

On Subject and Object

1

To lead in with reflections about subject and object raises the difficulty of stating what exactly the topic of discussion should be. The terms are patently equivocal. Thus "subject" can refer to the particular individual as well as to universal attributes of "consciousness in general," in the language of Kant's *Prolegomena*.¹ The equivocation cannot be removed simply through terminological clarification. For both meanings have reciprocal need of each other: one can hardly be comprehended without the other. No concept of the subject can have the element of individual humanity—what Schelling called "egoity"²—separated from it in thought; without any reference to it, subject would lose all significance. Conversely, the particular human individual, as soon as one reflects upon it under the guise of the universality of its concept, which does not signify merely some particular being *hic et nunc*, is already transformed into a universal, similar to what was expressed in the idealist concept of the subject; even the expression "particular person" requires the concept of species simply in order to be meaningful. The relation to that universal still inheres implicitly in proper names. They designate someone who has such and such a name and no other; and "someone" stands elliptically for "a person." On the other hand, if one wanted to escape complications of this kind by trying to define the two terms, then one would fall into an

aporia that attends the problematic of definition in modern philosophy since Kant. The concepts of subject and object, or rather what they refer to, have in a certain way priority over all definition. Defining means as much as subjectively, by means of a rigidly applied concept, capturing something objective, no matter what it may be in itself. Hence the resistance of subject and object to the act of defining. The determination of their meanings requires reflection on the very thing the act of defining truncates for the sake of conceptual manageability. Therefore it is advisable to start by taking up the words "subject" and "object" such as they are handed down by the well-honed philosophical language, as a historical sediment; not, of course, sticking to such conventionalism but continuing further with a critical analysis. One could begin with the allegedly naive, though already mediated, view that a knowing subject, whatever kind it may be, stands confronting an object of knowledge, whatever kind it may be. The reflection, which in philosophical terminology goes by the name of *intentio obliqua*, is then a relating from that ambiguous concept of object back to a no less ambiguous concept of subject. A second reflection reflects the first, more closely determining the vagueness for the sake of the contents of the concepts of subject and object.

2

The separation of subject and object is both real and semblance. True, because in the realm of cognition it lends expression to the real separation, the rivenness of the human condition, the result of a coercive historical process; untrue, because the historical separation must not be hypostatized, not magically transformed into an invariant. This contradiction in the separation of subject and object is imparted to epistemology. Although as separated they cannot be thought away, the *ψεῦδος* of the separation is manifested in their being mutually mediated, object by subject, and even more and differently, subject by object. As soon as it is fixed without mediation, the separation becomes ideology, its normal form. Mind then arrogates to itself the status of being absolutely independent—which it is not: mind's claim to independence announces its claim to domination. Once radically separated from the object, subject reduces the object to itself; subject swallows object, forgetting how much it is object itself. The image of a temporal or extratemporal original state of blissful identity between subject and object is romantic, however: at times a wishful projection, today just a lie. Before the subject constituted itself, undifferentiatedness was the terror of the blind nexus of nature, was myth; it was in their protest against this myth that the great religions had their truth content. After all, undifferentiatedness is not

unity, for the latter requires, even according to Platonic dialectic, diverse entities of which it is the unity. For those who experience it, the new horror of separation transfigures the old horror of chaos, and both are eternal sameness. The fear of gaping meaninglessness made one forget a fear that once was no less compelling: that of the vengeful gods Epicurean materialism and the Christian "fear not" wanted to spare mankind. This cannot be accomplished except through the subject. Were it liquidated instead of sublated into a higher form, the result would be not merely a regression of consciousness but a regression to real barbarism. Fate, the complicity of myth with nature, comes from the total political immaturity of society, from an age in which self-reflection had not yet opened its eyes, in which subject did not yet exist. Instead of conjuring the return of this age through collective praxis, the captivating spell of the old undifferentiatedness should be obliterated. Its prolongation is mind's identity-consciousness, which repressively makes its Other like itself. Were speculation concerning the state of reconciliation allowed, then it would be impossible to conceive that state as either the undifferentiated unity of subject and object or their hostile antithesis: rather it would be the communication of what is differentiated. Only then would the concept of communication, as an objective concept, come into its own. The present concept is so shameful because it betrays what is best—the potential for agreement between human beings and things—to the idea of imparting information between subjects according to the exigencies of subjective reason. In its proper place, even epistemologically, the relationship of subject and object would lie in a peace achieved between human beings as well as between them and their Other. Peace is the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other.

3

In epistemology, 'subject' is usually understood to mean the transcendental subject. According to idealist doctrine, it either constructs the objective world out of an undifferentiated material as in Kant or, since Fichte, it engenders the world itself. The critique of idealism was not the first to discover that this transcendental subject, which constitutes all content of experience, is in turn abstracted from living individual human beings. It is evident that the abstract concept of the transcendental subject, that is, the forms of thought, their unity, and the originary productivity of consciousness, presupposes precisely what it promises to establish: actual, living individuals. The idealist philosophies were aware of this point. Indeed, Kant tried to develop a fundamental, constitutive, and hierarchic distinction between the transcendental and the empirical sub-

ject in his chapter on the psychological paralogsms.³ His successors, however, particularly Fichte and Hegel, but also Schopenhauer, with subtle lines of argumentation endeavored to deal with the unavoidable problem of circularity. Frequently they returned to the Aristotelian motive that what comes first for consciousness—here, the empirical subject—is not the First in itself, and that it postulates the transcendental subject as its condition or origin. Even Husserl's polemic against psychologism, replete with the distinction between genesis and validity, continues this mode of argumentation.⁴ It is apologetic. The conditioned is to be justified as unconditioned, the derivative as primary. Here a topos of the entire Western tradition is repeated, which holds that only the First or, as Nietzsche critically formulated it, only something that has not evolved, can be true.⁵ The ideological function of the thesis cannot be overlooked. The more individuals are in effect degraded into functions within the societal totality as they are connected up to the system, the more the person pure and simple, as a principle, is consoled and exalted with the attributes of creative power, absolute rule, and spirit.

