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MAN AND HIS DOUBLES

I THE RETURN OF LANGUAGE

With the appearance of literature, with the return of exegesis and the concern for formalization, with the development of philology – in short, with the reappearance of language as a multiple profusion, the order of Classical thought can now be eclipsed. At this time, from any retrospective viewpoint, it enters a region of shade. Even so, we should speak not of darkness but of a somewhat blurred light, deceptive in its apparent clarity, and hiding more than it reveals: it seems to us, in fact, that we know all there is to be known about Classical knowledge if we understand that it is rationalistic, that, since Galileo and Descartes, it has accorded an absolute privilege to Mechanism, that it presupposes a general ordering of nature, that it accepts the possibility of an analysis sufficiently radical to discover elements or origins, but that it already has a presentiment, beyond and despite all these concepts of understanding, of the movement of life, of the density of history, and of the disorder, so difficult to master, in nature. But to recognize Classical thought by such signs alone is to misunderstand its fundamental arrangement; it is to neglect entirely the relation between such manifestations and what made them possible. And how, after all (if not by a slow and laborious technique), are we to discover the complex relation of representations, identities, orders, words, natural beings, desires,

and interests, once that vast grid has been dismantled, once needs have organized their production for themselves, once living beings have turned in towards the essential functions of life, once words have become weighed down with their own material history in short, once the identities of representation have ceased to express the order of beings completely and openly? The entire system of grids which analysed the sequence of representations (a thin temporal series unfolding in men's minds), arresting its movement, fragmenting it, spreading it out and redistributing it in a permanent table, all these distinctions created by words and discourse, characters and classification, equivalences and exchange, have been so completely abolished that it is difficult today to rediscover how that structure was able to function. The last 'bastion' to fall – and the one whose disappearance cut us off from Classical thought forever – was precisely the first of all those grids: discourse, which ensured the initial, spontaneous, unconsidered deployment of representation in a table. When discourse ceased to exist and to function within representation as the first means of ordering it, Classical thought ceased at the same time to be directly accessible to us.

The threshold between Classicism and modernity (though the terms themselves have no importance – let us say between our prehistory and what is still contemporary) had been definitively crossed when words ceased to intersect with representations and to provide a spontaneous grid for the knowledge of things. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they rediscovered their ancient, enigmatic density; though not in order to restore the curve of the world which had harboured them during the Renaissance, nor in order to mingle with things in a circular system of signs. Once detached from representation, language has existed, right up to our own day, only in a dispersed way: for philologists, words are like so many objects formed and deposited by history; for those who wish to achieve a formalization, language must strip itself of its concrete content and leave nothing visible but those forms of discourse that are universally valid; if one's intent is to interpret, then words become a text to be broken down, so as to allow that other meaning hidden in them to emerge and become clearly visible; lastly, language may sometimes arise for its own sake in an act of writing that designates nothing other than itself. This dispersion imposes upon

language, if not a privileged position, at least a destiny that seems singular when compared with that of labour or of life. When the table of natural history was dissociated, the living beings within it were not dispersed, but, on the contrary, regrouped around the central enigma of life; when the analysis of wealth had disappeared, all economic processes were regrouped around the central fact of production and all that rendered it possible; on the other hand, when the unity of general grammar – discourse – was broken up, language appeared in a multiplicity of modes of being, whose unity was probably irrecoverable. It is for this reason, perhaps, that philosophical reflection for so long held itself aloof from language. Whereas it sought tirelessly in the regions of life or labour for something that might provide it with an object, or with its conceptual models, or its real and fundamental ground, it paid relatively little attention to language; its main concern was to clear away the obstacles that might oppose it in its task; for example, words had to be freed from the silent content that rendered them alien, or language had to be made more flexible and more fluid, as it were, from within, so that once emancipated from the spatializations of the understanding it would be able to express the movement and temporality of life. Language did not return into the field of thought directly and in its own right until the end of the nineteenth century. We might even have said until the twentieth, had not Nietzsche the philologist – and even in that field he was so wise, he knew so much, he wrote such good books – been the first to connect the philosophical task with a radical reflection upon language.

And now, in this philosophical–philological space opened up for us by Nietzsche, language wells up in an enigmatic multiplicity that must be mastered. There appear, like so many projects (or chimeras, who can tell as yet?), the themes of a universal formalization of all discourse, or the themes of an integral exegesis of the world which would at the same time be its total demystification, or those of a general theory of signs; or again, the theme (historically probably the first) of a transformation without residuum, of a total reabsorption of all forms of discourse into a single word, of all books into a single page, of the whole world into one book. The great task to which Mallarmé dedicated himself, right up to his death, is the one that dominates us now; in its stammerings, it embraces all our current efforts to confine the

fragmented being of language once more within a perhaps impossible unity. Mallarmé's project – that of enclosing all possible discourse within the fragile density of the word, within that slim, material black line traced by ink upon paper – is fundamentally a reply to the question imposed upon philosophy by Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, it was not a matter of knowing what good and evil were in themselves, but of who was being designated, or rather *who was speaking* when one said *Agathos* to designate oneself and *Deilos* to designate others.¹ For it is there, in the holder of the discourse and, more profoundly still, in the possessor of the word, that language is gathered together in its entirety. To the Nietzschean question: 'Who is speaking?', Mallarmé replies – and constantly reverts to that reply – by saying that what is speaking is, in its solitude, in its fragile vibration, in its nothingness, the word itself – not the meaning of the word, but its enigmatic and precarious being. Whereas Nietzsche maintained his questioning as to who is speaking right up to the end, though forced, in the last resort, to irrupt into that questioning himself and to base it upon himself as the speaking and questioning subject: *Ecce homo*, Mallarmé was constantly effacing himself from his own language, to the point of not wishing to figure in it except as an executant in a pure ceremony of the Book in which the discourse would compose itself. It is quite possible that all those questions now confronting our curiosity (What is language? What is a sign? What is unspoken in the world, in our gestures, in the whole enigmatic heraldry of our behaviour, our dreams, our sicknesses – does all that speak, and if so in what language and in obedience to what grammar? Is everything significant, and, if not, what is, and for whom, and in accordance with what rules? What relation is there between language and being, and is it really to being that language is always addressed – at least, language that speaks truly? What, then, is this language that says nothing, is never silent, and is called 'literature?') – it is quite possible that all these questions are presented today in the distance that was never crossed between Nietzsche's question and Mallarmé's reply.

