future, namely, the anticipatory project in respect of which orientation in the present first becomes possible. On the other hand, by its directedness towards the future, the present reveals itself as the *fulfilling* of a project. Here, the future is revealed as such *to* the present, i.e. is not identical with the latter, because a distance remains between the activity and the projected in the activity. The future, it has been indicated, is the relation between a given

6. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.108. Kant also refers to this original capacity of spontaneity to establish *in advance* the objectivity of the object as the "transcendental content" the Understanding introduces into its representations. (A.79=B.105)

material and self-activity (the present) in the mode of 'Synthesis Of'; reformulated, the proposition's meaning is the following: *the future is the pro-visionality of the present.*

Wherein Lies the Modernity of the Modern Concept of Time?

A decisive implication ensues from these reflections: if an analysis of the three-fold unity of time made possible by the cogito must begin and end with the present, nonetheless, structurally considered, the cogito subordinates the present to the future as that which imparts on it a meaning and a direction. Why the future becomes priority in the cogito principle can be accounted for when one compares it with the enhancement of human contingency in continual creation. In effect, the very mode of time which continual creation had submitted to the greatest pressure—the future—reemerges, in the passage leading out from transitive preservation, as the essential domain of *self*-preservation. If continual creation rendered acutely uncertain the possibility of a worldly future, i.e. the domain in which the projects of a mundane existence play themselves out, it also prepared the possibility that it was just *this* characterization of the future which had to be rescued in the radicalization of the concept of time that took place in modern rationality. For the cogito, the 'now' becomes a stage in the accomplishment of a project, and to which it is subservient. The subject does not linger in the present nor dwell in the past; it is constitutively restless. Conversely, only from the priority of the future can one gain a deeper understanding of the relation to the past enabled by the cogito, and which we had characterized as the thoroughgoing historicity of the present. In effect, the significance of the subject's historicity remains partial and incomplete until incorporated into the broader significance of the cogito as a 'taking-up-and-working-through-in-view-of...' *The future-orientedness of the cogito reappears, in this perspective, as the provisionality of the present, i.e. the subordination of the past to a project.* But why must the past be transformed? Why, in spite of the recognition of the subject's thoroughgoing historicity, is man's past non-binding for the cogito principle?

This issue takes us to the fourth and decisive stage of our enquiry, namely, assessing what is specifically *modern* in the concept and experience of time that reaches expression in dependent spontaneity. Here, one must begin by noting that the present is not simply the 'sum' of historicity and projection. To the contrary, the question on the modernity of the time-concept comes down to clarifying the sense of the *relation* between historicity and projection, i.e. the sense of the present. What meaning does human historicity acquire when the cogito conceptualizes the future as projection? And, conversely, what understanding of the human

relation to the future is at work in the cogito's conceptualization of the past as the situatedness of the subject? Advancing a first step, one can say that whereas the past is the manner in which the subject appears as *radically undisposable* to itself, the future, to the contrary, appears as the domain of possible *self-determination*. But we have not yet touched on the essentially modern in this conception of time; the point would be that the undisposable past, *because* undisposable, designates the fortuitous, the accidental, and even the arbitrary or imposed. A certain ambiguity in the modern understanding of man's relation to the past is therewith exposed. On the one hand, historicity provides the horizon in the absence of which *no* possibilities at all are open to the subject; on the other, precisely because these circumstances are *not* derived from the subject, they remain fortuitous and arbitrary to it. Thus, in addition to its enabling function in respect of the present, the past also operates in the cogito as the source of the subject's alienation or estrangement. Although I cannot work out this insight in any detail, I wish to suggest that both Keynes's critique of liberal economics and Marx's critique of fetishism in *Das Kapital* are exemplary for this understanding of man's relation to his past.

In contrast, the future appears as the domain wherein the fortuitousness of the self's existence can be rendered meaningful in and through the activity of 'making something' of the entirely incidental situation in which the subject is immersed. To formulate this idea somewhat differently, the future manifests itself to the subject as the dimension of the non-arbitrary, of the *factum*—the made or produced—on which the seal of necessity could perhaps be bestowed. Such, in my view, is the modernity constitutive of the concept of time hidden in the cogito, and which reaches expression in the characterization of the present as a *taking-up-and-working-through-of-a-given-material-in-view-of-a-project*. That the future and the past can only be abstracted from this formulation of the present as its parts, and, conversely, that the present only is such in its articulation of past and future, makes clear why time—the time of the subject—is a *totum analyticum*.⁷

Recapitulation

The motivation leading to our discussion on the modern concept of time was the remarkable priority of the future which seems to be prevalent in our self-understanding as members of the welfare state, a prevalence that reappears in the modern concepts of technique and political practice. But simply to point to this priority remains too vague, and quite incapable of

7. "A *totum analyticum* is that whose parts, from the point of view of their possibility, presuppose in advance their unity in a whole..." Immanuel Kant, R. 3789, *Reflexionen*, in Akademie Ausgabe, in 29 vols (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1926), vol. 17.

elucidating what is specific to that experience of time. If it is undoubtedly true that the modern concept of time is only intelligible by reference to what precedes it in Christian philosophy, the relevant concept is not salvation but contingency. The entire effort of this chapter has been to characterize this concept of time by reference to the cogito principle. Our point of departure was the *relation* between *cogito* and *sum*, between dependency and spontaneity. Transitive conservation, argues §36, leads to a desintegration of the temporal modes of past, present, and future, such that their unity requires the external guarantee of a *causa sui*. In the process, the future becomes the temporal mode most severely brought under pressure by the problem of the *nihil*, inasmuch as it cannot be conceived as the prolongation and fulfillment of present existence. In contrast with Gassendi's attempt to return to the unity of time its pre-Scholastic indubitability, Descartes' argumentative employment of the hypothesis of the atomization of human time suggests that, in its effort to deal in a new way with the problem of contingency, self-preservation inaugurates a novel concept of time. The key to this concept is, I feel, the insight that contingency itself had to become the source whence the unity of time is regained. In other words, if the problem of the *nihil* and human contingency carries with it the additional problem of the fragmentation of human time, the modern response to the *first* problem—self-preservation, implies a new solution to the *second* problem, such that the differentiation and unity of time is now directly derived from self-preservation, from the *relation* between what Kant calls spontaneity and dependency.

My hypothesis, then, is that the modern concept of time can be derived from an analytic of subjectivity. As the *Kritik* includes a detailed reference to the concept of time, before working out this hypothesis it was necessary, in §37, to demarcate the nature of Kant's own manner of dealing with the concept of time over against our own. Briefly referring to inner sense and schematism, I suggested that a more original possibility could be inferred from the *Kritik*, namely, that the constitution of the subject *as such* determines the three-fold unity of time. Only then can the temporal modes of past, present, and future, in their unity and differentiation, be anchored in the relation between dependency and spontaneity.

The presentation of the modern concept of time in §38 proceeds in four steps that bear a certain peculiarity. Whilst the concepts of the past and the future are elaborated in the progressive clarification of the concept of the present, the latter remains abstract until both the past and the future have been clarified. The first step consisted in transposing the expression *cogito sum* into a structural consideration of dependent spontaneity, namely, from the present *tense* to the concept of the *present*. Its outcome is the insight that 'now', the present, is more original than either spontaneity or dependency, yet has both as its constituent parts. The present is the relation between a productive activity and a given material. This relation, *as a relation*, exhibits

two modifications, themselves the modes of past and future. On the one hand, the relation, hence the present, can be seen as 'Givenness To' (synthesis). The antecedence of a given material to spontaneity exhibits the past as the situation of the subject, as the horizon of opportunities open to it and which define the historicity of its present. On the other hand, the relation between spontaneity and dependency is 'Synthesis Of' (a given material). The anticipative character of production, spontaneity, discloses the future as the project towards which the present moves as its fulfillment or accomplishment, as the pro-visionality of the present. One expresses the *unity* and *differentiation* of past, present, and future constitutive for the modern concept of time in the formula 'taking-up-and-working-through-a-given-material-in-view-of-a-project'. This concept of time, in my opinion, is the presupposition of self-determination in the welfare state, and of the modern concepts of technique and political practice. After subjectivity, reality, and truth, it is the fourth of the basic concepts making up the a priori of Enlightenment.

CHAPTER 9. HISTORY

Our leading question in Part III reads as follows: What is Enlightenment? Kant has provided a dense, even provocative, answer to this question in the closing footnote to the essay “What is Orienting Oneself in Thinking?” *Aufklärung*: the “self-preservation of reason.” In a first approximation, Kant’s answer indicates that Enlightenment is *reason*. Here, it would be inappropriate to conclude that reason functions as a definition in the traditional sense of this term, namely, that which specifies and differentiates. For were this the case, the implication would be that modernity is rational in contrast with the irrationality or ‘a-rationality’ of either antiquity or the Middle Ages. Such is not the gist of Kant’s observation. Yet even when there is no pretention at making a general statement about the significance of modernity in the framework of Western history, Enlightenment is swiftly and unreflectively qualified—most often pejoratively—as ‘rationalistic’. The welfare state would be a concrete expression, even the acme, of modern rationalism. At the background of formulations such as these hovers the self-evidence of what is meant by ‘rationalism’ and ‘rationality’, such that the assertion ‘Enlightenment is reason’ has the air of a truism hardly worthy of attention or discussion. In a first moment, then, what Kant has to say seems to reinforce what is already known before hand. But what is reason? What concept of rationality is implied in the assertion ‘Enlightenment is reason’? And from the point of view of our own enquiry, what could it mean that the economics of the welfare state finds its rational foundations in *Aufklärung*?

Kant’s response irrupts into this horizon of the taken for granted in a sharp manner, and due to the strangeness of his formulation: self-preservation. Enlightenment is reason interpreted as self-preservation. In spite of their different approaches, the genealogies of modern rationality outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 coincide in signaling the properly *epochal* character of this concept of rationality. Kant is not merely indicating that self-preservation is a concept of rationality amongst others, but the rationality constitutive for modernity as such. But what is self-preservation? The *cogito* principle. This answer seems to bring us respite from the perplexity which Kant’s formulation causes us, if only due to the familiarity of the expression ‘the cogito principle’. Indeed, what is meant by the cogito principle appears to be almost as self-evident as are the expressions ‘rationalism’ and ‘rationalistic’. And not by chance, for wasn’t it Descartes who ushered in Western rationalism? Doesn’t its grounding in the cogito principle betray the ‘Cartesianism’ of the welfare state? Nevertheless, this answer to the question ‘What is self-preservation?’ is decisive only in appearance; it merely displaces the initial difficulty without resolving it: what is the cogito principle? What does it mean to

assert that the cogito is the principle of modern rationality as a whole? With which we are returned to our initial question: what is Enlightenment?

The foregoing chapters essay collecting four elements for a response to this question. Enlightenment, in my opinion, articulates historically determinate concepts of human being, of reality, of truth, and of time. Plumbing the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft* in view of these elements, Chapters 6, 7, and 8 successively unveil (1) an analytic of subjectivity, (2) an ontology of appearances, (3) a cogito-bound concept of truth, and (4) the integration of past, present, and future apposite to subjectivity. The first finds its terminus in dependent spontaneity, the basic structure of the subject. The second explicates the productive relation to reality constitutive for modern rationality. The third explores the productive relation of the subject to objectivity from the point of view of its adequateness or inadequateness. The fourth discovers in the relation between dependency and spontaneity the key to how the subject experiences and articulates the three-fold unity of time.

This closing chapter brings together and combines the findings of our foregoing analyses in a final determination of the cogito principle. Thesis: *Enlightenment is a specific concept of history*. That an exploration into the concept of history only takes place *after* having delineated an analytic of subjectivity, an ontology of appearances, a cogito-bound truth concept, and the temporality of subjectivity, is not accidental. Not only is it the case that the modern concept of history is related to these prior concepts, but, more essentially, only when their groundplan has been previously laid out, can the claim to a *modern* concept of history be adequately justified. Conversely, an enquiry into the modern concept of history carries further the reflection on these four previous concepts by making explicit their interconnectedness. Such, indeed, will be the argument unfolded in the course of this chapter: (1) that history has a subject, hence that history first becomes a properly *human* history; (2) that history is real in the manner of a '*made*' of a human '*making*'; (3) that *truth and falsehood* become attributes of the human relation to history; and (4) that historical time presents the structure of a taking-up-and-working-through-of-a-given-material-in-view-of-a-project; the ensemble of these features makes up, in my opinion, the peculiar modernity of the modern concept of history. This, most basically, is what I mean by asserting that Enlightenment is a concept of history.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first, §39, addresses the concept of history from the point of view of its subject, carrying forward Kant's analytic of subjectivity into an 'analytic of the historical subject'. Later, §40 outlines a 'metaphysics of history' wherein the concept of reality appertaining to history is brought into focus. Finally, §§ 41, 42, and 43 concentrate on the utopian vocation of the modern concept of history,

whereby three of its characteristic features are reviewed: the historical tension between the actual and the possible, the teleological structure of modern history, and the structure of historical time.

§39. The Analytic of Historical Subjectivity

Under the heading “Ideology in General, and Especially German Philosophy”, the first version of what is known as the ‘clean copy’ of *The German Ideology* contains a passage that was later crossed out by Marx and Engels. The title, whilst not the passage, was conserved in the clean copy with only a slight modification; instead of “German Philosophy”, it speaks of “German Ideology”. The similitude in the title evidences that, although deleted, the passage is directly pertinent to what was to follow in the main body of that text. It reads: “We know only a single science, the science of history. One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men... The history of nature, called natural science, does not concern us here; but we will have to examine the history of men, since almost the whole ideology amounts either to a distorted conception of this history or to a complete abstraction from it.”¹ The *Deutsche Ideologie* understands itself as laying the groundplan for a science of history, conceived as the science of *human* history. And, in effect, in the highly concentrated first chapter to the work, one finds, although still in germinal form, all the basic concepts that were later to be developed at length in Marx’s masterwork *Das Kapital*. In particular, the concept of the ‘mode of production’ (*Produktionsweise*), which was to prove the central epistemological category justifying the claim of *Das Kapital* to a scientific status, is prefigured in the references to the ‘mode of intercourse’, ‘relations of intercourse’, and the ‘relations of production and intercourse’ in the earlier work.