Nonetheless the question of the reality of the transcendental subject weighs heavier than it appears in its sublimation as pure spirit and, above all, in the critical revocation of idealism. In a certain sense, although idealism would be the last to admit it, the transcendental subject is more real, that is, it far more determines the real conduct of people and society than do those psychological individuals from whom the transcendental subject was abstracted and who have little to say in the world; for their part they have turned into appendages of the social machinery, ultimately into ideology. The living individual person, such as he is constrained to act and for which he was even internally molded, is as *homo oeconomicus* incarnate closer to the transcendental subject than the living individual he must immediately take himself to be. To this extent idealist theory was realistic and need not feel embarrassed when reproached for idealism by its opponents. The doctrine of the transcendental subject faithfully discloses the precedence of the abstract, rational relations that are abstracted from individuals and their conditions and for which exchange is the model. If the standard structure of society is the exchange form, its rationality constitutes people: what they are for themselves, what they think they are, is secondary. They are deformed at the outset by the mechanism that was then philosophically transfigured into the transcendental. What is supposedly most obvious, the empirical subject, would actually have to be considered as something not yet existing; from this aspect the transcendental subject is "constitutive." Allegedly the origin of all concrete objects, in its rigid timelessness it is concretely objectified, fully in keeping with the Kantian doctrine of the stable and immutable forms of transcendental consciousness. Its solidity

and invariance, which according to transcendental philosophy engenders objects or at least prescribes their regularity, is the reflective form of the reification of human beings that has objectively occurred in the conditions of society. The fetish character, societally necessary semblance, historically has become the *prius* of what according to its concept would have to be the *posterius*. The philosophical problem of constitution has been inverted into its mirror image; yet in its inversion it expresses the truth about the historic stage that has been attained; a truth, to be sure, that a second Copernican turn might theoretically negate. It certainly also has its positive moment: that the antecedent society keeps itself and its members alive. The particular individual owes the possibility of his existence to the universal; proof of this is thought, which is itself a universal and to that extent a societal relation. Thought is given priority over the individual not only fetishistically. But idealism hypostatizes only one side, which is incomprehensible except in relation to the other. Yet the given, the *skandalon* of idealism it can, however, not remove, demonstrates again and again the failure of that hypostasis.

4

The insight into the primacy of the object does not restore the old *intentio recta*, the slavish confidence in the external world existing precisely as it appears this side of critique, an anthropological state devoid of the self-consciousness that first crystallizes in the context of the relationship leading from knowledge back to the knower. The crude confrontation of subject and object in naive realism is of course historically necessitated and cannot be dismissed by an act of will. But at the same time it is a product of false abstraction, already a piece of reification. Once this is seen through, then a consciousness objectified to itself, and precisely as such directed outward, virtually striking outward, could no longer be dragged along without self-reflection. The turn to the subject, though from the outset intent on its primacy, does not simply disappear with its revision; this revision occurs not least of all in the subjective interest in freedom. The primacy of the object means rather that subject for its part is object in a qualitatively different, more radical sense than object, because object cannot be known except through consciousness, hence is also subject. What is known through consciousness must be a something; mediation applies to something mediated. But subject, the epitome of mediation, is the 'How', and never, as contrasted to the object, the 'What' that is postulated by every conceivable idea for a concept of subject. Potentially, though not actually, objectivity can be conceived without a subject; but not likewise object without subjectivity. No matter how sub-

ject is defined, the existent being cannot be conjured away from it. If subject is not something, and "something" designates an irreducibly objective element, then it is nothing at all; even as *actus purus* it needs to refer to something that acts. The primacy of the object is the *intentio obliqua* of the *intentio obliqua*, not the warmed-over *intentio recta*; the corrective to the subjective reduction, not the denial of a subjective share. Object is also mediated; but, according to its own concept, it is not so thoroughly dependent upon subject as subject is dependent upon objectivity. Idealism ignored such a difference and thereby coarsened an intellectualization that functions as a disguise for abstraction. But this occasions a revision of the prevailing position toward the subject in traditional theory, which exalts the subject in ideology and defames it in epistemological praxis. If one wants to attain the object, however, then its subjective determinations or qualities are not to be eliminated: precisely that would be contrary to the primacy of the object. If subject has a core of object, then the subjective qualities in the object are all the more an objective moment. For object becomes something at all only through being determinate. In the determinations that seem merely to be affixed to it by the subject, the subject's own objectivity comes to the fore: they are all borrowed from the objectivity of the *intentio recta*. Even according to idealist doctrine the subjective determinations are not merely an afterthought; they are also always required by what is to be determined, and in this the primacy of the object asserts itself. Conversely, the supposedly pure object, free of any added thought or intuition, is the very reflection of abstract subjectivity: only it makes the Other like itself through abstraction. Unlike the indeterminate substrate of reductionism, the object of undiminished experience is more objective than that substrate. The qualities the traditional critique of epistemology eradicated from the object and credited to the subject are due in subjective experience to the primacy of the object; the reign of *intentio obliqua* deceived about this. Its legacy devolved upon a critique of experience that attained its own historical, and finally societal, conditionedness. For society is immanent to experience, not an ἄλλο γένος. Only the societal self-reflection of knowledge obtains that epistemological objectivity that escapes knowledge so long as it obeys the societal coercions at work in it and does not think through them. Critique of society is critique of knowledge, and vice versa.