We know now where these questions come from. They were made possible by the fact that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the law of discourse having been detached from representation, the being of language itself became, as it were, fragmented; but they became inevitable when, with Nietzsche, and Mallarmé, thought was brought

back, and violently so, towards language itself, towards its unique and difficult being. The whole curiosity of our thought now resides in the question: What is language, how can we find a way round it in order to make it appear in itself, in all its plenitude? In a sense, this question takes up from those other questions that, in the nineteenth century, were concerned with life or labour. But the status of this inquiry and of all the questions into which it breaks down is not perfectly clear. Is it a sign of the approaching birth, or, even less than that, of the very first glow, low in the sky, of a day scarcely even heralded as yet, but in which we can already divine that thought – the thought that has been speaking for thousands of years without knowing what speaking is or even that it is speaking – is about to re-apprehend itself in its entirety, and to illumine itself once more in the lightning flash of being? Is that not what Nietzsche was paving the way for when, in the interior space of his language, he killed man and God both at the same time, and thereby promised with the Return the multiple and re-illuminated light of the gods? Or must we quite simply admit that such a plethora of questions on the subject of language is no more than a continuance, or at most a culmination, of the event that, as archaeology has shown, came into existence and began to take effect at the end of the eighteenth century? The fragmentation of language, occurring at the same time as its transition to philological objectivity, would in that case be no more than the most recently visible (because the most secret and most fundamental) consequence of the breaking up of Classical order; by making the effort to master this schism and to make language visible in its entirety, we would bring to completion what had occurred before us, and without us, towards the end of the eighteenth century. But what, in that case, would that culmination be? In attempting to reconstitute the lost unity of language, is one carrying to its conclusion a thought which is that of the nineteenth century, or is one pursuing forms that are already incompatible with it? The dispersion of language is linked, in fact, in a fundamental way, with the archaeological event we may designate as the disappearance of Discourse. To discover the vast play of language contained once more within a single space might be just as decisive a leap towards a wholly new form of thought as to draw to a close a mode of knowing constituted during the previous century.

It is true that I do not know what to reply to such questions, or, given these alternatives, what term I should choose. I cannot even guess whether I shall ever be able to answer them, or whether the day will come when I shall have reasons enough to make any such choice. Nevertheless, I now know why I am able, like everyone else, to ask them – and I am unable not to ask them today. Only those who cannot read will be surprised that I have learned such a thing more clearly from Cuvier, Bopp, and Ricardo than from Kant or Hegel.

II THE PLACE OF THE KING

Faced with so many instances of ignorance, so many questions remaining in suspense, no doubt some decision must be made. One must say: there is where discourse ends, and perhaps labour begins again. Yet there are still a few more words to be said – words whose status it is probably difficult to justify, since it is a matter of introducing at the last moment, rather like some *deus ex machina*, a character who has not yet appeared in the great Classical interplay of representations. And let us, if we may, look for the previously existing law of that interplay in the painting of *Las Meninas*, in which representation is represented at every point: the painter, the palette, the broad dark surface of the canvas with its back to us, the paintings hanging on the wall, the spectators watching, who are framed, in turn, by those who are watching them; and lastly, in the centre, in the very heart of the representation, nearest to what is essential, the mirror, showing us what is represented, but as a reflection so distant, so deeply buried in an unreal space, so foreign to all the gazes being directed elsewhere, that it is no more than the frailest duplication of representation. All the interior lines of the painting, and above all those that come from the central reflection, point towards the very thing that is represented, but absent. At once object – since it is what the artist represented is copying onto his canvas – and subject – since what the painter had in front of his eyes, as he represented himself in the course of his work, was himself, since the gazes portrayed in the picture are all directed towards the fictitious position occupied by the royal personage, which is also the painter's real place, since the occupier of that ambiguous place in which the painter and the sovereign alternate, in a never-ending flicker, as it were, is the

spectator, whose gaze transforms the painting into an object, the pure representation of that essential absence. Even so, that absence is not a lacuna, except for the discourse laboriously decomposing the painting, for it never ceases to be inhabited, and really too, as is proved by the concentration of the painter thus represented, by the respect of the characters portrayed in the picture, by the presence of the great canvas with its back to us, and by our gaze, for which the painting exists and for which, in the depths of time, it was arranged.

In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself within it, recognizing himself therein as an image or reflection, he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the 'representation in the form of a picture or table' – he is never to be found in that table himself. Before the end of the eighteenth century, *man* did not exist – any more than the potency of life, the fecundity of labour, or the historical density of language. He is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown old so quickly that it has been only too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known. Of course, it is possible to object that general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth were all, in a sense, ways of recognizing the existence of man – but there is a distinction to be made. There is no doubt that the natural sciences dealt with man as with a species or a genus: the controversy about the problem of races in the eighteenth century testifies to that. Again, general grammar and economics made use of such notions as need and desire, or memory and imagination. But there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such. The Classical *episteme* is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way, a specific domain proper to man. And if that is not sufficient, if it is still objected that, even so, no period has accorded more attention to human nature, has given it a more stable, more definitive status, or one more directly presented to discourse – one can reply by saying that the very concept of human nature, and the way in which it functioned, excluded any possibility of a Classical science of man.

It is essential to observe that the functions of 'nature' and 'human nature' are in opposition to one another, term by term, in the Classical

episteme: nature, through the action of a real and disordered juxtaposition, causes difference to appear in the ordered continuity of beings; human nature causes the identical to appear in the disordered chain of representations, and does so by the action of a display of images. The one implies the fragmentation of a history in order to constitute actual landscapes; the other implies the comparison of non-actual elements which destroy the fabric of a chronological sequence. Despite this opposition, however, or rather through it, we see the positive relation of nature to human nature beginning to take shape. They act, in fact, upon identical elements (the same, the continuous, the imperceptible difference, the unbroken sequence); both reveal against the background of an uninterrupted fabric the possibility of a general analysis which makes possible the distribution of isolable identities and visible differences over a tabulated space and in an ordered sequence. But they cannot succeed in doing this without each other, and it is there that the communication between them occurs. The chain of representations can, in effect, by means of the power it possesses to duplicate itself (in imagination and memory, and in the multiple attention employed in comparison), rediscover, below the disorder of the earth, the unbroken expanse of beings; memory, random at first, and at the mercy of representations as they capriciously present themselves to it, is gradually immobilized in the form of a general table of all that exists; man is then able to include the world in the sovereignty of a discourse that has the power to represent its representation. In the act of speaking, or rather (keeping as close as possible to what is essential in the Classical experience of language), in the act of naming, human nature – like the folding of representation back upon itself – transforms the linear sequence of thoughts into a constant table of partially different beings: the discourse in which it duplicates its representations and expresses them is what links it to nature. Inversely, the chain of being is linked to human nature by the play of nature: for since the real world, as it presents itself to the gaze, is not merely the unwinding of the fundamental chain of being, but offers jumbled fragments of it, repeated and discontinuous, the series of representations in the mind is not obliged to follow the continuous path of imperceptible differences; extremes meet within it, the same things occur more than once; identical traits are superimposed in the memory; differences stand out. Thus

the great, endless, continuous surface is printed with distinct characters, in more or less general features, in marks of identification – and, consequently, in words. The chain of being becomes discourse, thereby linking itself to human nature and to the sequence of representations.