My interest here, however, does not consist in tracing the conceptual-formation process that leads from the text written by Marx and Engels in Brussels between 1845 and 1846 to *Das Kapital* (1867). Instead, at stake is the significance of the cited passage for the concept of modern rationality. In effect, it is a remarkable feature of the analyses which follow in *The German Ideology* that they contain no definition of the concept of history, in spite of the claim to having founded the possibility of a science of human history. This omission is all the more remarkable because, as Marx and Engels note in the cited passage, the whole of German ideology proceeds on the basis of a “distorted conception of [human] history or a complete abstraction of it.” How, then, does a science of history open up for itself the field which it was to explore with such

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pgs. 28-29.

exceptional vigor and acuity? At issue, in this question, is not the scientificity of a science of human history, but the *object-domain* of that science proper. At issue, in other words, are not the epistemological categories developed by Marx and Engels in view of a concrete analysis of human history, nor a discussion of their application in, say, feudalism or capitalism. Consequently, it is not the scientific status of a historical materialism which I aim to bring into question (either to reject it or to defend it), for this question remains subordinated to the more essential problem concerning the domain by which it defines itself. What understanding of the concept of history goes in advance of and determines a 'science of human history'? What concept of history makes possible the still incipient and rudimentary analysis of the capitalist mode of production in *The German Ideology*, and its extended development in *Das Kapital*?

The Premises of a Science of Human History

By contrast with the Hegelians, both young and old, Marx and Engels understand the specificity of their scientific endeavor in the following way: "The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way." (pg. 31) The empirical *verification* of these premises, in the manner of a concrete analysis of the division of labor and the forms of property—tribal, ancient, feudal, and capitalist, will, of course, be the central task of historical materialism. But because the empirical verifiability of these premises determines the claim to scientificity, what is their status? Implicitly, at least, Marx and Engels recognize the significance of this question by noting that the premises are neither arbitrary nor dogmatic, but real. Their non-arbitrary character does not lie in their empirical verifiability, which is merely its *consequence*, but in the fact that they fix a manner of entering a domain, a manner of questioning that knows what it is looking for before it has found it, such that it *in advance* identifies, takes up and organizes the plethora of historical information, combining it into a congruent and intelligible whole. But what do these premises go in advance of? Of historical information, to be sure, although in a specific sense, namely, as stipulating what holds as *historical* information. In other words, the premises do not determine what 'is' historical, but what 'counts' as historical, and this prior to all verifiability and as the condition of possibility of the latter. The premises, then, are not themselves empirical or a posteriori; they are the *a priori* of a science of history. This, in a first instance, is what it means to say that they

are its *premises*. But although it is by means of these premises that a science of history assures for itself its scientific character, this is not the essential meaning of their a priori status. First and foremost, these premises are such because they *open up* the field in which a science of history can unfold; in a word, they are the latter's a priori in the sense of the concept of history which goes in advance of and determines the very possibility of historical materialism.

What are those premises? "They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity." One does not exaggerate in asserting that the totality of what was to come in the way of historical analysis, *Das Kapital* included, is governed by these premises. And yet they themselves fit into a single sentence. A further meaning of the word 'premises' becomes apparent. In effect, for historical materialism these are the unquestionable, not simply due to a lack of reflectiveness concerning its own presuppositions, but in the sense of that which first makes (historical) questioning *at all* possible. Not a reflection on the significance of these premises, but the unfolding of the vast domain which they open up, is proper to historical materialism. In this kind of relation to its own premises lies, perhaps, the essential 'scientificity' of historical materialism. Nonetheless, for whom wishes to understand the modern concept of history in its internal connection with modern rationality, it is these very premises which are of paramount importance.

They are four in number: (1) real individuals, (2) in a productive activity, (3) related to the material conditions they find already existing and which determine their productive activity, and (4) new conditions as the product of their activity. The word 'history' appears in none of them, and for good reason. These, properly speaking, are the premises of a human history, those which a science must make its own, not only if it wishes to be scientific, but because they delineate the most basic presuppositions of what it means to speak intelligibly about history *as such*. These premises enclose the concept of history which German ideology either distorts or abstracts from, and on the basis of which the latter's *critique* becomes the indispensable prolegomenon to a scientific approach to history. We will shortly ask what meaning 'critique' has here, and how its *restrictive* significance is determined by the concept of history contained in these premises. They suggest that the concept of history is determined as a *dynamic process*, and this in a four-fold manner: as a product, as a productive activity, as the material conditions of activity, as individuals in a productive activity. Each of these elements relates to and finds completion in the others; by implication, a concept of history that omits any of them immediately becomes abstract. What is the concrete, then, from which a critique of all historical abstractness is required? *The cogito principle*. The concept of history propounded by Marx and Engels is

intelligible by reference to the concept of rationality which had already found its accomplished formulation in the idea of transcendental philosophy: *the activity of an identity immanently producing something new from a given material*.

Two theses can be advanced here: (1) there is a strict parallel between a 'deduction' of 'I work' as the a priori condition of possibility of the historical world, on the one hand, and the deduction of 'I think' as the a priori condition of possible experience, on the other; (2) this parallelism consists in an identical conception of rationality at the base of transcendental idealism and historical materialism, namely, self-preservation. This suggests that the basic tasks of historical materialism, philosophically considered, are (a) the exhibition and description of the basic constitution of the subject as an *historical* subject—an analytic of historical subjectivity, and (b) the elucidation of the concept of reality implied in the modern concept of history—a 'metaphysics of history' understood as the completion of Kant's 'ontology of appearances'. The rest of this section is dedicated to more fully working out (a); (b), to the contrary, will be the subject matter of §40.

Historicity

Dependent spontaneity, the *Critique of Pure Reason* shows, is the basic constitution of subjectivity. In contrast with an immediate spontaneity, capable of giving itself its representations directly of and for itself (*creatio ex nihilo*), mediate or dependent spontaneity defines the basic constitution of a being the ontological creativity of which has to be understood as *productive*, i.e. as synthetic. Over against *intuitus originarius*, subjectivity admits of a two-fold specification: negatively, as non-creative, that is, dependent on a given material for its activity; positively, as *productive*. Against Heidegger's attempt to either sacrifice spontaneity to dependency (subject = secularized transitive conservation) or dependency to spontaneity (subject = secularized *causa sui*), maintaining the fragile relation between dependency and spontaneity was the principal effort of Kant's critical endeavor (subject = self-preservation).

The same effort is to be found in Marx and Engels' work, such that the *relation* between dependency and spontaneity determines the essence of human being as an *historical* subject. To be sure, neither a transcendental enquiry in general, nor the positing of an 'I work' principle as the a priori condition of possibility of the historical world in particular, entered the overt problem-set of historical materialism. Moreover, there is no comparable contrast between an *intuitus originarius* and an *intuitus derivativus* that could outline the program for a transcendental deduction of an 'I work' principle. Nevertheless, intellectual intuition, the self-activity

capable of giving itself the existence of its objects purely from itself, remains the indispensable, albeit invisible, counterpoint to what had been pointed out in *The Holy Family*: “Man has not created the matter itself. And he cannot even create any productive capacity if the matter does not exist beforehand.”² Like Kant’s interpretation of the cogito principle before it, a constitutive deficit is recognized in the historical subject, namely, its passivity or dependence on a given material for its activity. The dependency of the subject gives account of the first aspect of its historical character, namely, its *historicity*: “The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into... definite social and political relations.”³ The historical subject, as historical, is always and already *situated*, definite. Dependency, which the premises of productive activity, encompasses not only the social and political relations in which the individual is received rather than chooses, but also its relation to nature, thus its very constitution as a *natural* being. In its determinateness, both social and natural, the subject discloses its essential historicity. It is not my intention to enter here into a more detailed discussion of the different aspects of human determinacy which are discussed in the *Deutsche Ideologie*, and which extend not only to the ‘mode of production’, but even as far as the individual’s relation to language. Of sole importance, for our purposes, is that the analyses of human determinateness expounded in that book stand within, and unfold, the founding insight of modernity concerning the dependency of human being, its finitude.

But wherein, more concretely, lies the peculiar historicity of the subject? In this, namely, that the conditions of activity are always and already given in advance as that which escapes the control of the subject.⁴ This comes to a fore in a particularly forceful manner in the discussion on consciousness and self-consciousness, an issue that we have earlier explored in criticizing Heidegger’s interpretation of the subject. Pointing to the social character of consciousness, Marx and Engels assert: “My relation to my surroundings is my consciousness.” (pg. 44) Consciousness as the relation to the other of myself; with this is said that consciousness as ‘pure’ consciousness, a consciousness that were not socially and naturally mediated and even determined, is *in principle* impossible, inasmuch as the historical subject is the *relation* between dependency and spontaneity. Consequently, Marx can be seen as drawing out the social implications of what was already

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism* in the *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pg. 46.

3. *The German Ideology*, pg. 35.

4. “As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. Hence what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production.” *The German Ideology*, pgs. 31-32.

announced in Kant's radical assertion of the *Kritik*: "In man this [self-]consciousness demands inner perception of the manifold which is antecedently given in the subject..." The question which arises, of course, is whether, in Marx and Engels's view, the dependency of the subject determines consciousness in its entirety, or whether the subject's relatedness to its social and natural surroundings also contains a moment irreducible to either of these, namely, *self-consciousness*. The question regarding the *difference* between self and world coincides with that of *intransitive* conservation, *self-preservation*.

There is a further parallel between the *Kritik* and the *Deutsche Ideologie*. It concerns what Kant had called the negative function of critique, i.e. the restriction of speculative reason to an ontology of appearances. The critique it deploys against rational metaphysics has as its point of departure the peculiar *dependency* of human being, a dependency which rational metaphysics overlooks in its efforts to acquire knowledge not limited by sensibility and the empirical. Marx and Engels criticize German ideology for having distorted or abstracted from the concept of history as outlined in the four premises of a science of history: "It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the connection of their criticism with their own material surroundings." (pg. 30) Instead of putting in practice the project for a better social order beginning from a concrete analysis of these given conditions, the utopian thinking of German ideology consists in opposing a more or less ideal situation to the existent social conditions. It forgets therewith that history is the outcome of a *materially conditioned* productive activity; in this forgetfulness, utopian thinking devolves into 'utopianism', into an exercise in abstraction: *the self-empowerment of reason*. My view is that this critique of German ideology coincides, structurally speaking, with Kant's critique of rational metaphysics. Criticizing the abstractness of the Hegelians' utopian thinking becomes the implication of the premise according to which the production of history is determined by concrete social and natural conditions. The critical *restriction* of utopian thinking to the given conditions determining the concrete possibilities of transforming society takes place on the recognition of the finite character of the historical subject, namely, the historicity of its practice.

Self-Activation

If the subject is historical in its historicity, historicity does not exhaust the historical character of the subject. This assertion introduces the *second* element of the concept of subjectivity in historical materialism, and which Kant had called spontaneity or self-activity (*Selbsttätigkeit*). Indeed, the

premises of a science of human history include the productive activity of individuals together with the activity's material conditions. What is the essence of that activity, and precisely as productive? Wherein lies the possibility of distinguishing between a productive activity and its material conditions, and in what manner does this relation and difference account for the historical nature of the subject? "Individuals have always proceeded from themselves, but of course from themselves within their given historical conditions and relations, not from the 'pure' individual in the sense of the ideologists." (pg. 78) It is difficult to find a formulation in the totality of the Marxist oeuvre that more succinctly and clearly presents the concept of historical subjectivity in its basic structure of dependent spontaneity. Indeed, whereas the reference to historical conditions and relations underlines the dependency of the subject, its historicity, the first part of the sentence brings to the fore the concept of spontaneity, its activity. The assertion that "individuals proceed from themselves" takes up and prolongs what we had earlier discovered to be the meaning of spontaneity in Kant, namely, *an absolute beginning of causality*. That the historicity of the subject does not exhaust its historical character means that subjectivity is a principle of (synthetic) production that finds its necessary condition in the social and natural relations given to it. In an expression that closely resembles Kant's usage, Marx and Engels designate the productive activity of individuals with the expression *Selbstbetätigung*.⁵ An inversion of the significance of human dependency comparable to that of the *Kritik* becomes apparent: at each moment in history, mankind encounters circumstances which it has not supplied out of itself and which situate it; these, the expression of its finitude, become the opportunity for and the possibility of self-realization. The expression *self-activation* cancels the transitivity proper to the German verb *betätigen* and makes the self the object of its own activity: self-preservation, *conservatio sui*.

The problem-set proper to a 'transcendental deduction' now comes into focus. The tension between the historical immanence of self-activation and its a priori status with regard to its product is closely bound up with the possibility and the problem of a 'transcendental deduction' of the historical world. This tension, in my view, warrants assigning to self-activation the transcendental function of an 'I work' principle. In effect, the central insight vindicating the a priori claim of the 'I think' principle had been condensed thus: "we cannot represent to ourselves anything as combined in the object which we have not ourselves previously combined."⁶ A strictly comparable claim, although of course not explicitly asserted to be such,

5. *Selbstbetätigung* resists accurate translation into English. A literal translation is, perhaps, 'self-activity', but this rendering of the concept omits an important connotation of the German verb *betätigen*, namely, 'realizing' in the sense of making real or bringing into concrete existence. Bearing this in mind, I have translated the expression as 'self-activation'.

6. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.130.

can be derived from a passage of *Die deutsche Ideologie*, when Feuerbach is chastized for not understanding that “the sensuous world around him is not a thing given directly from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed [a product] in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations...” (pg. 39) The historical world as it appears to the individuals transforming it is always and already a human product. Labor is the a priori of history in the sense that a nature utterly untrammelled is not yet an historical world; history is a *subjective achievement* irreducible to the material from which it is constituted. Consequently, *that the subject is historical does not merely mean that the individual is received into a world already historically determined, but far more that subjectivity realizes itself in and through its product, history.*

§40. A Metaphysics of History

The first element in the modern concept of history, a concept which, in my opinion, achieves its explicit and finished formulation in Marx’s early work *Die deutsche Ideologie*, has been brought to light in §39. The modernity of the modern concept of history rests, according to the argument developed heretofore, on a novel understanding of the basic constitution of human being as a dependent spontaneity. The internal connection between transcendental idealism and historical materialism consists in that the latter carries further, and brings to completion, the analytic of subjectivity worked out in the Transcendental *Æsthetic* and Transcendental Logic. The principal significance of the first chapter of *The German Ideology*, from the point of view of an enquiry into modern rationality, is its exhibition and analysis of the basic constitution of the subject as an *historical* subject. Now, the idea of transcendental philosophy, as Kant titled the Introduction to the first edition of the *Kritik*, ties up this analytic with an ontology of appearances, namely, the concept of reality constitutive for modern rationality as such and in general. In the extension thereof, the task of §40 shall be two-fold. For the one, it seeks to connect the concept of history emerging from an analytic of the historical subject with the concept of reality implicit in the text of 1865. For the other, it essays connecting the critique of fetishism developed in *Das Kapital* to the concept of critique worked out in Kant’s masterwork and, in particular, to what the philosopher from Königsberg called the ‘critical’ objection against dogmatism.