The primacy of the object can be discussed legitimately only when that primacy—over the subject in the broadest sense of the term—is some-

how determinable, that is, more than the Kantian thing-in-itself as the unknown cause of phenomenal appearance.⁶ Despite Kant, to be sure, even the thing-in-itself bears a minimum of determinations simply by being distinguished from what is predicated by the categories; one such determination, of a negative kind, would be that of acausality. It is sufficient to establish an antithesis to the conventional view that agrees with subjectivism. The primacy of the object proves itself in that it qualitatively alters the opinions of reified consciousness that are smoothly consistent with subjectivism. Subjectivism does not affect naive realism at the level of content but rather simply attempts to provide formal criteria for its validity, as confirmed by the Kantian formula of empirical realism. One argument for the primacy of the object is indeed incompatible with Kant's doctrine of constitution: that in the modern natural sciences *ratio* peers over the wall it itself erects, that it snatches a snippet of what does not agree with its own ingrained categories. Such an expansion of *ratio* unsettles subjectivism. But what determines the antecedent object, as distinct from its being trussed up by the subject, can be grasped in what for its part determines the categorial apparatus by which the object is determined according to the subjectivist schema, namely in the conditionedness of what conditions the object. The categorial determinations, which according to Kant first bring about objectivity, are themselves something posited and thus, as it were, really are "merely subjective." The *reductio ad hominem* thus becomes the collapse of anthropocentrism. The fact that man as a *constituens* is in turn man-made disenchant the creationism of mind. But because the primacy of the object requires both reflection upon the subject and subjective reflection, subjectivity—differently than in the primitive materialism that actually does not permit dialectics—becomes a moment that is held fast.

Since the Copernican turn what goes by the name of phenomenalism—that nothing is known unless it goes through the knowing subject—has joined with the cult of the mind. Insight into the primacy of the object revolutionizes both of these views. What Hegel intended to maintain within subjective brackets has the critical consequence of shattering them. The general assurance that innervations, insights, cognitions are "only subjective" no longer helps as soon as subjectivity is seen through as a form of object. Semblance is the magical transformation of the subject into the ground of its own determination, its positing as true being. Subject itself must be brought to its objectivity, its stirrings must not be banished from cognition. But phenomenalism's semblance is a necessary

one. It attests to the virtually irresistible nexus of deception that subject as false consciousness produces and likewise belongs to. The ideology of the subject is founded in such irresistibility. The consciousness of a defect—the awareness of the limits of cognition—becomes a merit, so as to make the defect more bearable. Collective narcissism was at work. But it could not have prevailed with such stringency, could not have brought forth the most powerful philosophies, if a truth, though distorted, did not underlie it. What transcendental philosophy praised in creative subjectivity is the subject's own self-concealed imprisonment within itself. The subject remains harnessed within everything objective it thinks, like an armored animal in its layers of carapace it vainly tries to shake loose; yet it never occurred to those animals to vaunt their captivity as freedom. It would be well to ask why human beings did so. Their mental captivity is exceedingly real. Their dependence as cognitive subjects upon space, time, and forms of thought marks their dependence on the species. The species finds its expression in these constituents, which are no less valid for that reason. The a priori and society interpenetrate. The universality and necessity of those forms, their Kantian fame, is none other than what unites human beings. They needed this unity for *survival**. Captivity was internalized: the individual is no less imprisoned within himself than he is within the universal, within society. Hence the interest in reinterpreting the captivity as freedom. The categorial captivity of individual consciousness repeats the real captivity of each individual. Even the view of consciousness that allows it to see through that captivity is determined by the forms it has implanted in the individual. Their individual self-captivity might make people cognizant of their societal captivity: the prevention of this was and remains a capital interest for the continuation of the status quo. For the sake of the status quo philosophy had to overstep its bounds, with hardly less necessity than that of the forms themselves. Idealism was this ideological even before it set about glorifying the world as absolute Idea. The original compensation already includes the presumption that reality, exalted into a product of the putatively free subject, in turn vindicates itself as free.

7

Identity thinking, screen-image of the dominant dichotomy, in the age of subjective impotence no longer poses as the absolutization of the subject. Instead what is taking shape is a type of seemingly anti-subjectivist, scientifically objective identity thinking, what is called reductionism; the early Russell was called a neorealist. It is the characteristic form of reified consciousness at present, false because of its latent and therefore all the