This establishing of communication between nature and human nature, on the basis of two opposite but complementary functions – since neither can take place without the other – carries with it broad theoretical consequences. For Classical thought, man does not occupy a place in nature through the intermediary of the regional, limited, specific ‘nature’ that is granted to him, as to all other beings, as a birthright. If human nature is interwoven with nature, it is by the mechanisms of knowledge and by their functioning; or rather, in the general arrangement of the Classical *episteme*, nature, human nature, and their relations, are definite and predictable functional moments. And man, as a primary reality with his own density, as the difficult object and sovereign subject of all possible knowledge, has no place in it. The modern themes of an individual who lives, speaks, and works in accordance with the laws of an economics, a philology, and a biology, but who also, by a sort of internal torsion and overlapping, has acquired the right, through the interplay of those very laws, to know them and to subject them to total clarification – all these themes so familiar to us today and linked to the existence of the ‘human sciences’ are excluded by Classical thought: it was not possible at that time that there should arise, on the boundary of the world, the strange stature of a being whose nature (that which determines it, contains it, and has traversed it from the beginning of time) is to know nature, and itself, in consequence, as a natural being.

In return, however, at the meeting-point between representation and being, at the point where nature and human nature intersect – at the place in which we believe nowadays that we can recognize the primary, irrefutable, and enigmatic existence of man – what Classical thought reveals is the power of discourse. In other words, language in so far as it represents – language that names, patterns, combines, and connects and disconnects things as it makes them visible in the transparency of words. In this role, language transforms the sequence of perceptions into a table, and cuts up the continuum of beings into a pattern of characters. Where there is discourse, representations are laid

out and juxtaposed; and things are grouped together and articulated. The profound vocation of Classical language has always been to create a table – a ‘picture’: whether it be in the form of natural discourse, the accumulation of truth, descriptions of things, a body of exact knowledge, or an encyclopaedic dictionary. It exists, therefore, only in order to be transparent; it has lost that secret consistency which, in the sixteenth century, inspissated it into a word to be deciphered, and interwove it with all the things of the world; it has not yet acquired the multiple existence about which we question ourselves today; in the Classical age, discourse is that translucent necessity through which representation and beings must pass – as beings are represented to the mind’s eye, and as representation renders beings visible in their truth. The possibility of knowing things and their order passes, in the Classical experience, through the sovereignty of words: words are, in fact, neither marks to be deciphered (as in the Renaissance period) nor more or less faithful and masterable instruments (as in the positivist period); they form rather a colourless network on the basis of which beings manifest themselves and representations are ordered. This would account for the fact that Classical reflection upon language, even though comprised within a general arrangement of which it forms part by the same right as do the analysis of wealth and natural history, exercises, in relation to them, a regulating role.

But the essential consequence is that Classical language, as the *common discourse* of representation and things, as the place within which nature and human nature intersect, absolutely excludes anything that could be a ‘science of man’. As long as that language was spoken in Western culture it was not possible for human existence to be called in question on its own account, since it contained the nexus of representation and being. The discourse that, in the seventeenth century, provided the link between the ‘I think’ and the ‘I am’ of the being undertaking it – that very discourse remained, in a visible form, the very essence of Classical language, for what was being linked together in it was representation and being. The transition from the ‘I think’ to the ‘I am’ was accomplished in the light of evidence, within a discourse whose whole domain and functioning consisted in articulating one upon the other what one represents to oneself and what is. It cannot, therefore, be objected to this transition either that being in general is not contained

in thought, or that the singular being as designated by the 'I am' has not been interrogated or analysed on his own account. Or rather, these objections may well arise and command respect, but only on the basis of a discourse which is profoundly other, and which does not have for its *raison d'être* the link between representation and being; only a problematic able to by-pass representation would formulate such objections. But as long as Classical discourse lasted, no interrogation as to the mode of being implied by the *cogito* could be articulated.

III THE ANALYTIC OF FINITUDE

When natural history becomes biology, when the analysis of wealth becomes economics, when, above all, reflection upon language becomes philology, and Classical *discourse*, in which being and representation found their common locus, is eclipsed, then, in the profound upheaval of such an archaeological mutation, man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows: enslaved sovereign, observed spectator, he appears in the place belonging to the king, which was assigned to him in advance by *Las Meninas*, but from which his real presence has for so long been excluded. As if, in that vacant space towards which Velázquez's whole painting was directed, but which it was nevertheless reflecting only in the chance presence of a mirror, and as though by stealth, all the figures whose alternation, reciprocal exclusion, interweaving, and fluttering one imagined (the model, the painter, the king, the spectator) suddenly stopped their imperceptible dance, immobilized into one substantial figure, and demanded that the entire space of the representation should at last be related to one corporeal gaze.

The motive of this new presence, the modality proper to it, the particular arrangement of the *episteme* that justifies it, the new relation that is established by means of it between words, things, and their order – all this can now be clarified. Cuvier and his contemporaries had required of life that it should itself define, in the depths of its being, the conditions of possibility of the living being; in the same way, Ricardo had required labour to provide the conditions of possibility of exchange, profit, and production; the first philologists, too, had searched in the historical depths of languages for the possibility of

discourse and of grammar. This meant that representation ceased, *ipso facto*, to have validity as the locus of origin of living beings, needs, and words, or as the primitive seat of their truth; henceforth, it is nothing more in relation to them than an effect, their more or less blurred counterpart in a consciousness which apprehends and reconstitutes them. The representation one makes to oneself of things no longer has to deploy, in a sovereign space, the table into which they have been ordered; it is, for that empirical individual who is man, the phenomenon – perhaps even less, the appearance – of an order that now belongs to things themselves and to their interior law. It is no longer their identity that beings manifest in representation, but the external relation they establish with the human being. The latter, with his own being, with his power to present himself with representations, arises in a space hollowed out by living beings, objects of exchange, and words, when, abandoning representation, which had been their natural site hitherto, they withdraw into the depths of things and roll up upon themselves in accordance with the laws of life, production, and language. In the middle of them all, compressed within the circle they form, man is designated – more, required – by them, since it is he who speaks, since he is seen to reside among the animals (and in a position that is not merely privileged, but a source of order for the totality they form: even though he is not conceived as the end-product of evolution, he is recognized to be one extremity of a long series), and since, lastly, the relation between his needs and the means he possesses to satisfy them is such that he is necessarily the principle and means of all production. But this imperious designation is ambiguous. In one sense, man is governed by labour, life, and language: his concrete existence finds its determinations in them; it is possible to have access to him only through his words, his organism, the objects he makes – as though it is they who possess the truth in the first place (and they alone perhaps); and he, as soon as he thinks, merely unveils himself to his own eyes in the form of a being who is already, in a necessarily subjacent density, in an irreducible anteriority, a living being, an instrument of production, a vehicle for words which exist before him. All these contents that his knowledge reveals to him as exterior to himself, and older than his own birth, anticipate him, overhang him with all their solidity, and traverse him as though he were merely an object of

nature, a face doomed to be erased in the course of history. Man's finitude is heralded – and imperiously so – in the positivity of knowledge; we know that man is finite, as we know the anatomy of the brain, the mechanics of production costs, or the system of Indo-European conjugation; or rather, like a watermark running through all these solid, positive, and full forms, we perceive the finitude and limits they impose, we sense, as though on their blank reverse sides, all that they make impossible.