The First Premise: Men 'Make History'

In a lapidary passage crossed out from the manuscript of *The German Ideology*, Marx comments the following: "The reason why we nevertheless discuss history here in greater detail is that the words 'history' and 'historical' usually mean everything possible to the Germans except reality..." (pg. 41) If, at the very beginning of the chapter on Feuerbach, German ideology is held to conceive of history in a distorted or abstract manner, here, we are told, it is the very reality of history, and of history *as* reality, which those distortions and abstractions do away with. Characteristically, however, there is no reference to the concept of reality which is implied. As with the concept of history, also here the writers do not take up the concept of 'reality' as the object of explicit reflection. And with good reason. The concept of reality functions as the a priori of historical investigation, as that which in advance determines history as the domain of the 'real' wherein investigation can unfold and obtain empirical verification. But what is the *real* status of history? Why, in other words, is history reality and reality history? By analogy with Kant's metaphysics of nature, this question defines the nucleus of a 'metaphysics of history', itself a chapter in the broader framework of an ontology of appearances.

"Since we are dealing with the Germans, who are devoid of premises, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'." (pg. 41) In a sense, the authors are mistaken. For the *first* premise, in fact, the premise by reference to which the point Marx and Engels want to underline is intelligible, is that men 'make history'. But what does it mean to 'make history'? The answer to this question leads back to the premises Marx and Engels had sketched out so briefly at the outset of *The German Ideology*: individuals, a productive activity, the material conditions of production, and the product of the activity. That men 'make' history means that history is the made of a making. Production, here, has the significance of a 'bringing into being'. *History is real inasmuch as it is a product, the realized of a realizing activity.* In contrast with the 'making' of *techne*, the product character of history relies on the ontological productivity of human doing. The reality of history—the union of form and matter—finds in human making its *causa formalis*, and not merely its 'first cause of motion'. It is this, ultimately, what justifies Marx and Engels' insight that their investigations envisage history as a *human* history.

These consideration shed light, it seems to me, on the significance of the first thesis on Feuerbach: "The chief defect of all previous materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object*, or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively... Feuerbach

wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity.”⁷ The critique of Feuerbach’s materialism parallels, it seems to me, what Kant called the ‘critical’ objection against dogmatism, that is, suspending the presupposition that reality has an independent and autonomous character over against subjectivity. Practice, in the first Thesis on Feuerbach, relates to both subjectivity and objectivity, and even *is* the relation between the two. In that way, objectivity—reality—is shown to be the achievement of subjectivity or, as Marx puts it, the outcome of an ‘objective activity’. It is anything but coincidental, then, that Marx should have placed himself on the side of idealism and its recognition of the “active side” of subjectivity, even if “idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such.” (pg. 6) Here, I think, the ‘metaphysics of history’ unfolded in the early work of Marx stands closest to the ontology of appearances it was the task of Kant to unfold in the *Kritik d. r. Vernunft*. For it would be possible to see in the four premises of a science of human history the most basic concepts giving account of the reality of history.

But, on the other hand, the reality of history—its objectivity—is not that of a human creation in the sense this word possesses for Scholastic metaphysics. The productive relation of the historical subject to history is not the secularization of the relation between *causa sui* and a created world. The implication of the synthetic character of the subject’s ontological productivity is that it stands in an *immanent*, not transcendent, relation to history. In this sense, history can never, *in principle*, be fully the *subject’s* history. The mimetic relation of man to history encloses both the *identity* and the *difference* between the two. The subject’s claim to exercising control over history, in which is announced the (formal) identity between man and history, goes paired with the recognition of the (material) difference between the two.

Fetishism

The seed sown in the interconnection of the concepts of reality and history, and their grounding in the basic constitution of the historical subject as a dependent spontaneity, reaches maturation in the justly renowned first chapter of *Das Kapital*. As Marx’s foreword to the first edition makes clear, the critique of fetishism already contains the essential of the more general topic announced in the subtitle to the entire work: a “Critique of Political Economy”. A detailed examination of these masterful pages is neither possible here, nor necessary in view of our purposes. I will content myself with supplying enough elements to support, in a general

7. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”, *op. cit.*, pg. 6.

manner, the thesis that Marx's critique of fetishism parallels what Kant had earlier called the critical objection to dogmatism, a parallelism that is not coincidental, but which obeys the common concept of rationality underlying both the *Critique* and *Das Kapital*. In other words, my thesis is that the concepts of critique and of fetishism are *both* determined by the cogito principle.

What is fetishism? The response to this question is governed by a prior, more basic interrogation: what is a commodity? In spite of its apparent innocuousness, the question is biting, as it brings into focus the very concept of capitalism as an historical formation. In effect, capitalism manifests itself, in the first instance, as a world of commodities. By focusing on a seemingly trivial issue, the commodity, capitalism itself as a mode of production can be rendered thematic in its historical specificity. In short, a critique of fetishism opens up a way for itself in the form of an "analysis of commodities." But what is a commodity? "A commodity is, in the first place, an object (*Gegenstand*) outside of us, a thing..."⁸ It would seem that nothing of import has yet been said by determining commodities as objects; yet, in fact, the essential direction of Marx's investigation is already anticipated therein. The analysis of commodities exhibits and describes the *objectivity* of the peculiar object called a commodity, both how it *appears* to the private producers in capitalism, and what it *is*. In this bifurcation of the commodity's objectivity lies not only its peculiarity as a *commodity*, but also the key to fetishism. To exhibit and describe this two-fold meaning of objectivity is both to conceptualize fetishism and to criticize it. At the base, then, of the question 'What is a commodity?' lies a still more fundamental question: 'What is an object?' What, in other words, is the objectivity of objects in general, such that a commodity can be an object in this two-fold sense?

Certainly, this is not a question which Marx himself explicitly raises in the first chapter of *Das Kapital*. It is, to the contrary, the question which defines the core of an ontology of appearances in the *Kritik*. Moreover, the manner in which Marx closes his initial determination of the concept of a commodity seems to confirm the foreignness of his own problem-field to that of Kant's: "A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of one sort or another." A commodity, Marx tells us, is an object in the manner of a use-value. With this last concept, the proper theme of a critique of fetishism is announced, namely, an analysis of exchange-value. The contrast and relation between use- and exchange-values delivers the key to the concept of the commodity and, through it, of capitalism as a mode of production. If, then, an essential affinity connects the question 'What is a commodity?' to the Kantian question concerning the objectivity of objects, it is because the very

8. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pg. 49.

distinction between 'use-value' and 'exchange-value' introduces a reflection on the basic problem of the *concept of reality* implied in a commodity. How? In this, that use-value and exchange-value become the privileged medium by which to discover the two-fold determination of the 'objectivity' of commodities, namely, as the expression of what they *are* and of how they *appear* to their producers. A critique of fetishism dissolves the commodity's "appearance of objectivity" (pg. 88) by exhibiting and analyzing the conditions of the commodity's objective reality, i.e. its determination as a *product*.

The Objectivity of Commodities

The concept of fetishism gains here its fundamental significance from the point of view of an enquiry into modern rationality. In effect, fetishism describes the reality of commodities as these appear to their producers, namely, as objective. "A commodity is... a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped on the product of that labor..." (pg. 77) Value appears to the producers as a *natural* property of commodities, rather than as the materialization of human labor.⁹ But what concept of reality is enclosed in objectivity? The 'naturalness' of value ascribes an *autonomous and independent* status to commodities in respect to their producers; therein lies their peculiar 'objectivity'. Commodities are 'real' to their producers in the manner of autarchic and self-contained entities. "[H]uman labor produces value, but is not value. It becomes value in a solidified situation, in an objective form." (pg. 65) By discovering in value a characteristic these objects possess of and from themselves, not as its own achievement, labor has *reified* itself, become an autonomous thing. Reality as reification and hypostatization; such is the essence of fetishism.

The concept of dogmatism expounded by Kant comes once again to mind: "So long as we hold to the ordinary concepts of our reason with regard to the communion in which our thinking subject stands with the things outside us, we are dogmatic; looking upon them as real objects existing independently of us..." The parallel is neither arbitrary nor coincidental; *fetishism is dogmatic*. How commodities appear to their producers, the manner in which they are 'real' to these, is nothing other than what Kant calls the "ordinary concepts of our reason" concerning the relation between subject and object. Dogmatic is the view that the

9. "Hence, when we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. On the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended on them." (pg. 78)

objectivity of objects resides in their total separation from, and independence of, the subject.

The Critique of Fetishism

A critique of fetishism, consequently, follows in the footsteps of a critique of dogmatism, that had the task of “assign[ing] these outer appearances to the subject as representations.” If critical thinking in the sense of the *Kritik* leads objectivity back to its subjective sources, in a word, discovers in subjectivity the *formal* determination of the objectivity (reality) of objects, a comparable task becomes the lot of a critique of political economy. Here the *second* concept of objectivity comes into view: the product of a productive activity in relation to a given material. The *critique* of fetishism is conditioned in its possibility by a concept of reality in regard to which the objectivity of the fetish is mere “appearance of objectivity.” This second notion of objectivity comes to the fore in Marx’s concept of the use-value, namely, “combinations of two elements—matter and labor.”¹⁰ That the commodity is primarily a use-value means that it is objective or real in this basic sense. But its specificity as a *commodity* can only be grasped by recognizing that labor always takes place within a specific social form (*Gesellschaftsform*). The products of labor are always and already *social* products, the products of a given division of labor. More accurately, labor *is* the form of a use-value only *as* a social form. Exhibiting the objectivity of the object called a ‘commodity’ consists, then, in describing and analyzing the social form determining a use-value as an *exchange-value*: “The value form of the product of labor is the most abstract as well as the most general form of the bourgeois mode of production, that therewith is characterized both historically and as a special kind of social production.” (pg. 95) The parallel with Kant’s question concerning the objectivity of objects is most visible here. The social forms described and systematized by political economy make up “[t]he categories of the bourgeois economy... They are socially valid, hence the objective thought-forms for the productive relations of this historically determinate social mode of production, the production of commodities”¹¹ These categories are the “objective thought-forms” in a precise sense, namely, the thought-forms which lend the products of capitalism their peculiar objectivity as *commodities*. The question ‘What is a commodity?’ calls forth an investigation into the capitalist mode of production in general in view of making visible the

10. *Op. cit.*, pg. 50. And further: “Lastly, nothing can have value, without being an object of utility (*Gebrauchsgegenstand*).” (pg. 48)

11. *Op. cit.*, pg. 80; I have slightly modified the translation to render it more accurate to the German original.

objectivity apposite to commodities: exchange value as the 'combination' (*Verbindung*) of labor in the capitalist social form with natural materials.

The Reification of History

In what manner does Marx's analysis of commodities impinge on the modern concept of history? What is the relevance of a critique of fetishism to the interpretation of history sketched out in the Feuerbach chapter of *The German Ideology*? The answer, in my view, is that the reification of commodities functions, in Marx's analysis, as the index of a more fundamental process, namely, the *reification of mankind's relation to history itself*. Now, I have defended the view that the core of the critique of fetishism consists in an analysis of the objectivity of commodities, both as these appear to their producers and as what they are. If the two-fold concept of objectivity gives account of *fetishism* and of its *critique*, a parallel bifurcation is to be found in the concept of history. Here, once again, it must be said that the concept of history, and more precisely its *real* status, is not the overt problem to which the first chapter of *Das Kapital* responds. Nonetheless, the question 'What is history?', understood as a radicalization of the question 'What is a commodity?', is its soul. The internal unity of Marx's thinking is most visible if we reformulate this question in terms of what was anticipated in the first Thesis on Feuerbach: what is the peculiar objectivity of history, and wherein lies the essence of practice as an 'objective activity'?

The key problem is the transition in the level of analysis from a commodity to history, in exposing how the fetishizing of commodities evidences the fetishizing of history. The elements for a solution to the problem are already contained in the analysis of commodities. The 'naturalness' of the commodity is doubled by a *second* 'naturalness', that of the capitalist mode of production itself. Value can appear as an objective quality of commodities *only* if the capitalist division of labor goes of itself as the 'nature' of society, and not merely as a phase in the latter's historical development. "[Critical economy] begins post festum and therefore with the finished results of the developmental process. The forms which make labor products into commodities and which are therefore presupposed in the circulation of commodities, already possess the fixity of natural forms of social life, when [economists] attempt to give account of the content of these forms, rather than of their historical character, which rather already count as unchangeable to them." (pg. 89-90) The essential is contained in this illuminating passage. The reification of value into a quality commodities would possess of themselves is paralleled by the fixation of the division of labor necessary for the production of commodities into a constant, into the 'natural state' of society. The social

forms necessary for the production of commodities become the necessary as such, that which is *binding* on man, hence the unchanging and unchangeable. The second objectivation is the consequence of the first: because the *social forms* of capitalism lose their *subjective* character, appearing to the private producer as an autonomous reality independent of his doing, also *value* can appear to him as an objective quality of commodities.

What, from the point of view of modern rationality, is the significance of this fundamental reification? That the production and circulation of commodities, together with their ideological consolidation in political economy, coincides with the *self-loss* of reason. *The German Ideology* calls this moment of self-loss 'alienation': "This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into a material power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now."¹² Reason's self-loss, wherein the subject no longer recognizes himself as the *formal* cause of history, abolishes the subject's ontological productivity. In the continued production of commodities man stands in a *reproductive* relation to reality. *Mimesis* takes over, once again, its original meaning of the reproduction of a preexistent and autonomous reality. In the 'naturalness' of the capitalist mode of production, its manifestation as something eternal, history becomes repetition, not the production of something new. In a word, the future becomes the repetition of the past.