more fatal subjectivism. The remainder is molded according to the standard of subjective reason's ordering principles and, being abstract itself, agrees with the abstractness of that reason. Reified consciousness, which mistakenly takes itself for nature, is naive: a historical formation and itself mediated through and through, it takes itself, to speak with Husserl, for an "ontological sphere of absolute origins" and takes the thing confronting it, which it itself has trussed up, for the coveted matter itself.⁷ The ideal of depersonalizing knowledge for the sake of objectivity retains nothing but the *caput mortuum* of objectivity. If the dialectical primacy of the object is acknowledged, then the hypothesis of an unreflected practical science of the object as a residual determination after the subject has been subtracted away collapses. Subject is then no longer a subtractible addendum to objectivity. With the removal of one of its essential moments objectivity is falsified, not purified. The notion that guides the residual concept of objectivity has, then, its archetype in something posited and man-made: by no means in the idea of the in-itself, for which it substitutes the purified object. Rather it is the model of the profit that remains on the balance sheet after all production costs have been deducted. Profit, however, is subjective interest limited and reduced to the form of calculation. What counts for the sober matter-of-factness of profit thinking is anything but the matter:⁸ it disappears into the return it yields. Cognition, however, must be guided by what exchange has not maimed or—since there is nothing left unmaimed anymore—by what is concealed within the exchange processes. Object is no more a subjectless residuum than it is posited by subject. The two conflicting determinations fit together: the residue, which science settles for as its truth, is a product of its manipulative procedures that are subjectively organized. To define what object is would in turn be itself part of that organization. Objectivity can be made out solely by reflecting, at every historical and cognitive stage, both upon what at that time is presented as subject and object as well as upon their mediations. To this extent object is in fact "infinitely given as a task," as neo-Kantianism taught.⁹ At times subject, as unrestricted experience, will come closer to object than the residuum filtered and curtailed to suit the requirements of subjective reason. According to its present, and polemical, status in the philosophy of history, unreduced subjectivity is capable of functioning more objectively than objectivistic reductions. Not the least way all cognition is bewitched and spellbound is that the traditional epistemological theses have turned their subject matter upside down: *fair is foul, and foul is fair**. The objective contents of individual experience are produced not through the method of comparative generalization, but rather through the dissolution of what prevents that experience—as itself biased—from giving itself to the object without reservation, as Hegel said, with the

freedom that would relax the cognitive subject until it truly fades into the object with which it is akin by virtue of its own objective being.¹⁰ The key position of the subject in cognition is experience, not form; what for Kant is formation is essentially deformation. The exertion of cognition is predominantly the destruction of its usual exertion, of its using violence against the object. Knowledge of the object is brought closer by the act of the subject rending the veil it weaves about the object. It can do this only when, passive, without anxiety, it entrusts itself to its own experience. In the places where subjective reason senses subjective contingency, the primacy of the object shimmers through: that in the object which is not a subjective addition. Subject is the agent, not the constituent, of object; this has consequences for the relation between theory and practice as well.

8

Even after the second reflection of the Copernican turn, there still remains some truth to Kant's most contestable thesis: the distinction between the transcendental thing-in-itself and the constituted, concretely objective thing. For then object would finally be the nonidentical, liberated from the subjective spell and comprehensible through its own self-critique—if object is there at all and not rather what Kant outlined with the concept of idea.¹¹ Such nonidentity would quite closely approach the Kantian thing-in-itself, although he insisted on the vanishing point of its coincidence with subject. It would be no relic of a disenchanted *mundus intelligibilis*; rather it would be more real than the *mundus sensibilis* to the extent that Kant's Copernican turn abstracts from that nonidentity and therein finds its limit. Yet according to Kant, object is something "posited" by the subject, the weave of forms cast by the subject over the Something devoid of qualities,¹² finally the law that unites the appearances, which are disintegrated by their relation back to subject, into a concrete object. The attributes of necessity and universality Kant attaches to the emphatic concept of law possess thing-like solidity and are impenetrable just like the societal world the living collide with. That law, which according to Kant the subject prescribes to nature, the highest elevation of objectivity in his conception, is the perfect expression of subject as well as of its self-alienation: at the height of its formative pretension, the subject passes itself off as object. But nonetheless this again is paradoxically correct: in fact, subject is also object; it merely forgets, as it becomes autonomous form, how and by what it itself is constituted. Kant's Copernican turn precisely expresses the objectifica-

tion of the subject, the reality of reification. Its truth content is by no means an ontological one but, on the contrary, the historically amassed block between subject and object. The subject erects that block when it claims supremacy over the object and thereby defrauds itself of it. As in truth nonidentical, the object distances itself farther from the subject the more the subject "constitutes" the object. The block against which the Kantian philosophy pounds its head is at the same time a product of that philosophy. Subject as pure spontaneity, originary apperception, apparently the absolutely dynamic principle is, however, by virtue of its chorismos from any material no less reified than the world of things constituted by the model of natural science. For through the chorismos the asserted absolute spontaneity is, in itself, though not for Kant, shut down; it is a form that is supposed to be the form of something, whereas by its own constitution it cannot enter into interaction with any Something. Its stark separation from the activity of individual subjects, where that activity must be devalued as being contingent and psychological, destroys the originary apperception, Kant's inmost principle. His apriorism deprives pure action of precisely the temporality without which absolutely nothing can be understood as "dynamic." Action recoils into a being of the second order; explicitly, as everyone knows, in the later Fichte's rejection of his own 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*.¹³ Kant codifies such objective ambiguity in the concept of object, and no theorem about the object should ignore this. Strictly speaking, primacy of the object would mean that there is no object understood as something abstractly opposed to the subject but that it necessarily appears as that; the necessity of this semblance should be removed.¹⁴