But this primary discovery of finitude is really an unstable one; nothing allows it to contemplate itself; and would it not be possible to suppose that it also promises that very infinity it refuses, according to the system of actuality? The evolution of the species has perhaps not reached its culmination; forms of production and labour are still being modified, and perhaps one day man will no longer find the principle of his alienation in his labour, or the constant reminder of his limitations in his needs; nor is there any proof that he will not discover symbolic systems sufficiently pure to dissolve the ancient opacity of historical languages. Heralded in positivity, man's finitude is outlined in the paradoxical form of the endless; rather than the rigour of a limitation, it indicates the monotony of a journey which, though it probably has no end, is nevertheless perhaps not without hope. And yet all these contents, with what they conceal and what they also leave pointing towards the frontiers of time, have positivity within the space of knowledge and approach the task of a possible acquisition of knowledge only because they are thoroughly imbued with finitude. For they would not be there, in the light that partly illumines them, if man, who discovers himself through them, was trapped in the mute, nocturnal, immediate and happy opening of animal life; but nor would they posit themselves in the acute angle that hides them from their own direction if man could traverse them without residuum in the lightning flash of an infinite understanding. But to man's experience a body has been given, a body which is his body – a fragment of ambiguous space, whose peculiar and irreducible spatiality is nevertheless articulated upon the space of things; to this same experience, desire is given as a primordial appetite on the basis of which all things assume value, and relative value; to this same experience, a language is given in the thread of which all the discourses of all times, all successions and all

simultaneities may be given. This is to say that each of these positive forms in which man can learn that he is finite is given to him only against the background of its own finitude. Moreover, the latter is not the most completely purified essence of positivity, but that upon the basis of which it is possible for positivity to arise. The mode of being of life, and even that which determines the fact that life cannot exist without prescribing its forms for me, are given to me, fundamentally, by my body; the mode of being of production, the weight of its determinations upon my existence, are given to me by my desire; and the mode of being of language, the whole backwash of history to which words lend their glow at the instant they are pronounced, and perhaps even in a time more imperceptible still, are given to me only along the slender chain of my speaking thought. At the foundation of all the empirical positivities, and of everything that can indicate itself as a concrete limitation of man's existence, we discover a finitude – which is in a sense the same: it is marked by the spatiality of the body, the yawning of desire, and the time of language; and yet it is radically other: in this sense, the limitation is expressed not as a determination imposed upon man from outside (because he has a nature or a history), but as a fundamental finitude which rests on nothing but its own existence as fact, and opens upon the positivity of all concrete limitation.

Thus, in the very heart of empiricity, there is indicated the obligation to work backwards – or downwards – to an analytic of finitude, in which man's being will be able to provide a foundation in their own positivity for all those forms that indicate to him that he is not infinite. And the first characteristic with which this analytic will mark man's mode of being, or rather the space in which that mode of being will be deployed in its entirety, will be that of repetition – of the identity and the difference between the positive and the fundamental: the death that anonymously gnaws at the daily existence of the living being is the same as that fundamental death on the basis of which my empirical life is given to me; the desire that links and separates men in the neutrality of the economic process is the same as that on the basis of which everything is desirable for me; the time that bears languages along upon it, that takes up its place within them and finally wears them out, is the same time that draws my discourse out, even before I have

pronounced it, into a succession that no man can master. From one end of experience to the other, finitude answers itself; it is the identity and the difference of the positivities, and of their foundation, within the figure of the Same. It is apparent how modern reflection, as soon as the first shoot of this analytic appears, by-passes the display of representation, together with its culmination in the form of a table as ordered by Classical knowledge, and moves towards a certain thought of the Same – in which Difference is the same thing as Identity. It is within this vast but narrow space, opened up by the repetition of the positive within the fundamental, that the whole of this analytic of finitude – so closely linked to the future of modern thought – will be deployed; it is there that we shall see in succession the transcendental repeat the empirical, the cogito repeat the unthought, the return of the origin repeat its retreat; it is there, from itself as starting-point, that a thought of the Same irreducible to Classical philosophy is about to affirm itself.

It may perhaps be remarked that there was no need to wait until the nineteenth century for the idea of finitude to be revealed. It is true that the nineteenth century perhaps only displaced it within the space of thought, making it play a more complex, more ambiguous, less easily by-passed role: for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought, it was his finitude that forced man to live an animal existence, to work by the sweat of his brow, to think with opaque words; it was this same finitude that prevented him from attaining any absolute knowledge of the mechanisms of his body, the means of satisfying his needs, the method of thinking without the perilous aid of a language woven wholly of habits and imagination. As an inadequation extending to infinity, man's limitation accounted both for the existence of the empirical contents and for the impossibility of knowing them immediately. And thus the negative relation to infinity – whether conceived of as creation, or fall, or conjunction of body and soul, or determination within the infinite being, or individual point of view of the totality, or link between representation and impression – was posited as anterior to man's empiricity and to the knowledge he may gain of it. In a single movement, but without reciprocal return or circularity, it provided the foundation for the existence of bodies, needs, and words, and for the impossibility of subjugating them within an absolute knowledge. The experience taking form at the beginning of the nineteenth century

situates the discovery of finitude not within the thought of the infinite, but at the very heart of those contents that are given, by a finite act of knowing, as the concrete forms of finite existence. Hence the interminable to and fro of a double system of reference: if man's knowledge is finite, it is because he is trapped, without possibility of liberation, within the positive contents of language, labour, and life; and inversely, if life, labour, and language may be posited in their positivity, it is because knowledge has finite forms. For Classical thought, in other words, finitude (as a determination positively constituted on the basis of the infinite) provides an account of those negative forms, which are body, needs, language, and the limited knowledge it is possible to have of them; for modern thought, the positivity of life, of production and labour (which have their own existence, historicity, and laws) provides a foundation for the limited character of knowledge as their negative correlation; and, inversely, the limits of knowledge provide a positive foundation for the possibility of knowing, though in an experience that is always limited, what life, labour, and language are. As long as these empirical contents were situated within the space of representation, a metaphysics of the infinite was not only possible but necessary: it was necessary, in fact, that they should be the manifest forms of human finitude, and yet that they should be able to have their locus and their truth within representation; the idea of infinity, and the idea of its determination in finitude, made one another possible. But when these empirical contents were detached from representation and contained the principle of their existence within themselves, then the metaphysics of infinity became useless; from that point on, finitude never ceased to refer back to itself (from the positivity of the contents to the limitations of knowledge, and from the limited positivity of knowledge to the limited knowledge of the contents). Whereupon the entire field of Western thought was inverted. Where there had formerly been a correlation between a *metaphysics* of representation and of the infinite and an *analysis* of living beings, of man's desires, and of the words of his language, we find being constituted an *analytic* of finitude and human existence, and in opposition to it (though in correlative opposition) a perpetual tendency to constitute a *metaphysics* of life, labour, and language. But these are never anything more than tendencies, immediately opposed and as it were undermined from within, for there can be no