The *possibility* of a critique of political economy, to the contrary, rests on the presupposition of the product-character of history, its real status as the made of a human making. Consequently, its function consists in *suspending* the "objective appearance" of capitalism, disclosing the existent organization of society as *non-necessary*, as a fact without a binding character of its own. The recognition of the *formal* character of the capitalist division of labor, namely, its formal determination of the objectivity of the commodity as a *commodity*, both leads these forms back to their source in human activity and opens up the question concerning what form man gives and can give society. This giving of form, which Kant called *synthesis*, Marx calls *practice*, objective activity. By suspending the necessity of the existent organization of society, disclosing it as a transformable because non-binding fact, a critique of political economy prepares the way for its practical transformation or, as Kant would say, its *determination*.

12. *The German Ideology*, pgs. 47-48.

Critique in a Critical Theory and a Critique of Culture

The analysis of the concept of rationality implied in a critique of fetishism opens up a further field for investigation which, however, can only be pointed to here, rather than elaborated. In effect, I conjecture that this concept of rationality conditions the possibility of Horkheimer's project of a critical theory, as well as Adorno's critique of culture. To be sure, Horkheimer's characterization of a critical theory rests on the presupposition of the specificity of the Marxist concept of critique and its irreducibility to the Kantian employment of the term. This irreducibility would be what makes possible, and even necessitates, a shift from 'traditional' (Cartesian) theory to a 'critical' theory: "The word [critique] is here understood less in the sense of the idealistic critique of pure reason than in that of the dialectical critique of political economy. It characterizes an essential feature of the dialectical theory of society."¹³ Nevertheless, the foregoing exploration leads in the *opposite* direction, that is, it evidences the fundamental rational identity in a critique of political economy and the critique of dogmatism. Beginning from Horkheimer's analysis of 'false necessity', the critical exposure of which prepares the way for the practical transformation of society, it would be possible to evidence the Cartesian presuppositions of his critique of Cartesianism, if one means by Cartesian the concept of rationality sealed in the formula *ego cogito sum*.

Again, although a tentative characterization of the common notion of reason underlying the concepts of critique expounded by Kant and Adorno has already been attempted, concretely evidencing this conceptual community by reference to the presuppositions of a critique of culture exceeds by far the scope of this book. However, a revealing remark introducing the set of essays collected under the general title *Eingriffe. Neun kritische Modelle* could well serve as the point of departure for such an investigation. Adorno notes that the keyword "reified consciousness" (*verdinglichte Bewußtsein*) prescribes both the unity and the scope of the essays, namely, "that consciousness is criticized where it is only the reflex of the reality which carries it."¹⁴

§41. Utopia: Its Ontological Determination

Two aspects of what I take to be the concept of history implied in Enlightenment have been developed in §§39 and 40. The first is the grounding of this concept in a specific interpretation of the basic

13. Max Horkheimer, "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie", *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), vol. 4, pg. 184.

14. Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 10.2: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, pg. 457.

constitution of human being, namely, subjectivity. Historical, in the first instance, is the subject itself, and this as the implication of its two-fold status as a dependent spontaneity. Such, it seems to me, is the basic idea outlined in the first chapter of *The German Ideology*. This initial insight is carried further in §40, where I argue that the core of the modern concept of history is a decision concerning its *real* status. An analytic of historical subjectivity obtains its completion in a metaphysics of history, understanding by this the elaboration of the most general concepts giving account of the concept of reality implied in history, namely, its *product* character, and by reference to which a critique of fetishism is intelligible.

This general reflection on the two elements of an Enlightened concept of history—history as subject and as reality—is carried forward by exploring their significance for the modern concept of utopia. A reflection on this concept is revealing, in the first instance, because it is a privileged vehicle for securing a better understanding of the specificity of the modern concept of history. But this formulation remains too mild, even tame. More emphatically, a consideration of utopia is important because the modern concept of history has an utopian vocation. This utopian vocation manifests itself in three characteristic features: (1) the historical tension between the actual and the possible; (2) the teleological structure utopia lends the modern concept of history; (3) the coincidence between the not-yet-realized utopia and the future-orientedness of history. In turn, the pertinence of each of these features to the modern concept of history is anchored in the insight that utopia is the correlate of *practice*. Consequently, an exploration into the concept of utopia begins by raising anew an old question: what is practice? The eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach reads as follows: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”¹⁵ Practice receives its essentially modern destination as change, as transformation. But what is change? What does it mean that practice changes the world? And in what manner does change enclose three-fold utopian determination of modern history? The task of this and the remaining two sections of the chapter consists in grounding the three annotated features making up modern history’s utopian vocation in the concept of transformation.

In its fundamental meaning, a meaning it conserves throughout the history of Western ontology, change means ‘bringing into being’. The different ways in which the philosophy of Occident conceptualizes change reflect the various concepts of reality marking the epochs of its history. In this perspective, that practice ‘changes’ the world means, first and foremost, that practice is a bringing into being. This purely preparatory observation suggests the manner in which to approach the modern concept of utopia. Instead of attempting to extrapolate the features common to a

15. “Theses on Feuerbach”, *op. cit.*, pg. 5.

manifold of specific utopian projects in view of obtaining a 'generic' concept, access to the modern concept of utopia must be gained in the framework of an *ontological* investigation. Modernity's way of interpreting utopia ultimately rests on the concept of *reality* implied in its concept of history. What is common to the diverse utopian projects, but in the sense of that which goes ahead of and determines them, would be the concept of reality announced in Kant's ontology of appearances. These are, to be sure, highly abstract and even metaphysical propositions, which seem to stand in sharp contrast with the concreteness of utopian thinking in modernity, a thinking that characterizes itself by its relentless and painstaking examination of the given conditions of society in view of achieving the latter's transformation. Nonetheless, I shall contend that this thinking owes its very 'concreteness' to the 'abstractness' of the concept of reality implied in modern rationality.

The Real and the Realizable

The concept of utopia in modernity has a two-fold determination. Negatively, and even trivially, utopia is not real, not the existent society. Conversely, no existent society is utopian. That is to say, the non-existence of utopia has a *critical* significance in respect of existent social arrangements. Utopia is otherwise than society as it actually is. For just this reason, utopia enjoins the *transformation* of existent society. Positively, if utopia is the non-real, it is so in the form of the *realizable*, hence, as the not-yet-real.¹⁶ This has an implication that, while the backside of the thesis that utopia is the non-existent, is less obvious than the latter: *the concept of reality defines what counts as realizable*. Even in the most self-evident and trivial of utopia's characterizations—utopia is not society as it in fact is—a specific concept of reality, albeit inchoative, determines it. But if, by contrast with the actual, utopia marks out the domain of the realizable, what is the proper status of 'realizability'? *Possibility*. To assert that utopia is the non-real but realizable means that it stands within the sphere of the possible. We reenter familiar terrain, namely, the relation between the actual and the possible. We have already briefly surveyed this field when discussing Habermas's practical question concerning "the possibility of a [classless] society." I had suggested that this question was chiefly interesting in what concerns the internal relation

16. Ernst Bloch, of course, has developed the concept of utopia within the leitmotif of the 'not-yet' in his three volume work *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), for which are especially pertinent Chapters 17 and 18 of Volume 1, pgs. 224-287. But my reflections on the concept of utopia are not inspired in Bloch's thinking; to the contrary, the task for analysis, although one I will not unfold hereafter, would be to evidence that his philosophy of the 'not-yet' stands within the shadow of modern ontology and the cogito principle.

between utopia and possibility. Not the possibility *of* utopia, but utopia *as* possibility; such is the fundamental problem for whom wishes to adumbrate this concept from the perspective of modern ontology. Nonetheless, we had been forced to stop short in our early analyses of the concept of utopia, inasmuch as no explicit response or definition was forthcoming in Habermas concerning the concept of possibility preceeding and orienting the question concerning a classless society.

But granted that the modern concept of utopia is correlated to the sphere of possibility, in what way does Kant's ontology of appearances adumbrate utopia as the possible within *history*? This interrogation is all the more urgent because Kant's discussion of the modal categories is not framed either explicitly or implicitly in view of the concept of utopia. To the contrary, their development is anchored in the leading question of the *Kritik*, namely, the possibility of a priori synthetic judgments. Is their pertinence to utopia merely a more or less imaginative, more or less hazardous, 'application' of Kant's reflections? Or is the fruitfulness of his thinking, although not developed by him in this direction, *essentially* tied up with the presuppositions guiding the modern concepts of history and utopia? I hold the second view. In effect, both the preliminary exploration into the concept of inner possibility in Kant's pre-critical essay, as well as the manner in which possibility and existence are dealt with in the first and third critiques, show that *these modal categories are anchored directly in the basic constitution of subjectivity, i.e. in dependent spontaneity*. Commencing from here, and continuing by way of an analytic of historical subjectivity and a metaphysics of history, Kant's reflections on the modal categories can be shown to be directly relevant to the modern concept of utopia.

Logical and Real Possibility

Now, the passage from transitive to intransitive conservation was reviewed by drawing attention to the concept of 'inner possibility' Kant elaborated in the pre-critical essay "The Only Possible Proof for the Existence of God." The determination of possibility as thinkability inverts the Scholastic formula *factibilis neque possibilis* (the feasible or possible) in a way that is characteristic for modern rationality in general. To be sure, the reader of Kant must wait until the apparition of the *Kritik*, when the elaboration of 'thinking' has obtained its modern connotation of synthetic production, before the inversion of the equivalence *factibilis neque possibilis* can acquire its mature expression in the distinction between logical and real possibility. Nevertheless, the decisive for our purpose is to note that this inversion is *also* at work in the assertion that man 'makes' history. When 'feasibility' in the general formula 'the feasible or possible' designates a principle of synthetic production, the scope of the concept of

possibility is sufficiently enlarged to be able to function as an *historical* category and not merely an epistemological one. The historical concretion of the concept of possibility emerging from self-preservation is, in my opinion, the modern concept of utopia.

It fell to the *Critique of Judgment* to most acutely formulate the relation of the modal concepts of possibility and existence to dependent spontaneity: "It is indispensable [and] necessary for human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of things, and this fact has its basis in the subject and in the nature of his cognitive powers. For if the exercise of these powers did not require two quite heterogeneous components, understanding to provide concepts, and sensible intuition to provide objects corresponding to these, then there would be no such distinction. If our understanding were intuitive it would have no objects except actual [ones]."¹⁷ Here, once again, *intuitus originarius* takes over a contrastive function, by reference to which the concepts of possibility and actuality germane to the subject can be ascertained. In contrast with a being solely limited in its ontological productivity (*creatio ex nihilo*) by the condition of being in general—non-contradiction—the synthetic productivity of the subject requires that a material be given to it. For the latter, possibility, understood as the realizable in general, does not coincide with *logical* possibility, i.e. with the principle of non-contradiction. "It is, indeed, a necessary logical condition that a concept of the possible must not contain any contradiction; but this is not by any means sufficient to determine the objective reality of the concept, that is, the possibility of such an object as is thought through the concept."¹⁸ The insight which modernity takes over from the radical elaboration of the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine in the Middle Ages, namely, that "much is possible which is not actual" (A.231=B.284) is tempered by the recognition, retained in the carry-over of contingency into self-preservation, that human spontaneity is always bound to the empirically given world, hence that the material on which human spontaneity depends, sets the boundaries to the possible, to what can be constructed. Scientific-technical investigation in the modern era sufficiently evidences the importance of the insight that the construction of knowledge is bound to the experiential world in such a way that the latter sets limits to the merely thinkable. For this reason, if logical possibility is the purely thinkable, a presentation (*Vorstellung*) of the understanding that does not contradict itself, Kant defines *real* possibility as "That which agrees with the formal

17. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W.S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), pg. 284 (Ak. 401-402).

18. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.220=B.268.

conditions of experience, that is, with the conditions of intuition and of concepts...¹⁹

What, then, is the significance of the word 'real' in Kant's definition of the concept of real possibility, as opposed to logical possibility? This, namely, that real possibility demarcates the domain of the *realizable*, where the concept of reality therewith implied is the *synthetic product* of form and matter. Only when one has situated the modal categories of possibility and existence in Kant's ontology of appearances, and anchored the latter in the basic constitution of subjectivity, does it begin to become clear what it could mean that, while not-yet-real, utopia pertains to the domain of the possible or realizable in history. Indeed, utopias, in the modern era, are projects for society. Although not formulated with the historical domain in view, Kant's assertion that "much is possible which is not actual" is also exemplary for the utopian vocation of the modern concept of history. But also here the restriction of possible projects by the given social world is decisive for the era's utopian vocation. It is not sufficient that a utopian project satisfy the logical condition of non-contradiction; a realizable project is such only by its relation to the given social conditions from which it starts.

Real Possibility as an Historical Concept

These considerations take us back to the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. Modern practice changes the world, transforms it. But what is change? Kant's reflections on the modal categories sharpen our initial response. Change, it had been noted, means to 'bring into being'. What is it to 'bring into being' in its modern significance? To *realize*. But realizing, the giving of a novel form by which society becomes other than what it has been, is rooted in determinateness, in the given conditions in the absence of which all possibility is abstract. For this reason, and as the implication of the modern concept of reality, utopian thinking has to be 'concrete'. These considerations cast the sentence that inaugurates the political analyses of the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in a new light: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under cir-

19. *Op. cit.*, A.218=B.265. And again: "A concept is always possible if it is not self-contradictory. This is the logical criterion of possibility, and by it the object of the concept is distinguishable from the *nihil negativum*. But it may none the less be an empty concept, unless the objective reality of the synthesis through which the concept is generated has been specifically proved; and such proof... rests on principles of possible experience, and not on the principle of analysis (the law of contradiction). This is a warning against arguing directly from the logical possibility of concepts to the real possibility of things." (A.597=B.265)

cumstances directly encountered, given and transferred from the past.”²⁰ Marx’s formulation, which delivers the essence of historical subjectivity, rests on the same insight governing Kant’s thinking on the modal categories, namely, dependent spontaneity, self-preservation. Other than at the price of sacrificing all claim to credibility, modern utopia does not and cannot extricate itself from the presupposition that mankind makes its history, but only from the concrete conditions given to it. The possibilities open to utopia are governed by the given social-historical conditions of practice. *What can be ‘made’, the historically realizable, coincides with real possibility.* This, ultimately, is the presupposition guiding Habermas’s practical question concerning the possibility of a classless society.²¹

Nonetheless, the internal relation between the concepts of history and utopia, according to which the latter is the field of historical possibility, is not merely pertinent to historical materialism or to a mode of totalitarianism itself in the process of being absorbed into the past. We are indebted to Marx for having made explicit the utopian structure of the modern concept of history *as such* and, I conjecture, the utopian structure which conditions the possibility of modern politics as a whole. In effect, the political program in general, not only in the specific form of one-party politics, but also that deployed in multiparty politics, presupposes the relation between possibility and history announced in the opening pages of the “Eighteenth Brumaire”. If, on the one hand, the social conditions the political program finds at hand are the given in the absence of which all setting of purposes is abstract, the projection and realizability of a possible end for political action, on the other, is what makes it a *program*. That mankind makes its own history working out from determinate circumstances remains, it seems to me, the ultimate presupposition governing the practice we call modern politics.