9

Just as little, to be sure, "is there" actually subject. Its hypostasis in idealism leads to absurdities. They may be summarized by saying that the definition of subject involves that against which it is posited; and by no means simply because as a *constituens* it presupposes the *constitutum*. Subject is itself object to the extent that the "there is," which the idealist doctrine of constitution implies—there has to be subject so that it can constitute something—in its turn was borrowed from the sphere of facticity. The concept of what there is means nothing other than the concept of what exists, and as existent subject falls at once under the heading of object. But as pure apperception subject should be the absolutely Other of all existents. Even here some truth appears in its negative guise: that the reification the sovereign subject has inflicted on everything, includ-

ing itself, is semblance. It transposes into the abyss of itself what would be beyond reach of reification; with the absurd consequence, of course, that it thereby licenses all other reification. Idealism takes the idea of the correct life and wrongly projects it inward. The subject as productive imagination, pure apperception, ultimately as free action,¹⁵ enciphers that activity in which the life of people actually reproduces itself, and with good reason anticipates in it freedom. That is the reason why subject will hardly simply vanish into object or into anything else allegedly higher, into Being however it may be hypostatized.¹⁶ Subject in its self-positing is semblance and at the same time something historically exceedingly real. It contains the potential for the sublation of its own domination.

10

The difference between subject and object slices through subject as well as through object. It can no more be absolutized than it can be removed from thought. Actually everything that is in the subject can be attributed to the object; whatever in it is not object semantically bursts open the "is." The pure subjective form of traditional epistemology, according to its own concept, is always only a form of something objective, never without that objectivity, indeed not even thinkable without it. The solidity of the epistemological ego, the identity of self-consciousness, is obviously modeled after the unreflected experience of the enduring, identical object; even Kant fundamentally relies on this. He could not have claimed that the subjective forms are conditions of objectivity if he had not tacitly granted them an objectivity borrowed from the one to which he contrasts the subject. However, at the extreme where subjectivity contracts, from the single point of its synthetic unity, what is taken together is always only what in itself belongs together anyway. Otherwise synthesis would be mere arbitrary classification. Of course, without the subjective act of synthesis such a belonging together is just as inconceivable. Even the subjective a priori can be claimed to have objective validity only in so far as it has an objective side; without it the object constituted by the a priori would be a pure tautology for subject. Finally, by virtue of its being indissoluble, given, and extraneous to the subject, its contents, what Kant calls the matter of cognition, is likewise something objective in the subject.¹⁷ Accordingly, it is easy to think of the subject as nothing and of the object as absolute, a tendency not far from Hegel's thoughts. But this is once again transcendental illusion. Subject is reduced to nothing through its hypostasis, making something out of no thing.¹⁸ The hypostasis defaults because it cannot satisfy the innermost, naive-realistic criterion of exis-

tence. The idealist construction of the subject founders on its falsely taking subject to be objective in the sense of something existing in-itself, precisely what it is not: measured against the standard of entities, the subject is condemned to nothingness. Subject is all the more the less it is, and all the less the more it believes itself to exist, to be for itself something objective. As an essential moment, however, it is ineradicable. Upon the elimination of the subjective moment the object would come apart diffusely like the fleeting stirrings and twinklings of subjective life.

11

Object, though attenuated, also is not without subject. If object itself lacked subject as a moment, then its objectivity would become nonsense. This is flagrantly obvious in the weakness of Hume's epistemology. It was subjectively oriented while still believing it could dispense with the subject.¹⁹ Therefore it is necessary to judge the relationship between individual and transcendental subject. The individual subject, as has been stated since Kant in countless variations, is an integral component of the empirical world. Its function, however, its capacity for experience—which the transcendental subject lacks, for no purely logical entity could have any sort of experience—is in truth much more constitutive than the role idealism ascribed to the transcendental subject, which is itself a profoundly, precritically hypostatized abstraction of individual consciousness. Nevertheless the concept of the transcendental is a reminder that thinking, by virtue of its own immanent elements of universality, transcends its own inalienable individuation. The antithesis between universal and particular too is necessary as well as deceptive. Neither one can exist without the other, the particular only as determined and thus universal, the universal only as the determination of a particular and thus itself particular. Both of them are and are not. This is one of the strongest motives of a nonidealist dialectics.

12

The subject's reflection upon its own formalism is reflection upon society, with the paradox that, following the intention of the later Durkheim, on the one hand the formative constituents originate in society, while on the other hand, as current epistemology can boast, they are objectively valid; in Durkheim's arguments they are already presupposed in every proposition that demonstrates their conditionedness.²⁰ This paradox may well be one with the subject's objective captivity within itself. The cogni-