question of anything but metaphysics reduced to the scale of human finitudes: the metaphysic of a life that converges upon man even if it does not stop with him; the metaphysic of a labour that frees man so that man, in turn, can free himself from it; the metaphysic of a language that man can reappropriate in the consciousness of his own culture. Modern thought, then, will contest even its own metaphysical impulses, and show that reflections upon life, labour, and language, in so far as they have value as analytics of finitude, express the end of metaphysics: the philosophy of life denounces metaphysics as a veil of illusion, that of labour denounces it as an alienated form of thought and an ideology, that of language as a cultural episode.

But the end of metaphysics is only the negative side of a much more complex event in Western thought. This event is the appearance of man. However, it must not be supposed that he suddenly appeared upon our horizon, imposing the brutal fact of his body, his labour, and his language in a manner so irruptive as to be absolutely baffling to our reflection. It is not man's lack of positivity that reduced the space of metaphysics so violently. No doubt, on the level of appearances, modernity begins when the human being begins to exist within his organism, inside the shell of his head, inside the armature of his limbs, and in the whole structure of his physiology; when he begins to exist at the centre of a labour by whose principles he is governed and whose product eludes him; when he lodges his thought in the folds of a language so much older than himself that he cannot master its significations, even though they have been called back to life by the insistence of his words. But, more fundamentally, our culture crossed the threshold beyond which we recognize our modernity when finitude was conceived in an interminable cross-reference with itself. Though it is true, at the level of the various branches of knowledge, that finitude is always designated on the basis of man as a concrete being and on the basis of the empirical forms that can be assigned to his existence, nevertheless, at the archaeological level, which reveals the general, historical *a priori* of each of those branches of knowledge, modern man – that man assignable in his corporeal, labouring, and speaking existence – is possible only as a figuration of finitude. Modern culture can conceive of man because it conceives of the finite on the basis of itself. Given these conditions, it is understandable that Classical

thought, and all the forms of thought that preceded it, were able to speak of the mind and the body, of the human being, of how restricted a place he occupies in the universe, of all the limitations by which his knowledge or his freedom must be measured, but that not one of them was ever able to know man as he is posited in modern knowledge. Renaissance 'humanism' and Classical 'rationalism' were indeed able to allot human beings a privileged position in the order of the world, but they were not able to conceive of man.

IV THE EMPIRICAL AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL

Man, in the analytic of finitude, is a strange empirico-transcendental doublet, since he is a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible. But did not the human nature of the eighteenth-century empiricists play the same role? In fact, what was being analysed then was the properties and forms of representation which made knowledge in general possible (it was thus that Condillac defined the necessary and sufficient operations for representation to deploy itself as knowledge: reminiscence, self-consciousness, imagination, memory); now that the site of the analysis is no longer representation but man in his finitude, it is a question of revealing the conditions of knowledge on the basis of the empirical contents given in it. It is of little importance, for the general movement of modern thought, where these contents happened to be localized: knowing whether they were sought in introspection or in other forms of analysis is not the point. For the threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called *man*. Two kinds of analysis then came into being. There are those that operate within the space of the body, and – by studying perception, sensorial mechanisms, neuro-motor diagrams, and the articulation common to things and to the organism – function as a sort of transcendental aesthetic; these led to the discovery that knowledge has anatomo-physiological conditions, that it is formed gradually within the structures of the body, that it may have a privileged place within it, but that its forms cannot be dissociated from its peculiar functioning; in short, that there is a *nature* of human knowledge that determines its

forms and that can at the same time be made manifest to it in its own empirical contents. There were also analyses that – by studying humanity's more or less ancient, more or less easily vanquished illusions – functioned as a sort of transcendental dialectic; by this means it was shown that knowledge had historical, social, or economic conditions, that it was formed within the relations that are woven between men, and that it was not independent of the particular form they might take here or there; in short, that there was a *history* of human knowledge which could both be given to empirical knowledge and prescribe its forms.

Now, these analyses have this in particular about them: they apparently do not need one another in any way; moreover, they can dispense with the need for an analytic (or a theory of the subject): they claim to be able to rest entirely on themselves, since it is the contents themselves that function as transcendental reflection. But in fact the search for a nature or a history of knowledge, in the movement by which the dimension proper to a critique is fitted over the contents of empirical knowledge, already presupposes the use of a certain critique – a critique that is not the exercise of pure reflection, but the result of a series of more or less obscure divisions. And, in the first place, these divisions are relatively clearly elucidated, even though they are arbitrary: the division that distinguishes rudimentary, imperfect, unequal, emergent knowledge from knowledge that may be called, if not complete, at least constituted in its stable and definitive forms (this division makes possible the study of the natural conditions of knowledge); the division that distinguishes illusion from truth, the ideological fantasy from the scientific theory (this division makes possible the study of the historical conditions of knowledge); but there is a more obscure and more fundamental division: that of truth itself; there must, in fact, exist a truth that is of the same order as the object – the truth that is gradually outlined, formed, stabilized, and expressed through the body and the rudiments of perception; the truth that appears as illusions are dissipated, and as history establishes a disalienated status for itself; but there must also exist a truth that is of the order of discourse – a truth that makes it possible to employ, when dealing with the nature or history of knowledge, a language that will be true. It is the status of this true discourse that remains ambiguous. These two things lead to one

conclusion: either this true discourse finds its foundation and model in the empirical truth whose genesis in nature and in history it retraces, so that one has an analysis of the positivist type (the truth of the object determines the truth of the discourse that describes its formation); or the true discourse anticipates the truth whose nature and history it defines; it sketches it out in advance and foments it from a distance, so that one has a discourse of the eschatological type (the truth of the philosophical discourse constitutes the truth in formation). In fact, it is a question not so much of an alternative as of a fluctuation inherent in all analysis, which brings out the value of the empirical at the transcendental level. Comte and Marx both bear out the fact that eschatology (as the objective truth proceeding from man's discourse) and positivism (as the truth of discourse defined on the basis of the truth of the object) are archaeologically indissociable: a discourse attempting to be both empirical and critical cannot but be both positivist and eschatological; man appears within it as a truth both reduced and promised. Pre-critical naïveté holds undivided rule.