Consequently, two boundaries would demarcate the social-critical range of utopian thinking in modernity. At one end, utopia is the merely virtual and content-free social project presupposed in the negation of what is, namely, the residual social form intimated, but not articulated, in unmasking the facticity of given social arrangements. I take Adorno’s critical thinking to be representative of this specific radicalization and restriction of the modern concept of utopia. “Critical thinking is not the spiritual reproduction of that which merely is... In it, the utopian moment

20. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Marx and Engels *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pg. 103.

21. Evidently, the merely analytic, rather than synthetic, kind of utopian thinking criticized by Marx finds its exact correlate in the *rational metaphysics* demolished by the *Kritik d.r. Vernunft* as a result of the examination of the conditions of possibility of knowledge. The correspondence between the pejorative connotation of utopia and rational metaphysics is neither coincidental nor merely ‘external’; the critique of both is rooted in the same interpretation of rationality, namely, the cogito principle. Conversely, and no less importantly, the rehabilitation of a utopian thinking based on the concrete analysis of the given conditions of practice implies that *one and the same understanding of the mimetic relation to reality is presupposed in the modern concepts of knowledge and utopia.*

is that much stronger the less... it objectifies itself into utopia and thereby sabotages its realization."²² This very formulation discloses, however, the concept of reality by reference to which the "realization" of utopia is meaningful: *the product of a form-giving activity in relation to a given material*. Although postponed indefinitely in favor of the thoroughgoing negation of the existent, critique's utopian aspiration remains bound up with the presupposition of practice as world-transformation, as the realization of the possible. At the other end of the spectrum, utopian thinking merges into modern politics proper, where concrete, often localized proposals are put forward for social change. If, in the first, utopia is a merely virtual project, in the second it loses its virtuality to become a definite plan for change. Both fall within the concept of rationality which reaches its achieved philosophical conceptualization in the idea of transcendental philosophy.

§42. Utopia: Its Purposive Determination

The foregoing pages situate the modern concept of utopia in an ontological perspective. Their point of departure was the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: practice changes the world. This approach may seem strange at first sight. For, in its ordinary meaning, utopia is a project for a good society. The ontological presuppositions of utopia in the modern era leave no room, it appears, for consideration of the problem of *ends* which is immediately raised in the question concerning a good society. The investigation into the concept of real possibility, and its relation to the basic constitution of subjectivity, would have left the essential out of bounds, namely, the immediate relation of practice to the good. Only on the ground of this, its essentially purposive orientation, could practice have utopia as its correlate.

Nonetheless, this objection is not conclusive, inasmuch as the question can be inverted. Could it be that the concept of utopia has to have been initially rooted in the concept of reality proper to modern history before the utopian problem concerning the good can become fully comprehensible? Would the modern manner of dealing with the practical problem of the ends served by society, both those it actually serves and those it could serve, be defined by the novel concept of reality constitutive for modern rationality? Moreover, would the relation of purposivity to ontology be what allows of disclosing an internal connection between *the good and the true*? Would it be the case that the problem of truth and falsehood in history is reflected by way of purposivity and, conversely, that because purposivity has an ontological significance in the modern era,

22. Theodor W. Adorno, "Resignation", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 10.2, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, pg. 798.

man's practical relation to history can be rendered thematic as either true or false? The present section adopts this second view, arguing that there is an essential relation between the two-fold conception of utopia as the possible and as the good, which requires commencing with the first to then lead over to an examination of the second.

Making and Acting

In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle contrasted *praxis* with *techne*, indicating that "the reasoned state of capacity to act is different from the reasoned state of capacity to make..."²³ Whereas the making of *techne* is concerned with poetic productions in a broad sense that includes both the artificial and the artistic, practical activity, in the sense of *praxis*, is concerned with ends, with the good life. The problem of ends, of the good of society and of the individual, falls within the domain of an activity irreducible to making, to production. If the art of the artist or of the artisan initiates change—the coming to be' of a substance—practical activity does not set a process of change into motion in this fundamental ontological sense. *Praxis* does not relate to its object, the good, as does *techne* to the poetic production. For this reason Aristotle adds: "Nor are they included one in the other; for neither is acting making nor is making acting." (1140a4-1140a5) As for the Greek, also for modern man the concept of practice regards the problem of ends, of the good. In contrast with technique, concerned as it is with the means necessary to achieving a given finality, practice is an activity immediately oriented towards ends. But an essential difference makes itself heard when one confronts Aristotle's words with those of the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach. Modern practice changes the world. *Praxis* raised no comparable claim. Change, for the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, has the meaning of 'bringing into being', a process for which Aristotle reserved the human doing he calls *techne*. Marx's assertion, to the contrary, makes clear that modern practice is a 'making'. Yet it does not merely collapse into the modern equivalent of *techne*. Modern practice is not technical in the manner of an activity that concerns itself with the means to a given end. To the contrary, only insofar as it directly occupies itself with ends themselves, with the good of the individual and of society, does the *practical* character of 'bringing into being' come into its own, and can practice justify its *transformative* claim.

The fact that, in contrast with the Aristotelian distinction between *techne* and *praxis*, the modern concept of practice interconnects activity oriented toward ends with a bringing into being, finds its explanation in the irruption of the Scholastic problem of the *nihil* into the history of Western

23. *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1140a3-1140a4.

metaphysics, and in the superseding of transitive by intransitive conservation. In effect, the concept of practice comes to be determined by the general structure of the cogito principle, that is to say, as *synthesis*, as a productive activity in relation to a given material. In terms of the four causes of the metaphysical tradition, this means that whereas in *techne* the artist already had the formal, final, and material causes of his activity at hand, and which it was his task to assemble together and set into motion, *ego cogitare*, in its most general formulation, designates a principle of *formal* causality in respect of its *cogitata*. The *cogitatum*—the object—owes its reality, formally considered, to the ego; therein lies the subject's peculiar ontological productivity. If, in contrast with *praxis*, the modern concept of practice can assemble purposivity with 'bringing into being', it is because formal causality, the ontological productivity proper to the cogito, makes room for ends, and in such a way that *positing ends* and *realizing* these defines the meaning of practice as a productive activity. Otherwise stated, a correct understanding of the relation between the cogito principle and purposivity turns on the *inclusive* function of formal, in respect of final causality.

Form and Non-Contradiction

This clears the way for understanding the significance of a simple, but entirely decisive aspect of the modern concept of utopia. In discussing the latter's ontological presuppositions, it was indicated that these are social projects, blueprints for a possible society. But, putting aside the aspect of possibility, what *kind* of projects are these? Better formulated: *what* is projected in a utopian project? *A social form*. Utopias, in modernity, outline *forms of organizing society*. We have already discussed the contribution of form to the concept of possibility, namely, *logical* possibility. Viewed as social forms, utopias are subject to a negative condition, namely, the condition of non-contradiction. Only what meets the criterion of logical possibility can also be realized, even if this logical criterion proves insufficient. For, due to the formal character of utopian projects, their realizability or real possibility must be established by reference to the determinate conditions of practice. When one no longer views the concept of utopia from the perspective of possibility, but from that of purposivity, also here the project for a good society coincides with the presentation (*Vorstellung*) of a social form. Why? Because purposivity in modern rationality comes to stand within the scope of formal causality. If self-activity or spontaneity is to be a *purposive* principle, it can only be so as a principle of *formal* causality. Consequently, the positing and realization of ends envisaged in utopian thinking occurs as the practical 'form-giving' to (transformation of) existent society.

With which we come to the decisive question: what is the specific goodness of society as posited in the modern concept of utopia? A single answer seems viable: *the formal, albeit purely negative, condition of non-contradiction*. Only a form of social organization that passes the test of non-contradiction can raise the claim to being 'good'. This returns us to the relation between practice, conceived as a *purposive* activity, and the good. For our finding can also be expressed by saying that only an end (a social form) that is *universalizable* is 'good'. The point which seems to me decisive in all this is not so much the well-known criterion of universalizability, but that the universalizability of the ends embodied in a social form—the good society—is the necessary *implication* of the *concept of reality* presupposed in the modern utopia. Because the product of a form-giving activity in relation to a given material, the real, *as real*, is subject to the stricture of non-contradiction. With this, modern rationality retains and promotes the insight gained earlier by Scholastic philosophy concerning the rationality of being. A cursory review of what was sketched out in §24 may contribute to clarifying what I mean.

The conceptualization of divine omnipotence becomes the leading question of an ontological enquiry when the relation between the made and the making is framed in the perspective of *ex nihilo* creation. When nothingness is the *terminus a quo* of creation, a demarcation of the range of God's ontological productivity coincides with the question 'What can God make?' or, to put it otherwise, 'What can be made?' This question clears the ground for Scholastic philosophy's investigation into the basic structure of being as such, that is, of being *as made* (*entis in quantum est ens, vel facti entis in quantum est factum*). The answer reached by Scholastic ontology, first articulated in an explicit manner by Aquinas, is the *possibile logicum*: non-contradiction. In the passage from transitive to intransitive conservation, paralleled in the passage from *creatio ex nihilo* to synthesis, modern rationality carries over the Scholastic insight that non-contradiction defines the basic structure of being as being. Like *techne* and *creatio ex nihilo* before it, modern rationality views the real as the made of a making. But the radicalization of the ontological questioning going from *techne* to creation is retained by modern rationality, when it recognizes that non-contradiction governs being from the point of view of its makeability. In Kant's terminology, non-contradiction is a necessary even if not the sufficient condition for the objective reality of things and ultimately of experience as a whole. Kant's ontology of appearances makes clear that for modern rationality, no less than for Christian theology, the very meaning of being implies rationality, its non-contradictory content. What holds for the real holds also for the realizable. Therewith, the concept of 'goodness' implied in utopia is the consequence of the non-contradiction pertaining to the modern concept of reality itself.

But the non-contradiction of the form of reality is what Kant calls the

formal criterion of *truth*. “The universal, though merely negative, condition of all our judgments in general, whatever be the content of our knowledge, and however it may relate to the object, is that they be not self-contradictory...”²⁴ Although inaugurating Section I of the “System of Principles of Pure Understanding”, “The Highest Principle of all Analytic Judgments”, the statement is couched in general terms. Non-contradiction, says Kant, is the universal condition of the truth of “*all* our judgments...”, adding that it applies “whatever the *content* of our knowledge...” Abstracting from the content of knowledge, which brings into play the material criterion of truth, non-contradiction holds as its most general *formal* criterion. Synthetic judgments, as synthetic, are also subject to this stricture. Chapter 7 has argued that the epistemological concept of truth worked out in the *Kritik* stands on the ground of a more fundamental domain: reality and appearance. When conceived as attributes of knowledge, truth and falsehood are restricted to the *theoretical* relation of subjectivity to reality.

But in what is essential to it, Kant’s assertion surpasses the problem of judgment. Ultimately, truth is an attribute of knowledge not because it is a judgment, but because judgment is *synthesis*, the mimetic relation the subject enacts to reality. *Practice* is another productive relation modern man can take up with being. History, a marginal annotation to *The German Ideology* observes, is “reality.” Its reality, as evidenced in a metaphysics of history, is none other than its *synthetic* character. Because synthetic, also the practical relation to being can be viewed from the point of view of its adequateness or inadequateness. *Truth and falsehood become attributes of history*. Insofar as the modern concept of practice catalyzes the insight that mankind makes its history, albeit from the concrete conditions it finds at hand, it then becomes possible to *question* the product and its ‘maker’, to take up a critical position in respect of the achieved. Therein would lie the social-critical function of utopian thinking in the modern era. *Taking up a critical (utopian) stance in respect of history as a human achievement, hence of man himself as its artificer, already moves within the more original domain opened up by the cogito-bound truth concept*. For even when only inchoately, utopia is the vehicle whereby modern man reflects his relation to history in the mode of adequateness and inadequateness. When is the historical world ‘true’? That is to say, when is history as a *human* history adequate to its concept? When its form is non-contradictory. Utopia, conceived as the project of a ‘good society’, coincides with utopia as the project of a human history adequate to its concept. *The good is convertible with the true: bonum et verum convertuntur*.

24. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A.150=B.189.

Form and Contradiction

These considerations allow us to finally introduce a latent problem which has been deliberately postponed until now. Practice, says Marx, transforms the world. But *why* is change at all necessary? Why is assuring a 'way out'—an *Ausgang* Kant would say—from the existent society, the indispensable task of critical thinking? Modern ontology suggests the answer: *the contradiction of the given society's form*. Jacques Rancière has pointed out that Marx employs the concept of critique throughout his philosophical career to designate the specificity of his activity, adding that "The role of critique is to say or to read... contradiction, to exhibit it for what it is.... What [critique] perceives behind these contradictions is a more profound contradiction, that which is expressed in the concept of *alienation*."²⁵ On the basis of this general characterization of critique, Rancière then proceeds to a meticulous analysis of its unfolding in the *Manuscripts of 1844* and *Das Kapital*.

But rather than descending to this more detailed level of discussion, however fruitful for a deeper understanding of Marx's work, what interests me are the ontological foundations of a general characterization of critique. As I have attempted to show, Marx's concept of critique does not spring up from nowhere, but has its own history, the history of modern rationality itself. In my view, one only succeeds in grasping *why* contradiction becomes the focal point of Marx's critical enterprise by reference to the concept of reality assured in the passage from transitive to intransitive conservation. The task of exposing contradictions in existent society rests on the presupposition that the real is non-contradictory. Contradiction in society tears it apart in an *ontological* sense; contradiction rends its very claim to reality, banishing existent social arrangements to the realm of a fact without any binding character of its own. *The exposure of contradiction in society unmasks what had been taken to be real as mere appearance; as false and bad*. In other words, critique makes patent the 'appearance of objectivity' at the core of fetishism by discovering in commodities the product of a contradictory social form—the capitalist mode of production.