tive function, without which there would be neither difference nor unity of the subject, for its part has arisen historically. It consists essentially in those formative constituents; to the extent that there is cognition, it must take place in accordance with them, even where it looks beyond them. They define the concept of cognition. Yet those formative constituents are not absolute but rather a historical development like the cognitive function itself. It is not beyond the pale of possibility that they could disappear. To predicate their absoluteness would posit the cognitive function, the subject, as absolute; to relativize them would dogmatically revoke the cognitive function. To counter this it is claimed that the argument involves a silly sociology: that God created society and society created man and God in man's image. But the anteriority thesis is absurd only so long as the individual or its biological prototype is hypostatized. In view of evolutionary history it is more likely to assume the temporal *prius*, or at least the simultaneous copresence of the species. That "the" human being was there before the species is either a Biblical echo or sheer Platonism. Nature at its lower stages is full of nonindividuated organisms. If, as more recent biologists maintain, human beings in fact are born so much more ill-equipped than other creatures, then they probably could have survived only in association, through rudimentary social labor; the *principium individuationis* is secondary to that, hypothetically a kind of biological division of labor. It is improbable that some single human first emerged, archetypically. The belief in such an emergence mythically projects the *principium individuationis*, now historically fully developed, backward into the past or onto the celestial realm of eternal ideas. The species may have individuated itself through mutation, in order then, through individuation, to reproduce itself in individuals by relying on biological singularity. The human being is a result, not an εἶδος; the insights of Hegel and Marx penetrate all the way into the inmost aspects of the so-called questions of constitution. The ontology of "the" human being—the model for the construction of the transcendental subject—is centered on the developed individual, as is indicated linguistically by the ambiguity in the article "the," which names the species as well as the individual.²¹ To this extent nominalism, much more than its opponent, ontology, includes the primacy of the species, of society. To be sure, ontology makes common cause with nominalism by at once denying the species, perhaps because it suggests animals: ontology, by exalting the individual into the form of unity and into a being-in-itself as opposed to the many; nominalism, by unreflectedly proclaiming the individual, on the model of the human individual, to be the true entity. It denies society in its concepts by degrading it into an abbreviation for the individual.

Marginalia to Theory and Praxis

For Ulrich Sonnemann

1

A simple consideration of history demonstrates just how much the question of theory and praxis depends upon the question of subject and object. At the same time as the Cartesian doctrine of two substances ratified the dichotomy of subject and object, literature for the first time portrayed praxis as a dubious undertaking on account of its tension with reflection. Despite all its eager realism, pure practical reason is devoid of object to the same degree that the world for manufacturing and industry becomes material devoid of quality and ready for processing, which in turn finds its legitimation nowhere else but in the marketplace. Whereas praxis promises to lead people out of their self-isolation, praxis itself has always been isolated; for this reason practical people are unresponsive and the relation of praxis to its object is a priori undermined. Indeed, one could ask whether in its indifference toward its object all nature-dominating praxis up to the present day is not in fact praxis in name only. Its illusory character is inherited by all the actions unreflectedly adopting the old violent gesture of praxis. Since its beginnings American pragmatism has been criticized—with good reason—for consecrating the existing conditions by making the practical applicability of knowledge its criterion for knowledge; supposedly nowhere else could the practical effectiveness of knowledge be tested. If in the end theory, which bears upon

mies, trans. Willis Domingo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983).

63. The child studies published by Else Frenkel-Brunswik (1908–1958) comprise the following: "A Study of Prejudice in Children," *Human Relations* 1 (1948): 295–306; "Patterns of Social and Cognitive Outlooks in Children," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 21 (1951): 543–548; and together with J. Havel, "Authoritarianism in the Interviews of Children: 1. Attitudes toward Minority Groups," *Journal of General Psychology* 82 (1953): 91–136; "Further Explorations by a Contributor to 'The Authoritarian Personality,'" in *Studies in the Scope and Method of 'The Authoritarian Personality'*, ed. Richard Christie and Marie Jahoda, 226–275.

64. Cf. the chapters "The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research" and "The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory" in Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1949, 1957, 1968).

65. In the radio version Adorno translates this as "Rand der Verrückten," later as "Rand der Wahnsinnigen."

66. In the radio version Adorno translates "Testsätze."

67. "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses" (1943), in GS 9.1 (1975): 7–141.

68. Radio version and earlier English translation: "The situation I faced there was entirely different from that of the Princeton project or *The Authoritarian Personality*."

69. "The Stars Down to Earth," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1957), 2:19–88. Reprinted in GS 9.2:7–120. An abbreviated German version was published in 1962 as "Aberglaube aus zweiter Hand" in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Sociologica II: Reden und Vorträge* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1962). It is reprinted in GS 8:147–76. See also "The Stars Down to Earth: The *Los Angeles Times* Astrology Column," *Telos*, 19 (Spring 1974): 13–90; reprinted in T. W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. Stephen Crook (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 34–127.

70. Cf. Freud's theory of the "death drive" [*Todestrieb*] in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930); English: vol. 21 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

71. Adorno applies the "biphasic" behavior the depth psychologist Otto Fenichel (*Psychoanalytic Theory of Neuroses* [New York: Norton, 1945]) notes in compulsive neurotics ("The patient behaves alternately as though he were a naughty child and a strict punitive disciplinarian" [*ibid.*, 291]) to the rationalized time schedule of modern bourgeois life, which establishes antinomies of work and pleasure. Astrology columnists offer a solution by emphasizing ego ideal responsibilities for the morning, and the pleasure principle for the evening. Adorno: "The problem of how to dispense with contradictory requirements of life is solved by the simple device of distributing these requirements over different periods mostly of the same day." [Adorno's emphasis] GS 9.2:56; Crook, *ibid.*, 67.

72. Radio version interjects: "that the products of the culture industry, of the secondhand 'popular culture'*, . . ."

73. In the radio version Adorno translates "vorurteilvollen."

74. "How to Look at Television," *Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 8 (Spring 1954): 213–235. Reprinted as "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture"

in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), 474–487.

"Fernsehen als Ideologie": "Television as Ideology" in this volume.