This is why modern thought has been unable to avoid – and precisely from the starting-point of this naïve discourse – searching for the locus of a discourse that would be neither of the order of reduction nor of the order of promise: a discourse whose tension would keep separate the empirical and the transcendental, while being directed at both; a discourse that would make it possible to analyse man as a subject, that is, as a locus of knowledge which has been empirically acquired but referred back as closely as possible to what makes it possible, and as a pure form immediately present to those contents; a discourse, in short, which in relation to quasi-aesthetics and quasi-dialectics would play the role of an analytic which would at the same time give them a foundation in a theory of the subject and perhaps enable them to articulate themselves in that third and intermediary term in which both the experience of the body and that of culture would be rooted. Such a complex, over-determined, and necessary role has been performed in modern thought by the analysis of actual experience. Actual experience is, in fact, both the space in which all empirical contents are given to experience and the original form that makes them possible in general and designates their primary roots; it does indeed provide a means of communication between the space of the body and the time

of culture, between the determinations of nature and the weight of history, but only on condition that the body, and, through it, nature, should first be posited in the experience of an irreducible spatiality, and that culture, the carrier of history, should be experienced first of all in the immediacy of its sedimented significations. It is easy enough to understand how the analysis of actual experience has established itself, in modern reflection, as a radical contestation of positivism and eschatology; how it has tried to restore the forgotten dimension of the transcendental; how it has attempted to exorcise the naïve discourse of a truth reduced wholly to the empirical, and the prophetic discourse which with similar naïveté promises at last the eventual attainment by man of experience. Nevertheless, the analysis of actual experience is a discourse of mixed nature: it is directed to a specific yet ambiguous stratum, concrete enough for it to be possible to apply to it a meticulous and descriptive language, yet sufficiently removed from the positivity of things for it to be possible, from that starting-point, to escape from that naïveté, to contest it and seek foundations for it. This analysis seeks to articulate the possible objectivity of a knowledge of nature upon the original experience of which the body provides an outline; and to articulate the possible history of a culture upon the semantic density which is both hidden and revealed in actual experience. It is doing no more, then, than fulfilling with greater care the hasty demands laid down when the attempt was made to make the empirical, in man, stand for the transcendental. Despite appearances to the contrary, it is evident how closely knit is the network that links thoughts of the positivist or eschatological type (Marxism being in the first rank of these) and reflections inspired by phenomenology. Their recent rapprochement is not of the order of a tardy reconciliation: at the level of archaeological configurations they were both necessary – and necessary to one another – from the moment the anthropological postulate was constituted, that is, from the moment when man appeared as an empirico-transcendental doublet.

The true contestation of positivism and eschatology does not lie, therefore, in a return to actual experience (which rather, in fact, provides them with confirmation by giving them roots); but if such a contestation could be made, it would be from the starting-point of a question which may well seem aberrant, so opposed is it to what has

rendered the whole of our thought historically possible. This question would be: Does man really exist? To imagine, for an instant, what the world and thought and truth might be if man did not exist, is considered to be merely indulging in paradox. This is because we are so blinded by the recent manifestation of man that we can no longer remember a time – and it is not so long ago – when the world, its order, and human beings existed, but man did not. It is easy to see why Nietzsche's thought should have had, and still has for us, such a disturbing power when it introduced in the form of an imminent event, the Promise-Threat, the notion that man would soon be no more – but would be replaced by the superman; in a philosophy of the Return, this meant that man had long since disappeared and would continue to disappear, and that our modern thought about man, our concern for him, our humanism, were all sleeping serenely over the threatening rumble of his non-existence. Ought we not to remind ourselves – we who believe ourselves bound to a finitude which belongs only to us, and which opens up the truth of the world to us by means of our cognition – ought we not to remind ourselves that we are bound to the back of a tiger?

V THE 'COGITO' AND THE UNTHOUGHT

If man is indeed, in the world, the locus of an empirico-transcendental doublet, if he is that paradoxical figure in which the empirical contents of knowledge necessarily release, of themselves, the conditions that have made them possible, then man cannot posit himself in the immediate and sovereign transparency of a *cogito*; nor, on the other hand, can he inhabit the objective inertia of something that, by rights, does not and never can lead to self-consciousness. Man is a mode of being which accommodates that dimension – always open, never finally delimited, yet constantly traversed – which extends from a part of himself not reflected in a *cogito* to the act of thought by which he apprehends that part; and which, in the inverse direction, extends from that pure apprehension to the empirical clutter, the chaotic accumulation of contents, the weight of experiences constantly eluding themselves, the whole silent horizon of what is posited in the sandy stretches of non-thought. Because he is an empirico-transcendental

doublet, man is also the locus of misunderstanding – of misunderstanding that constantly exposes his thought to the risk of being swamped by his own being, and also enables him to recover his integrity on the basis of what eludes him. This is why transcendental reflection in its modern form does not, as in Kant, find its fundamental necessity in the existence of a science of nature (opposed by the perpetual conflicts and uncertainties of philosophers), but in the existence – mute, yet ready to speak, and secretly impregnated with a potential discourse – of that *not-known* from which man is perpetually summoned towards self-knowledge. The question is no longer: How can experience of nature give rise to necessary judgements? But rather: How can man think what he does not think, inhabit as though by a mute occupation something that eludes him, animate with a kind of frozen movement that figure of himself that takes the form of a stubborn exteriority? How can man be that life whose web, pulsations, and buried energy constantly exceed the experience that he is immediately given of them? How can he be that labour whose laws and demands are imposed upon him like some alien system? How can he be the subject of a language that for thousands of years has been formed without him, a language whose organization escapes him, whose meaning sleeps an almost invincible sleep in the words he momentarily activates by means of discourse, and within which he is obliged, from the very outset, to lodge his speech and thought, as though they were doing no more than animate, for a brief period, one segment of that web of innumerable possibilities? – There has been a fourfold displacement in relation to the Kantian position, for it is now a question not of truth, but of being; not of nature, but of man; not of the possibility of understanding, but of the possibility of a primary misunderstanding; not of the unaccountable nature of philosophical theories as opposed to science, but of the resumption in a clear philosophical awareness of that whole realm of unaccounted-for experiences in which man does not recognize himself.

Given this displacement of the question of transcendence, contemporary thought could not avoid reviving the theme of the *cogito*. Was it not also on the basis of error, illusion, dreams and madness, all the experiences of unaccounted-for thought, that Descartes discovered the impossibility of there not being thoughts – to such effect that the

thought of the ill-thought, of the non-true, of the chimerical, of the purely imaginary, emerged as the possible locus and the primary, irrefutable proof of all those experiences? But the modern *cogito* is as different from Descartes' as our notion of transcendence is remote from Kantian analysis. For Descartes was concerned to reveal thought as the most general form of all those thoughts we term error or illusion, thereby rendering them harmless, so that he would be free, once that step had been taken, to return to them, to explain them, and then to provide a method of guarding against them. In the modern *cogito*, on the other hand, we are concerned to grant the highest value, the greatest dimension, to the distance that both separates and links thought-conscious-of-itself and whatever, within thought, is rooted in non-thought. The modern *cogito* (and this is why it is not so much the discovery of an evident truth as a ceaseless task constantly to be undertaken afresh) must traverse, duplicate, and reactivate in an explicit form the articulation of thought on everything within it, around it, and beneath it which is not thought, yet which is nevertheless not foreign to thought, in the sense of an irreducible, an insuperable exteriority. In this form, the *cogito* will not therefore be the sudden and illuminating discovery that all thought is thought, but the constantly renewed interrogation as to how thought can reside elsewhere than here, and yet so very close to itself; how it can be in the forms of non-thinking. The modern *cogito* does not reduce the whole being of things to thought without ramifying the being of thought right down to the inert network of what does not think.