Simultaneous with the metamorphosis of reality into appearance, the identity of the private producers in capitalism is torn asunder, to become *self-contradiction*, fracture. "The conditions under which individuals have intercourse with each other, so long as this contradiction is absent, are conditions appertaining to their individuality, in no way external to them; conditions under which alone these definite individuals, living under definite relations, can produce their material life and what is connected

25. Jacques Rancière, in *Lire le Capital*, ed. L. Althusser, 4 vols. (Paris: François Maspero, 1973), Vol. 3: *Le concept de critique et la critique de l'économie politique des 'Manuscrits de 1844' au 'Capital'*, pg. 10.

with it, are thus the conditions of their self-activation and are produced by this self-activation.”²⁶ *Capitalism is human history in the mode of inadequateness, of falsehood.* Therefore, a critique of political economy becomes the precondition for the practical transformation of society that restitutes the non-contradiction of the historical world and the lost identity of the historical subject. The utopian moment in critical thinking is the correlate of this *suspension of reality and truth*: over against a ‘bad reality’ wracked by contradiction, a good society, *as good*, is subject to the general ontological stipulation that the real, *as real*, must be non-contradictory.

Bonum, verum et unum convertuntur

The internal relation between modern ontology and the concepts of unity, truth, and goodness bring into focus a problem I had mentioned when undermining Heidegger’s employment of the secularization theorem in §23. The burden of Heidegger’s thesis is that together with the metaphysical usurpation of the divine attribute of self-causation—the subject: the secularized *summum ens*—the ego also takes over the attributes of goodness and truth, such that the subject becomes the secularized variant of the *summum bonum* and the *summum verum*. For the reasons indicated in Chapter 5, I view this explanatory hypothesis as untenable in its effort to account for the genesis of the subject. Nevertheless, the foregoing considerations suggest it can be fruitfully taken up from an alternative perspective: *unity, goodness and truth are activated through the subject as predicates of the real.*

This has an implication which seems to me of the greatest importance in light of an understanding of subjectivity. In effect, the subject’s relation to the good and the true is *mediate*, never immediate. An old thesis, one I expounded when first presenting the modern concept of *mimesis*, comes once again to the fore: *only indirectly, in the detour through nature and society, can man recognize himself for what he is.* That is to say, *what man is cannot be read off directly from his alleged ‘nature’, nor are goodness or truth properties he possesses of himself, but ones appertaining to his achievements. Reason as self-preservation: at the core of Enlightenment lies the insight that man has no ‘essence’, no ‘nature’.* Only in the product of its activity—history, and *as* the product of its activity, can the subject take up a relation to the good and the bad, the true and the false.

The alternative to the alleged secularization of goodness and truth by subjectivity is intimately bound up, I think, with what Blumenberg has called the “second overcoming of Gnosticism” by modernity. The first,

26. *The German Ideology*, pg. 82. In keeping with the proposed translation of *Selbstbetätigung*, I have rendered the text’s ‘self-activity’ as ‘self-activation’.

unsuccessful overcoming of Gnosticism is that of Scholasticism itself, that commences with Augustine's attempt to justify God by ascribing evil in the world to human freedom. "The price of this preservation of the cosmos was not only the guilt that man was supposed to assign himself for the condition in which he found the world but also the resignation that his responsibility for that condition imposed on him: renunciation of any attempt to change for his benefit, through action, a reality for the adversity of which he had himself to blame."²⁷ The implications of the second overcoming of Gnosticism in respect of the modern concept of history are patent. *Self-preservation appears on the scene when the historical world is conceived as a factum, the made of a human making, such that mankind can take responsibility upon itself both for a 'bad reality' and for its practical transformation.* This, ultimately, is what it means to say that the transition to the cogito principle encloses the insight that unity, goodness, and truth are activated through the subject as predicates of history.

§43. Utopia: Its Temporal Determination

Before entering this concluding section of the chapter a general review of the different phases of our analysis may be useful. The chapter takes as its point of departure the insight that the emergence of a novel concept of history in modernity is tied up with the apparition of a new interpretation of the basic constitution of man. *That history has a subject in the modern era means, first and foremost, that the subject itself is historical.* Indeed, §39 argues that the historical character of the subject resides in the very features defining it as a subject, namely, dependency and spontaneity. If the Transcendental Æsthetic and Transcendental Logic of the *Kritik* can be interpreted as an analytic of subjectivity, wherein the two elements of dependency and spontaneity are exhibited and described in their constitutive relation, it fell to the first chapter of *Die deutsche Ideologie*, published some 54 years after Kant's masterwork, to provide an analytic of the *historical* subject. The four premises of a science of human history are the analytic's nucleus: (1) real individuals, (2) in a productive activity, (3) the material conditions they find already in existence and which determine their productive activity, and (4) new conditions as the product of their activity. These premises are such in a specific sense: they define the a priori which, knowing what it looks for, goes in advance of and opens up a specific domain for investigation. These premises not only comport a prior decision on what counts as history, but, more fundamentally, what counts as a *human* history. The essential step has then been taken. Because in their determination of history as a human history, these premises announce

27. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pgs. 126, 136.

Enlightenment's insight that the concept of history must be grounded in the basic constitution of man as an historical being. *Not beginning from the concept of history does one then proceed to derive the historical character of man; to the contrary, only the historical character of man himself assures the possibility and the concept of something like history.* This, as I see it, is the fundamental intuition guiding the analytic of the historical subject sketched out in *The German Ideology*.

If §39 explores a science of human history from the point of view of its first component, i.e. the concept of human being apposite to a 'human' history, §40 pursues Marx and Engels's formulation in view of its second element, namely, the concept of history itself. An analytic of historical subjectivity leads over to a metaphysics of history. In a marginal annotation to which reference has already been made, Marx criticizes German ideologists for whom the word history means anything but reality. Whence the leading question of a metaphysics of history: what is the 'reality' status of history? The four premises of a science of human history receive their most condensed formulation when one says that men "make history." 'Making' has an ontological significance here. As in *techne* and *creatio ex nihilo* before it, 'making' denotes a 'bringing into being'. History, in its specific being, appears as the achievement of an immanently productive activity in relation to a given material. It is the product-character of history, its manifestation as a practical achievement of subjectivity, which would later be brought to the foreground in the critique of fetishism inaugurating *Das Kapital*.

Subsequently, §41 turns to the concept of utopia, in view of highlighting an essential characteristic of the modern concept of history, namely, the tension between the actual and the possible. This tension is apparent in the formulation of the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: practice *transforms* the world. Kant's lapidary formula, according to which much more is possible than is actual, is emblematic for the utopian vocation of modern history in a two-fold way. For the one, it makes clear that existent society, as existent, does not exhaust the realm of the possible, such that other social forms are thinkable and realizable. Utopian thinking in the modern era stands within the general process whereby the given world loses its overwhelming persuasive hold on man. On the other, Kant's dictum is negative or restrictive: in view of the historical subject's constitution as a *dependent* spontaneity, the historically possible or realizable is 'definite', determined by the conditions given to practice. The modern concept of utopia coincides with what Kant calls real possibility.

For its part, §42 focuses on the teleological structure of the modern concept of history, connecting the ontological presuppositions of modern utopia to the practical problem of social ends. Here, the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach is appraised from the point of view of the good and the true. Practice transforms a bad reality into a good society. But wherein lies the

peculiar goodness and truth of an utopian society? In the non-contradiction of its social form. The central argument developed hitherto is that the universalizability of the ends embodied in a social form (the criterion of a good society) and the concept of reality presupposed in modern utopia are essentially related to each other: the good society, as good, is subject to the general ontological stricture, first gained in the Scholastic enquiry into the concept of being, that the real, as real, is non-contradictory.

Secularized Eschatology

However summary and general in its intentions, a characterization of the modern concept of history remains incomplete until it has been taken up in a *temporal* perspective. In effect, a peculiar structuration of past, present, and future lends historical time its properly *modern* character. In short, the interrogation we find before us is how it might be possible to exhibit the time of modern history in its peculiar three-fold unity. First, however, a few words about a line of thinking we shall avoid.

Heidegger's thesis of the secularization of salvation-certainty into self-certainty as the basis of the purposivity inherent to modern rationality has already been discussed in some detail. Modern history, in Heidegger's view, displays the inherent dynamic of a progressive self-empowerment, such that self-empowerment not only becomes a possibility in modern history but even *is* the history of modernity as a whole. Implicitly, at least, this view contains a picture of the concept of historical time proper to modern rationality. But it is Karl Löwith who has employed secularization to give a detailed explanation of the most noteworthy feature of the era's concept of history, namely, its future-orientedness. Moreover, his interpretation succeeds in linking the priority of the future with a teleological progression, a thesis which is encapsulated in the general title of his book *Meaning in History*.

History, says the author, "is meaningful only by indicating some transcendent purpose beyond the actual facts. But since history is a movement in time, the purpose is a goal... The claim that history has an ultimate meaning implies a final purpose or goal transcending the actual events."²⁸ Strictly speaking, Löwith has in mind *Judeo-Christian* history. The introduction of eschatology effects a basic rupture in Western historical consciousness. "The Christian and post-Christian outlook on history is futuristic, perverting the classical meaning of *historein*, which is related to present and past events." (pg. 6) Cataloging this rupture in historical consciousness as a perversion is not without importance; it shows the general attitude Löwith displays toward what takes place in Western

28. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, pg. 5.

history after the crisis of antiquity. On the other hand, the citation's reference to a "post-Christian outlook on history", by which is meant the modern one, changes nothing of substance. In effect, the sole difference between the historical consciousness of modernity and that of the Middle Ages is the secularization of the latter's eschatological future. Predictably, Löwith sees in utopia the preferred vehicle whereby modernity secularizes the "Kingdom of God." Also predictably, historical materialism becomes the favored object for unmasking a manifold of secularizations governed, one and all, by the thoroughgoing eschatologization of history achieved by Judeo-Christianism. Thus, it can be successively argued that exploitation functions as the secularization of original sin, that the crisis of capitalism secularizes the last judgment, that the proletariat is the secularization of God's chosen people, that the transformation of necessity into freedom secularizes the transformation of the earthly city into a city of God, and so forth.

Löwith opposes to this *linear* conception of history, that because linear is Judeo-Christian, the *circular* conception of time predominant in the Greco-Roman world. "Greek philosophers and historians were convinced that whatever is to happen will be of the same pattern and character as past and present events; they never indulged in the prospective possibilities of the future." (pg. 6) At the base of this circular historical consciousness lies, in Löwith's opinion, a fundamental characteristic of antiquity, namely, its belief in a preordained fate, both individual and collective, as the principal determinant of future events. Consequently, in its repetition of past and present, the future is open to historical investigation and cognition as a 'fact', as the extrapolation of what has already taken place and will take place once more. Not surprisingly, Löwith is fascinated by Nietzsche's 'eternal recurrence of the same', a concept which he takes to fit in well with the argument for a reproductive understanding of history.

We must put to one side a discussion of the broader philosophical context in which Löwith has developed and popularized the idea of a secularization of Judeo-Christian eschatology. In particular, it would be necessary to more closely examine the implications of Löwith's attempt to recuperate a 'pagan' conception of history in view of what the author himself acknowledges to be its presupposition of a preordained fate. My interest here moves in a different direction, and consists in arguing that one does not grasp the essence of the *modern* articulation of historical time by viewing it as the secularization of eschatology. In this sense, the trenchant distinction between a circular and a linear conception of historical time is not only not helpful in view of an understanding of the modern concept of history, but even misleading.

Change Through Practice

That the subject makes history signifies that it relates practically to history. The concept of history is specified by that of practice. What is practice? The eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach reads: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." Practice changes the world. Change, thus far, has been explored from the point of view of its contribution to the ontological and purposive determination of the modern concept of history. The thesis to be developed hereafter is that it *also* yields access to history's temporal determination in modernity. At first glance, this is not in any way remarkable or surprising. For already the immediate or naïve understanding of the concept of change is saturated with time. Inarticulately and as something that goes of itself, the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach conceals the concept of time whereby the world can discover itself to practice as an *historical* world.

Paradoxically, the principal difficulty one encounters in assuring access to this problem is the very fact that the concept of change bears an immediate reference to time. It is a truism that change is change over time. The snag, however, is that beginning from here it is impossible to clear the ground for an understanding of time in its *historical* character. For it levels time down to the 'medium', or more correctly, to the dimension in which change occurs or takes place and can be measured. If one attempts to understand the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach working out from here, the practical transformation of the world is reduced to a linear sequence of before, now, and after. But Marx's thesis says more, and more essentially: *practice* changes the world. Change goes together with practice. Hence, practice does not relate to time as does the contained to the container, and where the presence or absence of the former would be indifferent to the concept of the latter. If, for the one, change qualifies practice, lending it its specific character as an activity, change, for the other, takes place in and through practice. In a certain sense, then, the direction of enquiry is inverted: *the concept of change derives its contours, as it were, from practice*. To understand the concept of change, Marx is telling us, reference to practice is indispensable. To be sure, the eleventh Thesis does not postulate a simple identity, practice \equiv change, a tautology that would yield the same result, regardless of the term from which one started. Nevertheless, it does suggest that a two-way relation holds between these concepts.

What is being related? With regard to *what* must the relation between change and practice constantly be held in view? To the concept of time, and precisely as historical time. What is the sense, *temporally* considered, of this two-way relation? My thesis is the following: *whereas change lends practice its specificity as a temporal activity, such that past, present, and future become the temporal modes of history, the three-fold unity of*

historical time is rooted in the structure of practice. That practice changes the world does not lead over to an investigation into the concept of change in isolation from practice. This path is swiftly arrested in the face of the truism earlier annotated: change is change over time, such that practice occurs 'in' time. The contrary path must be pursued: practice itself distinguishes and integrates past, present, and future as the modes of historical time. More sharply formulated, *practice structures historical time into its modern unity and differentiation.* Or, to use Kant's expression, practical subjectivity is the *ratio antecedenter determinans* of historical time.