75. Paul Tillich (1886–1965), German Protestant theologian and philosopher, leader of the "League of Religious Socialists" [Bund religiöser Sozialisten] in Berlin. In 1929 he was named professor of religious studies and social philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. In 1933 he was suspended by the National Socialists and emigrated to the United States, becoming a US citizen in 1940. From 1937 to 1955 he was professor for philosophical theology at the Union Theological Seminary (New York), from 1955 to 1962 at Harvard University, and from 1962 until his death at the University of Chicago. In 1931 Adorno wrote his *Habilitation* under Tillich, which appeared in book form in 1933: *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); the original is GS 2.

76. Radio version interjects: "and thereby learns for the first time how to put the specifically cultural into conceptual terms."

77. Radio version interjects: "and there too nothing is for free, rather the commodities are exchanged equivalently."

78. Radio version: "We Europeans."

79. Radio version continues: "indeed as an expression of mechanization."

80. Charles Alexis Henri Clével de Tocqueville (1805–1859), French writer and politician. After his visit to America in 1831–1832, he wrote his famous *On Democracy in America* (1835–1840), in which he described American society as the model of an inevitably expansive democracy, and surmised an inevitable loss of individualism.

Ferdinand Kürnberger (1821–1879), Austrian liberal-minded author of novels, plays, and satirical feuilletons, who achieved fame for his *roman à clef* about Nicolas Lenau's travels to the United States entitled *Der Amerika-Müde* (1855). Whereas the popular literature about America at the time juxtaposed a free and democratic society and natural wholesomeness to a repressive civilization of restoration Europe, Kürnberger's novel portrays America as a land without culture where egoism and materialism prevail.

On Subject and Object

1. "Consciousness in general" is Kant's designation for the universal validity of "judgments of experience" as opposed to the subjective validity of individual, psychological "judgments of perception" (as in Locke's 'ideas' and Hume's 'perceptions'). Judgments of perception refer directly to sensible intuitions and are made according to the individual's "association of ideas," whereas judgments of experience are made by the faculty of understanding, which subsumes intuitions under universal concepts of the understanding, such as causality. Such concepts are logical universals and therefore transcend individual, subjective experience and consciousness, belonging rather to "experience in general" and "consciousness in general":

The sum of the matter is this: the business of the senses is to intuit, that of the understanding is to think. But thinking is uniting representations in a con-

consciousness. This unification originates either merely relative to the subject and is contingent and subjective, or it happens absolutely and is necessary or objective. The uniting of representations in a consciousness is judgment. Thinking therefore is the same as judging, or referring representations to judgments in general. Hence judgments are either merely subjective when representations are referred to a consciousness in one subject only and united in it, or they are objective when they are united in a consciousness in general, that is, necessarily. The logical moments of all judgments are so many possible ways of uniting representations in consciousness.

(Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft auftreten können* [1783], §22 [A 88; A. A. 4:304–5]; English: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Carus translation revised by James W. Ellington* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977], 48)

2. Cf. Schelling's 1810 *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* in *Schellings Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, vol. 4, *Schriften zur Philosophie der Freiheit, 1804–1815* (Munich: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929; reprint, 1978), 309–376, esp. 330ff.: "On this view then, there are two principles in God. The first principle or the first primordial force is that through which He exists as a particular, single, individual being. We can call this force the Selfhood, the Egoism in God," (330) and it has the form of "Egoity" [*Egoität*] (332) under which the being or essence [*Wesen*] of God is posited. The second and opposed principle is that of love, and Schelling assures the reader that egoism and love are the "human expressions" for the real and the ideal, respectively, in God.

3. "The Paralogisms of Pure Reason," *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1965), 328–383.

4. On Husserl's attack on psychologism and his distinction between genesis and validity [*Genesis/Geltung*] cf. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, *GS* 5:7–245, esp. 81–95. English: *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique; Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, trans. Willis Domingo (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982; Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983), esp. 74–78.

5. Cf. sections 2 and 16 of the first part of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

6. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 20: "The effect of an object upon the faculty of representation, so far as we are affected by it, is sensation [*Empfindung*]. That intuition which is in relation to the object through sensation, is entitled *empirical*. The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is entitled *appearance* [*Erscheinung*]" (*Critique of Reason*, 65).

7. "Seinssphäre absoluter Ursprünge," Husserl's term for consciousness understood as an absolute first cause. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Husserliana*, vol. 3/1, ed. Karl Schuhmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 107 (in the original pagination of the 1922 Halle edition). English: *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier, 1962). Adorno quotes this phrase on the first page of his Husserl critique: *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie: Studien über Husserl und die phänomenologischen Antinomien* (1956), *GS* 5 (1970): 7–245. English: *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*.

8. Adorno plays on the resonance between *Sachlichkeit*, which means an objective, unemotional attitude (as in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, sometimes translated as "The New Functionalism") and *Sache*, "subject matter, matter-at-hand."

9. Allusion to the Marburg School (H. Cohen, R. Natorp, E. Cassirer, K. Vorländer) who mobilized Kant's transcendental epistemology against materialist theories and in favor of a strict, value-free, verifiable empiricism. "Infinitely given as a task" [*unendlich aufgegeben*] echoes Kant's claim that transcendental ideas of reason operate "regulatively" rather than "constitutively": they are not given [*gegeben*] in experience but given as a task [*aufgegeben*] to thought by which mind can think beyond what it receives in phenomenal experience.