This double movement proper to the modern *cogito* explains why the 'I think' does not, in its case, lead to the evident truth of the 'I am'. Indeed, as soon as the 'I think' has shown itself to be embedded in a density throughout which it is quasi-present, and which it animates, though in an equivocal semi-dormant, semi-wakeful fashion, it is no longer possible to make it lead on to the affirmation 'I am'. For can I, in fact, say that I am this language I speak, into which my thought insinuates itself to the point of finding in it the system of all its own possibilities, yet which exists only in the weight of sedimentations my thought will never be capable of actualizing altogether? Can I say that I am this labour I perform with my hands, yet which eludes me not only when I have finished it, but even before I have begun it? Can I say that I

am this life I sense deep within me, but which envelops me both in the irresistible time that grows side by side with it and poses me for a moment on its crest, and in the imminent time that prescribes my death? I can say, equally well, that I am and that I am not all this; the *cogito* does not lead to an affirmation of being, but it does lead to a whole series of questions concerned with being: What must I be, I who think and who am my thought, in order to be what I do not think, in order for my thought to be what I am not? What is this being, then, that shimmers and, as it were, glitters in the opening of the *cogito*, yet is not sovereignly given in it or by it? What, then, is the connection, the difficult link, between being and thought? What is man's being, and how can it be that that being, which could so easily be characterized by the fact that 'it has thoughts' and is possibly alone in having them, has an ineradicable and fundamental relation to the unthought? A form of reflection is established far removed from both Cartesianism and Kantian analysis, a form that involves, for the first time, man's being in that dimension where thought addresses the unthought and articulates itself upon it.

This has two consequences. The first is negative, and of a purely historical order. It may seem that phenomenology has effected a union between the Cartesian theme of the *cogito* and the transcendental motif that Kant had derived from Hume's critique; according to this view, Husserl has revived the deepest vocation of the Western *ratio*, bending it back upon itself in a reflection which is a radicalization of pure philosophy and a basis for the possibility of its own history. In fact, Husserl was able to effect this union only in so far as transcendental analysis had changed its point of application (the latter has shifted from the possibility of a science of nature to the possibility for man to conceive of himself), and in so far as the *cogito* had modified its function (which is no longer to lead to an apodictic existence, starting from a thought that affirms itself wherever it thinks, but to show how thought can elude itself and thus lead to a many-sided and proliferating interrogation concerning being). Phenomenology is therefore much less the resumption of an old rational goal of the West than the sensitive and precisely formulated acknowledgment of the great hiatus that occurred in the modern *episteme* at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If phenomenology has any allegiance, it is to the discovery of

life, work, and language; and also to the new figure which, under the old name of man, first appeared less than two centuries ago; it is to interrogation concerning man's mode of being and his relation to the unthought. This is why phenomenology – even though it was first suggested by way of anti-psychologism, or, rather, precisely in so far as, in opposition to anti-psychologism, it revived the problem of the *a priori* and the transcendental motif – has never been able to exorcize its insidious kinship, its simultaneously promising and threatening proximity, to empirical analyses of man; it is also why, though it was inaugurated by a reduction to the *cogito*, it has always been led to questions, to the question of ontology. The phenomenological project continually resolves itself, before our eyes, into a description – empirical despite itself – of actual experience, and into an ontology of the unthought that automatically short-circuits the primacy of the 'I think'.

The second consequence is a positive one. It concerns the relation of man to the unthought, or, more precisely, their twin appearance in Western culture. It seems obvious enough that, from the moment when man first constituted himself as a positive figure in the field of knowledge, the old privilege of reflexive knowledge, of thought thinking itself, could not but disappear; but that it became possible, by this very fact, for an objective form of thought to investigate man in his entirety – at the risk of discovering what could never be reached by his reflection or even by his consciousness: dim mechanisms, faceless determinations, a whole landscape of shadow that has been termed, directly or indirectly, the unconscious. For is not the unconscious what necessarily yields itself up to the scientific thought man applies to himself when he ceases to conceive of himself in the form of reflection? As a matter of fact, the unconscious, and the forms of the unthought in general, have not been the reward granted to a positive knowledge of man. Man and the unthought are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries. Man has not been able to describe himself as a configuration in the *episteme* without thought at the same time discovering, both in itself and outside itself, at its borders yet also in its very warp and woof, an element of darkness, an apparently inert density in which it is embedded, an unthought which it contains entirely, yet in which it is also caught. The unthought (whatever name we give it) is

not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is linked to him in an entirely different way; it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind stain by which it is possible to know him. In any case, the unthought has accompanied man, mutely and uninterruptedly, since the nineteenth century. Since it was really never more than an insistent double, it has never been the object of reflection in an autonomous way; it has received the complementary form and the inverted name of that for which it was the Other and the shadow: in Hegelian phenomenology, it was the *An sich* as opposed to the *Für sich*; for Schopenhauer it was the *Unbewusste*; for Marx it was alienated man; in Husserl's analyses it was the implicit, the inactual, the sedimented, the non-effected – in every case, the inexhaustible double that presents itself to reflection as the blurred projection of what man is in his truth, but that also plays the role of a preliminary ground upon which man must collect himself and recall himself in order to attain his truth. For though this double may be close, it is alien, and the role, the true undertaking, of thought will be to bring it as close to itself as possible; the whole of modern thought is imbued with the necessity of thinking the unthought – of reflecting the contents of the *In-itself* in the form of the *For-itself*, of ending man's alienation by reconciling him with his own essence, of making explicit the horizon that provides experience with its background of immediate and disarmed proof, of lifting the veil of the Unconscious, of becoming absorbed in its silence, or of straining to catch its endless murmur.