But then our original question crops up once again: what is practice? In view of this interrogation, it no longer is possible to satisfy ourselves with the answer furnished by the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach. Change brings the problem of historical time into focus, but does not resolve it. What is practice? *Synthesis.* With this, one gives its most general and abstract rational characterization. 'Most general', I say, because with synthesis nothing is said about ends, the proper object distinguishing practice from technique. Synthesis gives account of the *modernity* of modern practice. 'Most abstract', moreover, because the four premises of a science of history put forth in the opening chapter of *The German Ideology* present the concept of practice in a more tangible manner, namely, the productive activity of given individuals in relation to determinate material conditions. Nevertheless, while more abstract, the characterization of practice as synthesis is no less accurate, as it summarizes the significance of these four premises. Its 'rational' characterization, finally, because it anchors the concept of practice directly in modern rationality: synthesis is the cogito principle.

Historical Time and the Synthetic Structure of Practice

The synthetic character of practice is brought most forcefully to the fore in the assertion earlier cited from the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transferred from the past." Practice appears here as the *relation* between a productive activity and its given circumstances. Neither only the material conditions, nor only the productive activity, but the relation between the two is constitutive for practice; therein lies its synthetic character. Historical time, runs our conjecture, is anchored in the synthetic structure of practice. The past, present, and future of history, grasped in their modern unity and differentiation, must be rooted in the relation between a productive activity and its material conditions. When one reviews the

citation with this problem in mind, one notices that it explicitly introduces the temporal dimension of the *past*. To be sure, this explicit reference is not contained in the German original, which, literally translated, reads as follows: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it from loose pieces, not under self-chosen circumstances, but under circumstances found immediately at hand, pre-given and received."²⁹ While more literal, it does not modify the sense of the former in any important way. The material conditions are such because *pre-given*, received by individuals. The prefix 'pre-' denotes what is earlier in time, the past. Yet the past, is not merely what is prior in the purely sequential sense of a 'before'. Marx speaks of the material conditions of practice as 'definite', and of the individuals that make history as 'definite' individuals. The past, as *historical past*, is the 'definiteness' of the historical subject, the horizon it cannot choose but in which it is already immersed, prior to all productive activity and as the latter's necessary condition. *The historicity of the subject determines the past as a historical past, not vice-versa*. Now, the past manifests itself as one of the two terms making up the more original unity called practice. Does the latter also encompass future and present, such that only in its relation to these other temporal modes does the past become fully intelligible?

While there is no individual that is not 'definite' in the sense indicated by Marx, the meaning of individuality is not restricted to 'definiteness'. Slightly rephrased, although not modified in its essential meaning, the *Eighteenth Brumaire* states that although men only make history under pre-given conditions, they *make* history. Substantially the same idea is contained in the concept of *Selbstbetätigung*: "Individuals have always proceeded from themselves, but of course from themselves within their given historical conditions and relations." That individuals make history means that the past, for which they are not responsible, does not exhaust their relation to time. The circumstances and conditions of practice are pre-given, but given *to* a productive activity. Therewith the second element of practice comes into view. Production appears as the combination and setting forward of what is given. This does not mean that it would ever be possible to suspend the subject's 'definiteness', but that *transformation*, rather than repetition, defines the relation enacted by the subject to its own past. To trans-form is to give a new form. If, from one point of view, production is preceded by the given world, from another it antecedes the latter, in the manner of the form going in advance of, and determining, what is being made. What is being made appears, thanks to the form-giving (trans-forming) character of practice, as the not-yet-realized, the future. The future, in other words, appears as the sole historical dimension for which the subject can take responsibility upon itself,

29. Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, in *MEW*, Vol. 8, pg. 115.

namely, the domain wherein the possibilities opened up by the past can be realized. The two-fold determination of utopia as social form and as project acquires its properly temporal relevance. *Not because utopia must be in the future does modernity define it as a project; to the contrary, only because the future is an anticipative project (Kant: Vorstellung) can utopia appear as the domain of the not-yet-realized-but-realizable.*

Practice is neither solely a productive activity nor merely the material conditions but the *relation* between the two, the *making*. Otherwise stated, practice is neither past nor future, but that wherein these unite: the *present*. The historical past and future are such only as different aspects of the present, as the determinateness of the historical present and as its pro-jective (utopian) character. This returns us to the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach and the relation between practice and change. If the concept of change first introduces practice to the problem of historical time, practice *structures* time, that is, differentiates past, present, and future while subordinating them into the partial aspects of a single, more original and encompassing totality: historical time. Practice changes the world. This formulation encloses the insight that historical time, for the modern era, is a taking-up-and-working-through-of-a-given-material-in-view-of-a-project.

CONCLUSION

The Introduction to this book proposed to elaborate a general concept of Enlightenment working out from a characterization of the rational foundations of welfare economics. The immediate interest motivating this investigation is the economic crisis of the welfare state. Yet, paradoxically, the economic crisis is not the crisis of economics. To the contrary. The central role it has conquered for itself in the politics of the welfare state is reinforced by the contemporary situation of economic malaise. More than ever, securing control over the economic system, such that low levels of unemployment are attained, and a sustainable rate of growth is achieved, are the technical imperative of our time. This has its implications for the concept of rationality at work in welfare economics. *Whatever the theoretical changes leading beyond Keynes's masterwork, the economic configuration of a 'post-welfare' state will continue to rely on the concepts of theory and technique constitutive for modern rationality.* The concepts of *mimesis*, reality, and truth which have been sketched out heretofore will remain the theoretical and technical presuppositions of a post-welfare state. In this highly restricted sense, Enlightenment is an acquisition that will not be surrendered.

The difficulties posed by the economic crisis of the welfare state lie in political practice. For at issue are the concepts and the criteria by which we are to evaluate the social implications of changes leading beyond the welfare state in its current form. Economic theory and technique can give us no response to these problems; they are practical in nature. Now, in its basic intention, Enlightenment is a *practical*, rather than a technical or scientific project. It has been the task of modern philosophy to articulate Enlightenment in the manner of a reflection on the *concept* of political practice. The foregoing pages have examined this concept, arguing that, more basic than the distinction between means and ends, is a set of common presuppositions constitutive for modern rationality in general. This insight was built up, in Part I, by comparing the concept of technique, outlined in Keynes's *General Theory*, with that of political practice, sketched out in Habermas's critique of advanced capitalism. One and the same concept of rationality—the cogito principle—is constitutive for both. After the genealogy of modern rationality provided in Part II, it was the task of Part III to consider the cogito principle in its unity, analyzing the presuppositions common to Enlightened technique and political practice. Rather than carrying any further the analysis of these presuppositions, the aim of this conclusion will be to assess them in their practical significance. At issue is the most basic and massive of our findings, namely, the rational identity of technique and Enlightened political practice, in its *significance* for the latter: does the interpretation of Enlightenment which emerges from

the foregoing analyses remain a viable practical project for contemporary Western society? Can the concept of political practice which Enlightened philosophical thinking has developed be defended even today?

Before passing over to the concrete examination of this question, an initial word on how I propose to deal with it, and the reasons for this approach. In effect, what is perhaps noteworthy about the following pages is not the fact that six theses are formulated on the question at hand, but that, of these, the initial five are *negative*, whereas the sixth is *positive* in a conspicuously cautious and guarded manner. After the elaborate, often abstract, analyses the reader has patiently followed in the course of this book, he or she will be asked to accept, on five successive counts, that the conceptual framework so toilsomely built up to account for the concept of political practice is not directly applicable to the urgent social question 'Whither?' posed by the economic crisis of the welfare state today. To boot, not satisfied with this negative approach, the author will then request the reader's further complaisance, by asserting that Enlightenment *does* retain meaning for our historical situation, yet without being able to offer a full-blown conceptual framework with which this claim could be adequately substantiated. In short, I will ask the reader to be sympathetic to the view that we must relinquish important aspects of the presuppositions guiding our thinking on Enlightenment *and* carry further, as indispensable for orientation in our contemporary historical situation, the question 'What is Enlightenment?' If I expect that the reader will only with difficulty and grave reservations consent to this invitation, it is because I myself, after a passionate involvement with Enlightenment, with effort have been able to break away from the task of analyzing its basic presuppositions, and take sufficient distance to begin to evaluate them in their practical significance. The step away from analysis to a critical evaluation of its results brings about a sentiment of loneliness, leaving in its wake the nagging question whether one has, after all, understood, or whether the essential has slipped one by. It is this intellectual situation, both engaged with Enlightenment and distanced from it, which these closing pages mirror:

1) The Introduction to this book had mentioned Kant's well-known essay of 1784, and I want to begin this conclusion by referring to it once more. Therein, Kant formulated in all clarity the basic meaning modern philosophy has ascribed to Enlightenment as a practical project: *emancipation*. The opening sentence of his text clinches the teleological conception of history typical for philosophical interpretations of Enlightenment: the emergence from a self-imposed immaturity portrays human history as the progression from heteronomy toward autonomy. It is this basic teleological pattern which must first draw our attention. Against

Heidegger's genealogy of modernity, this teleology cannot be understood as a secularization of the Christian quest for salvation-certainty. But, in another sense, it is thoroughly metaphysical and must be relinquished. In effect, as its point of departure, heteronomy coincides with the reoccupation (Blumenberg) of Augustine's decision to impute to human freedom the responsibility and guilt for the 'bad' condition of the world. Certainly, whereas Augustine denied man the possibility of transforming to his advantage the bad world for which he was responsible, the task of modern metaphysics was to assure this very possibility for man. But, in the process, it takes over the portentous presupposition that, at its outset, the condition of the world is 'bad', hence that the telos of man in respect of his own history must be to rehabilitate himself, transforming it into a 'good' world. Correspondingly, the guilt of man in *De libero arbitrio* is reoccupied by a situation of self-imposed immaturity. This two-fold reoccupation is metaphysical because it repeats a metaphysical decision. *There is no basis for the assumption that the original condition of the world is as such bad (or good, for that matter)*. Nor is there any basis for the assumption that man has an original condition that one can qualify as a self-imposed immaturity (or maturity).

This has an immediate repercussion for the domain of politics: *when embedded in an all-encompassing historical teleology, an emancipatory concept of political practice is metaphysical*. For, in that case, emancipation becomes the later philosophical elaboration of what Kant calls *Ausgang*, emergence from a self-imposed immaturity. In this strong sense of the word, which I will refer to by placing the word between scare quotes, 'emancipation' assumes that the original condition of the social world in which we live is characterized by heteronomy, and that the general movement of history leads in the direction of autonomy. This is already the case for *Das Kapital*, but it also holds in respect of the 'theory of social evolution' in the framework of which Habermas interprets the crisis tendencies of advanced capitalism. Indeed, when both Marx and Habermas envisage a rupture in human history, between an unconscious past and present, on the one hand, and a conscious future, on the other, they reoccupy once more, although to answer in a new way, Augustine's fateful metaphysical gesture.

In terms of the welfare state and its economic crisis, the implication of this critique is that one must refuse to treat the transformations which are in the offing within the framework of a 'theory of social evolution.' My discomfort with Habermas's views on advanced capitalism is not his critique of the dominant position which economic technique has acquired in the welfare state, but the 'emancipatory' concept of political practice he proposes as an alternative. The social changes accompanying the transition from the liberal to the welfare state, and from the latter to a 'post-welfare' state, cannot be interpreted as so many stages in the general historical

progression from heteronomy toward human autonomy.

Thesis 1: *Interpreted as 'emancipation', Enlightenment is not a viable practical project for contemporary Western society.*

2) This 'emancipatory' interpretation of Enlightenment receives its basic rational configuration in the concept of history which has been expounded at length in Chapter 9 heretofore. The exposure of the contradictory character of the existent form of social organization, and its critical reduction to the status of a non-binding fact, paves the way for its practical transformation into a non-contradictory organization of society. One cannot sufficiently stress the importance of the fact that the basic concepts by which this historical process is thought, and the concept of political practice to which it leads, find their origin in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In effect, the congruence between the analytic of the historical subject and the metaphysics of history laid out in the *German Ideology*, for the one, and Kant's analytic of theoretical subjectivity and metaphysics of nature, for the other, evidences that this concept of history ensues as the *extension* to the practical domain of what are originally theoretical and technical concepts. But also, and more importantly, it exposes the self-evident presupposition that the practical relation to history is directly *homologous*, in its rational structure, with the theoretical and technical relation to objectified processes, both natural and social.

Hence, the emancipatory passage from heteronomy to autonomy finds its conceptual anchorpoint in *the polarity between facticity and validity*. If validity indicates that *non-contradiction* is the sole rational criterion by which to evaluate the ends posited in political practice, the critically achieved facticity of given norms and institutions is the condition of possibility of universalizability as a practical attitude. These two moments correspond precisely to the positive and negative moments, respectively, of what Kant calls the *Faktum* of practical freedom. In its extension, the Enlightened critique of ideology attempts to dissolve the heteronomous determination of reason by existent norms, values, and institutions, reducing these to the mode of facticity, such that reason, and reason alone, can give itself its own laws: autonomy. As such, the historical teleology of Enlightenment presupposes that practical reason can *in principle* function autonomously, even when experience shows that it has hitherto not functioned in this way in history. In Kant's words, the *Faktum* of freedom is a 'necessary presupposition' of practical reason, not a concept of experience.

It is at this, the most radical level reached by modern philosophical thinking on practice, where an objection must be brought to bear: from a practical standpoint, norms and institutions don't leave us indifferent, not even when we are discussing their transformation, and this not merely in

fact, but *in principle*. In its negative connotation, the *Faktum* of freedom assumes that, in his practical dealings, man can take up an attitude of neutrality in respect of norms, values, and institutions strictly comparable to that of the theoretician in respect of objective (natural and social) phenomena. That this is possible cannot, from the point of view of modern rationality, be *explained*, but only *postulated*. Yet it is precisely this postulate which must be questioned and submitted to closer scrutiny. *The practical relation to history does not seem to be directly homologous with the corresponding theoretical and technical relations to objectified processes*. Whereas the strict disjunction between the reproductive and productive interpretations of *mimesis* is tenable for theory and technique, it is necessary to relativize its practical significance. This, in my view, is the kernel which must be retained of Heidegger's critique of the subject and its claim to freedom. In other words, isn't the outcome of the polemic between secularization and reoccupation the recognition that, at least in respect of Enlightened political practice, the subject, although not a *causa sui*, is an *alter dei*?