10. Presumably alluding to the following passage from the "Preface" to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) (*Werke* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970], 3:56):

That habit should be called material thinking, a contingent consciousness that is absorbed only in material stuff, and therefore finds it hard work to lift the self clear of such matter, and to be with itself alone. At the opposite extreme, argumentation [*Räsonieren*] is freedom from all content [of thought], and a sense of vanity toward it. From it is demanded [by Hegel's method] the effort to relinquish this freedom and, instead of being the arbitrarily moving principle of the content, to sink this freedom in the content and let it move by its own nature, that is, by the self as its own, and to observe this movement. This refusal to intrude into the immanent rhythm of the concept, either arbitrarily or with wisdom obtained from elsewhere, constitutes a restraint that is itself an essential moment of the concept.

(G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977], 35–36; translation modified)

11. Cf. the first book of "The Transcendental Dialectic" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

12. Drawing on the distinction between sensible appearance (*phenomenon*) and intelligible essence (*noumenon*), Kant maintains "we indeed, rightly considering objects of sense as mere appearances, confess thereby that they are based upon a thing in itself, though we know not this thing as it is in itself but only its appearances, viz., the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something" (*Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 57 [§32, A. A. 4:314f.]). For the same structure of intelligible/sensible in terms of the moral law see Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3d. ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 61 (A. A. 4:462).

13. In his later versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (especially that of 1810) Johann Gottlieb Fichte's idealism becomes more extreme and finally, religious. In his *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben* (1806) Fichte's original principle of the intellectual and moral self-positing of the Ego (subjective idealism) is shown to rely on what is absolute, unconditioned, and can only be affirmed in thought—what Fichte now calls God.

14. Adorno plays here on the resonance between the verb *erscheinen*, "to appear phenomenally" (hence in Kant "phenomenon"—"appearance" as opposed to "noumenon," "essence"—is called *Erscheinung*), and *Schein* (and the related verb *scheinen*, "to seem") "semblance," "illusion" (here "seeming appearance" as opposed to "being").

15. "Free action" [*freie Tathandlung*], a phrase from Fichte's metaphysical theory as presented in his *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), which holds that the fundamental principle underlying all reality derives from the self-positing and self-affirming of the Ego, i.e., subjective idealism. Such positing precedes and itself conditions the resultant dualism between Ego (subject) and non-Ego (object); since the positing itself is unconditioned, Fichte calls it a "free action."

16. Thinly veiled allusion to Heidegger.

17. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A20–21.

18. Adorno's pun: "*die Verdinglichung des Undinglichen*," literally, "the reification of what is not thingly," but also playing on the colloquial *Unding*, "absurdity."

19. According to David Hume (1711–1776), the mind's primary data is comprised solely of sensory impressions, feelings, or ideas, the latter being nothing but memories of previous impressions. Therefore Hume concluded that the mind is nothing other than a bundle of subjective perceptions related through resemblance, succession, and causation and lacks any substantive identity of the self (what Kant inherited as the problem of the unity of consciousness). Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), bk. 1, pt. 4; Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), section 12.

20. Adorno here echoes one of his critiques of Durkheim's concept of *faits sociaux* as expounded in his *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (1901) and *Sociologie et philosophie* (1924). For Adorno's appraisal of Durkheim's sociology, cf. his "Einleitung zu Emile Durkheim, 'Soziologie und Philosophie,'" *GS* 8:245–279 and "Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der deutschen Soziologie" in *GS* 8:500–531, esp. 503.

21. In German, like French, the article is used to indicate species as well as individual, thus, *der Mensch* [or *l'homme*] means both "man" as well as "mankind."

Marginalia to Theory and Praxis

1. "Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie / Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum." *Faust, Erster Teil*, ll. 2038–2039. In Walter Kaufman's translation: "Gray, my dear friend, is every theory, / And green alone life's golden tree," in *Goethe's Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 206.

2. Adorno's neologistic *entqualifizieren* suggests not only the English "disqualify" but here primarily "removing the qualities, distinctions from," "de-differentiating."

3. Alluding to line 16 of Rudolf Borchardt's poem "Auf eine angeschossene Schwalbe, die der Dichter fand," here given in a literal translation:

TO A SWALLOW SHOT AND WOUNDED, FOUND BY THE POET

Now there you lie, a small broken arrow;
Your tendon cut clean through
And no more wing is healthy
For one alone cannot carry you.

You meet my monstrous closeness
With a mien of deathly fear

My hesitation to you means claw and tooth
My leaning forward hunger for you,

And no more flight; for you are not swift;
You and your nest-mate
Could win life only
By outstripping, by escaping:

With enmity through the desert of your world
Shooting, always before the enemy,
In the shrill, shrill cry alone
You stay together, lonely community!

How, in my hand, which renders warmth,
The life-black eye is surprised!
I am not god, who disowns you,
Like hundreds upon hundreds every day,—

You had flight, and what can sustain you,
From him, the serene sustainer of your foe,
Past the spot, where your impotence lay,
went your god, flew your sibling,

And those you never honored with your thievery,
When you rounded the curve in the blueness,
Already a birth of dust crept upon you,
To it you are carrion, soon as it sees you wounded!—

Tiny tongue, that boldly feasts upon my finger
You are full of tidings without speaking;
So that you once trust stronger ones,
Must god break the ring of his own providence,—

To rectify, where even he pities
The mockery and wrong of his own work,
he has need of his great son,
whom the common kingdom does not completely compass.

Here he thanks me, what he gave me:
That he granted me his soul,
Drew taught the bridge between you and him,
The bridge he himself could not build.

He who sets each body before death
Does not let his own be gambled away:
He, who banished his creature, created
Also the creature, to save the banished.