This implies the need for a basic reassessment of a phenomenon that has been treated extensively in the course of our exposition, namely, the practical significance of *ideology*. From the viewpoint of modern rationality, ideology is the moment of self-loss or of self-delusion co-original with the self-preservation of reason. Its critical destruction is the precondition for an Enlightened political practice. But the inability to reduce the given social world to the status of a non-binding fact in view of its thoroughgoing practical transformation cannot be attributed solely to ideology and the latter's stubborn resistance to critical dissolution. Rather, a certain inversion of perspectives seems to be required: one would have to ask whether ideology only possesses a 'masking' function, or whether, in a sense that must remain undetermined here, it also, and even most fundamentally, is a *condition of possibility* of political practice. *The essential historicity of practice, both individual and collective, would have to be searched for in this fundamental, because enabling, concept of ideology*. In this context, the question is whether the form/matter distinction is appropriate to understanding the specificity of the ideological in this positive sense.

In the same vein, one must more carefully consider whether the enactment of social identity available to political practice in modernity is adequately rendered by the concept of the synthetic tautology 'man \equiv man' outlined heretofore. For the synthetic character of the tautology recognizes that a moment of difference—'matter'—is indispensable to social identity; but is the concept of matter—determinability—capable of accounting for the nature of the 'difference' in the absence of which no social identity is possible? Returning to Heidegger, although the claim that the subject secularizes the Scholastic concept of God must ultimately founder as a

genealogical explanation, the two-fold structure of the self-preserving subject exposes it to a double question. The first: is there ever an 'absolute beginning' in political *form-giving*, as required by the concept of formal causality? The second: does recourse to the concept of *matter*, in the sense of a purely determinable manifold that must be given for self-activity, and which the latter cannot supply of itself, sufficiently account for the finitude of the practical subject? Notice that at stake is not merely a 'rehabilitation' of matter that would redress the initial imbalance in favor of form, but whether matter and form are *at all* viable categories by which to understand (political) practice as such.

These considerations have an immediate bearing on the relation between the welfare state and Enlightenment. Following Keynes's *General Theory*, we have traced the process whereby economic technique in the welfare state levels down the existent economic system to the mode of facticity in view of its transformation into a state of full employment. Here, the *Faktum* of freedom is not merely the 'necessary presupposition' of technique, but is already a *concept of experience*. It is possible to interpret society as a mathematical manifold of causal relations, assuming an attitude of theoretical indifference, in view of its technical transformation. One must question, however, the possibility of extending this attitude of neutrality to the law and politics of the welfare state, and whether the changes introduced by political practice into its norms and institutions can at all be anteceded by their critical reduction to the mode of facticity. The political function of law in the welfare state is 'ideological' in a sense that cannot simply be equated with the masking of social contradictions; the critical dissolution of this fundamental ideological character of law, were it all possible, would coincide with the suspension of a condition of possibility of political practice itself. Here, perhaps, and not merely in the distinction between means and ends, lies the essential difference between technique and practice in the welfare state.

Thesis 2: *Conceived as the practical radicalization of the concept of rationality already governing the economic technique of the welfare state, Enlightenment is not a viable project for contemporary Western society.*

Thesis 3: *Universalizability is not the criterion by which the social implications of changes to be introduced to the welfare state can be evaluated and decided upon by political practice.*

3) Yet a third critique must be addressed to Enlightenment, and it comes on the heels of the foregoing objection. Again, it is highly significant that the relation between the practical subject and history outlined in *The German Ideology* reproduces the relation between the theoretical subject

and knowledge laid out in the idea of transcendental philosophy in Kant's *Critique*. The concept of political practice to which this gives rise presupposes that the concepts of logical and real possibility, originally sketched out by Kant for the domain of science, are applicable, without further ado, to the domain of history. In the attitude proper to modern science, the theoretical subject has an *open* horizon: *everything* is possible subordinated to the (formal) condition of non-contradiction and the (material) condition of verification or experimentation. The concept of *utopia* proper to Enlightened political practice is the historical concretion of these concepts. Utopia's ontological determination as *realizability* coincides with what Kant calls 'real possibility'. The foregoing objection regarding the basis of the distinction between technique and practice comes into focus at this point. If the social world, with its institutions, values, and norms, cannot be levelled down to the mode of facticity, the practical subject's relation to history cannot merely duplicate the theoretical and technical employment of the concepts of logical and real possibility. This has a consequence for the concept of historical time that cannot be overestimated. *Practically considered, although the future is not a closed horizon, it is not open in the same way that it is for theory and technique.*

A comparable objection can be raised in respect of the practical application of the cogito-bound truth concept. In effect, as is shown in the *purposive* determination of the modern concept of utopia, Enlightenment transposes the truth concept which Kant had worked out for modern theory and technique to the practical subject's relation to history. Utopia, the virtual form of society that can meet the condition of universalizability, is the measure by which existent society is critically examined in view of its practical transformation. 'Emancipation', to put it otherwise, consists in projecting utopia onto existent society, practically transforming the latter in such a way that it comes to be adequate to the measure of reason: *adæquatio rei et intellectus*. Although the cogito-bound concept of truth undoubtedly has theoretical and technical validity, something which close consideration of the *General Theory* serves to confirm, it does not seem adequate to an understanding of the practical subject's relation to history. To return to our first thesis, one must question whether *the basic distinction between facticity and validity (truth) is suitable to political practice.*

These considerations on possibility and the cogito truth-concept have, once again, immediate relevance for the relation between welfare and Enlightenment. Although not closed, the horizon of possibilities available for changes to the welfare state is not open in the sense required by universalizability and 'emancipation'. The 'possibility of a classless society', in the sense that Habermas uses this expression, namely, as an organization of society that satisfies the (formal) criterion of non-contradiction and the (material) criterion of the conditions of realizability offered by

advanced capitalism, would not be a *practical* possibility. This assertion is not the expression of resignation, nor merely the perception of a drastic restriction of the range of transformative possibilities open to us today in the framework of the economic crisis of the welfare state and the collapse of communism. Instead, my suggestion is that historical possibility cannot be simply interpreted as the practical application of its original theoretical and technical meaning. Correspondingly, a classless society, in the indicated sense, is not the 'measure' by which to conceptualize how political practice is to move on beyond the welfare state in its present configuration.

Thesis 4: *Conceived as the utopian radicalization of the welfare state, Enlightenment is not a viable practical project for contemporary Western society.*

4) Beginning with Kant's general characterization of Enlightenment, the foregoing theses answer in the negative the question we had originally posed in the Introduction to this book, namely, whether the concept of political practice outlined by modern philosophical thinking on Enlightenment can be of guidance in view of how to move on from where we stand today. 'Emancipation', universalizability, utopianism and facticity/validity are, in my view, concepts which can be of no use for orienting political practice in our present situation. Now, this critique could, incorrectly, be construed to mean that the crisis of these concepts is the core of the economic crisis of the welfare state. In its prolongation, the dismantling of social security and the other achievements of the welfare state would be justified by arguing that they are part and parcel of a practical project which is untenable in its basic concepts. I am not in any way attempting to defend this position, nor is it the implication of my critique. To the contrary. If, as I *have* argued, it is not possible to view the social changes leading from the liberal to the welfare state, nor those leading beyond the latter into a 'post-welfare' state, as so many stages in the historical teleology going from heteronomy to autonomy, then, inversely, the critics of the welfare state are also deprived of the argument that this teleology is untenable or illusory in order to justify dismantling the welfare state.

Thesis 5: *The social arrangements of the welfare state, in particular its redistributive claim, do not rely on the concepts of 'emancipation', universalization, and utopianism; the critique of the latter provides no justification for rejecting the former.*

This point can be approached from another, though related, perspective.

In effect, welfare economics requires that law be harnessed in view of the technical functions of 'allocation', 'distribution' and 'stabilization'. In other words, welfare economics is only possible if law becomes its vehicle, hence a means to an end. During no other period of the history of Occident has law been so technical as in contemporary society; the merely quantitative explosion of 'regulations' issued by the 'regulatory state' is preconditioned by the ordering constitutive for modern rationality. To this extent, at least, the technical imperative of setting-a-given-in-order is the presupposition of law in the welfare state. But does this exhaust law's essential meaning for the welfare state? Is it not rather the case that law can only be technical on the basis of its more fundamental *practical* significance? Indeed, economic technique cannot legitimate itself; it depends on a legitimation that only the political function of law can bestow upon it. This insight reformulates our earlier insight that the political function of law in the welfare state is ideological in a constitutive, not merely distortive, manner.

The contours of a new field of investigation begin to delineate themselves at this moment, one to which we can only point without entering. Throughout our investigation, the three 'functions' of the state in welfare economics count as the point of departure for an enquiry into the concept of *technique*. In contrast, and although shown to unfold the same basic concept of rationality as (economic) technique, the Enlightened concept of political practice was gained by way of an analysis of the presuppositions of a critique of advanced capitalism, wherein those economic functions retain their unproblematic technical character. Consequently, from the point of view of Enlightenment, the question concerning the *practical* significance of those economic functions cannot be raised, other than to unmask their ideological-distortive role. An inversion parallel to that of the concept of ideology becomes necessary. The recognition of the constitutive ideological function of law suggests that *where the welfare state is most technical, namely, in its economic functions, lies concealed the concept of political practice that conditions the possibility of the latter*. In particular, the presupposition shared by economic technique and the Enlightened critique of advanced capitalism, according to which the state is merely the institutional referent of means-end relations, becomes questionable inasmuch as it blocks an enquiry into the concept of political practice from the point of view of the relation between the state, law, and authority.

I can now make good the promise formulated in the opening pages of the Introduction to this book, where I expressed the conviction that only when one has succeeded in grasping the concept of Enlightenment in its most general presuppositions can the adequate questions be raised in respect of law in the welfare state. Indeed, law is of central interest to an enquiry into the latter's rational foundations because it allows of exhibiting

the concept of political practice inherent to 'allocation', 'distribution' and 'stabilization', and in the absence of which these could not fulfill their claim to a technical setting-a-given-in-order of society. Which is not to say that, in consonance with Enlightenment, one has in advance granted that this formulation of rationality is also constitutive for the concept of political practice itself. To the contrary, the background philosophical question raised by this new field of enquiry is none other than attempting to ascertain whether the finitude of political practice is sufficiently finite when defined in terms of a material that must be 'given' for a 'setting-in-order'.

5) These considerations lead over to the second part of the conclusion. For they seem to imply that Enlightenment is irrelevant, practically speaking, to the welfare state. But such is the case only if its concept has been exhausted by the foregoing critical appraisal. Indeed, the question which remains unanswered in our critique of Enlightenment is whether its concept *necessitates* an all-embracing historical teleology leading from heteronomy to autonomy. Are 'emancipation', universalizability, and utopianism the indispensable conceptual core of Enlightenment? Certainly, these concepts are bound up with the reoccupation, by modern philosophy, of Augustine's metaphysical problem. But would dissolving the metaphysical reoccupation of Augustine's problem still leave room for a *modest* concept of Enlightenment, a concept that could be relevant to the welfare state? In other words, the question is whether Enlightenment admits of a distinction between its metaphysical and non-metaphysical aspects.

Such is, I believe, the case. The decisive point that cannot be lost from sight is that the attribution of responsibility to man for an evil world also, and most fundamentally, first makes of history a *human* history, if only partially so. Modernity completes the movement initiated by Augustine, attributing to man the capacity to change to his advantage the given social world, precisely in the recognition that it is the expression of a *human* history. Here, again, this recognition is more fundamental than responding to the challenge of the evil world/human guilt constellation with a teleology of historical self-rehabilitation. *A modest concept of Enlightenment is the result of purging the practical subject's relation to history of the stronger, metaphysical, claims of 'emancipation', universalizability, and utopianism.* In effect, it does not fall prey to the fundamental elements of the critique I have brought to bear on the metaphysical variant of Enlightenment: (1) To assert that history is a human history is not to make any claim about an original character the social world may possess. Neither the demonization of the existent social world, nor its glorification, are its preconditions. In this same line of reasoning, that man 'makes' history does not entail a comprehensive teleology from heteronomy to

autonomy. But it does suggest the possibility of what one could call localized emancipatory processes. (2) To claim that the practical subject can exercise a critical attitude in respect of history is not to argue that critique consists in the reduction of the norms, values, and institutions of the given social world to the mode of facticity. To put it in other words, the evaluation of ideology, which *is* a possibility, need not entail the stronger claim to universalization. (3) Again, the kind of active position in respect of history available to the practical subject does not require that the future be construed as the open horizon of utopianism. The modest concept of Enlightenment is compatible with the recognition that the historical future is finite. Hence, albeit finite, the *future* remains the privileged temporal horizon of political practice. (4) Although a critically achieved non-ideological situation as its zero-point is not possible without suspending a condition of possibility of political practice, the critical attitude this modest form of Enlightenment does claim for itself consists in the capacity to submit to questioning and transformation specific aspects of this ideological framework, *in the understanding that it is always and already the outcome of human activity*. Precisely because ideology is the outcome of human activity, its hypostatization is not tolerated by a moderate Enlightenment. Herein, moreover, would lie the basis for a non-metaphysical concept of emancipation.

Thesis 6: *That history is a human history, and as such, one in respect of which the practical subject can take up an active position of questioning and change; this is the necessary condition of a non-metaphysical concept of Enlightenment.*

6) The reader will notice that Thesis 6 formulates the *necessary* condition of a moderate concept of Enlightenment, but not its *sufficient* condition. The reasons for this bring us back to the practical problem posed by the economic crisis of the welfare state: by what criteria are the social implications to changes brought about to the welfare state to be assessed? Thesis 6 is silent on this matter; it does not fill in the void left over by the rejection of universalizability. More generally, and not limited to the specific situation of the welfare state, it provides no criteria of what counts as emancipation. The rejection of a universal teleology of historical self-rehabilitation seems to leave us in precisely the opposite situation: *any* finality goes. But is this tolerable? Isn't Enlightenment, most fundamentally, a thinking on the *ends* of reason, i.e. the attempt to find a justification for the finalities of action? When one has rejected an encompassing historical teleology, how is it still possible to think the ends of political practice? What kind of justification for political practice remains open to us today if we know that (1) history is a human history and (2) universalizability can no longer be accepted? If (1) is the necessary

condition of the modest concept of Enlightenment, only an alternative to (2) can provide its sufficient condition. The analyses developed in the course of this book do not yield the materials for a conclusive response to this problem. In this sense, the question 'By what criteria are we to evaluate the social consequences of changes to the welfare state?' holds open, and carries forward, Kant's original question: 'What is Enlightenment?'

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