In modern experience, the possibility of establishing man within knowledge and the mere emergence of this new figure in the field of the *episteme* imply an imperative that haunts thought from within; it matters little whether it be given currency in the form of ethics, politics, humanism, a duty to assume responsibility for the fate of the West, or the mere consciousness of performing, in history, a bureaucratic function. What is essential is that thought, both for itself and in the

density of its workings, should be both knowledge and a modification of what it knows, reflection and a transformation of the mode of being of that on which it reflects. Whatever it touches it immediately causes to move: it cannot discover the unthought, or at least move towards it, without immediately bringing the unthought nearer to itself – or even, perhaps, without pushing it further away, and in any case without causing man's own being to undergo a change by that very fact, since it is deployed in the distance between them. There is something here profoundly bound up with our modernity: apart from its religious moralities, it is clear that the West has known only two ethical forms. The old one (in the form of Stoicism or Epicureanism) was articulated upon the order of the world, and by discovering the law of that order it could deduce from it the principle of a code of wisdom or a conception of the city; even the political thought of the eighteenth century still belongs to this general form. The modern one, on the other hand, formulates no morality, since any imperative is lodged within thought and its movement towards the apprehension of the unthought;² it is reflection, the act of consciousness, the elucidation of what is silent, language restored to what is mute, the illumination of the element of darkness that cuts man off from himself, the reanimation of the inert – it is all this and this alone that constituted the content and form of the ethical. Modern thought has never, in fact, been able to propose a morality. But the reason for this is not because it is pure speculation; on the contrary, modern thought, from its inception and in its very density, is a certain mode of action. Let those who urge thought to leave its retreat and to formulate its choices talk on; and let those who seek, without any pledge and in the absence of virtue, to establish a morality do as they wish. For modern thought, no morality is possible. Thought had already 'left' itself in its own being as early as the nineteenth century; it is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action – a perilous act. Sade, Nietzsche, Artaud, and Bataille have understood this on behalf of all those who tried to ignore it; but it is also certain that Hegel, Marx, and Freud

knew it. Can we say that it is not known by those who, in their profound stupidity, assert that there is no philosophy without political choice, that all thought is either 'progressive' or 'reactionary'? Their foolishness is to believe that all thought 'expresses' the ideology of a class; their involuntary profundity is that they point directly at the modern mode of being of thought. Superficially, one might say that knowledge of man, unlike the sciences of nature, is always linked, even in its vaguest form, to ethics or politics; more fundamentally, modern thought is advancing towards that region where man's Other must become the Same as himself.

VI THE RETREAT AND RETURN OF THE ORIGIN

The last feature that characterizes both man's mode of being and the reflection addressed to him is the relation to the origin – a relation very different from that which Classical thought tried to establish in its ideal geneses. In the eighteenth century, to return to the origin was to place oneself once more as near as possible to the mere duplication of representation. Economics was conceived on the basis of barter, because in barter the two representations that each party made to himself of his property and the other's property were equivalent; since they were offering satisfaction for almost identical desires, they were, in sum, 'alike'. The order of nature was conceived, prior to any catastrophe, as a table in which beings followed one another in so tightly knit an order, and upon so continuous a fabric, that in going from one point of this succession to another one would have moved within a quasi-identity, and in going from one extremity of it to the other one would have been led by the smooth expanse of 'likeness'. The origin of language was conceived as the transparency between the representation of a thing and the representation of the cry, sound, or gesture (the language of action) that accompanied it. Finally, the origin of knowledge was sought within this pure sequence of representations – a sequence so perfect and so linear that the second had replaced the first without one's becoming conscious of the fact, since they were not simultaneous, since it was not possible to establish any difference between them, and since one could not experience the second as other than 'like' the first; and it was only when a sensation appeared to be more

'like' a previous one than all the others that reminiscence could come into play, that imagination could represent a representation afresh, and that knowledge could gain a foothold in this duplication. It was of little importance whether this origin was considered fictitious or real, whether it possessed the value of an explanatory hypothesis or a historical event: in fact, these distinctions exist only for us; in a system of thought for which chronological development resides within a table, upon which it constitutes no more than a line of a certain length, its starting-point is at the same time outside real time and inside it: it is the first fold that enables all historical events to take place.

In modern thought, such an origin is no longer conceivable: we have seen how labour, life, and language acquired their own historicity, in which they were embedded; they could never, therefore, truly express their origin, even though, from the inside, their whole history is, as it were, directed towards it. It is no longer origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it: like the virtual tip of a cone in which all differences, all dispersions, all discontinuities would be knitted together so as to form no more than a single point of identity, the impalpable figure of the Same, yet possessing the power, nevertheless, to burst open upon itself and become Other.

Man was constituted at the beginning of the nineteenth century in correlation with these historicities, with all these things involuted upon themselves and indicating, through their display but by means of their own laws, the inaccessible identity of their origin. Yet man's own relation to his origin does not occur in the same way. This is because man, in fact, can be revealed only when bound to a previously existing historicity: he is never contemporaneous with that origin which is outlined through the time of things even as it eludes the gaze; when he tries to define himself as a living being, he can uncover his own beginning only against the background of a life which itself began long before him; when he attempts to re-apprehend himself as a labouring being, he cannot bring even the most rudimentary forms of such a being to light except within a human time and space which have been previously institutionalized, and previously subjugated by society; and when he attempts to define his essence as a speaking subject, prior to

any effectively constituted language, all he ever finds is the previously unfolded possibility of language, and not the stumbling sound, the first word upon the basis of which all languages and even language itself became possible. It is always against a background of the already begun that man is able to reflect on what may serve for him as origin. For man, then, origin is by no means the beginning – a sort of dawn of history from which his ulterior acquisitions would have accumulated. Origin, for man, is much more the way in which man in general, any man, articulates himself upon the already-begun of labour, life, and language; it must be sought for in that fold where man in all simplicity applies his labour to a world that has been worked for thousands of years, lives in the freshness of his unique, recent, and precarious existence a life that has its roots in the first organic formations, and composes into sentences which have never before been spoken (even though generation after generation has repeated them) words that are older than all memory. In this sense, the level of the original is probably that which is closest to man: the surface he traverses so innocently, always for the first time, and upon which his scarcely opened eyes discern figures as young as his own gaze – figures that must necessarily be just as ageless as he himself, though for an opposite reason; it is not because they are always equally young, it is because they belong to a time that has neither the same standards of measurement nor the same foundations as him. But this thin surface of the original, which accompanies our entire existence and never deserts it (not even, indeed especially not, at the moment of death, when, on the contrary, it reveals itself, as it were, naked) is not the immediacy of a birth; it is populated entirely by those complex mediations formed and laid down as a sediment in their own history by labour, life, and language; so that in this simple contact, from the moment the first object is manipulated, the simplest need expressed, the most neutral word emitted, what man is reviving, without knowing it, is all the intermediaries of a time that governs him almost to infinity. Without knowing it, and yet it must be known, in a certain way, since it is by this means that men enter into communication and find themselves in the already constructed network of comprehension. Nevertheless, this knowledge is limited, diagonal, partial, since it is surrounded on all sides by an immense region of shadow in which labour, life, and language conceal their

truth (and their own origin) from those very beings who speak, who exist, and who are at work.

The original, as modern thought has never ceased to describe it since *The phenomenology of mind*, is thus very different from that ideal genesis that the Classical age had attempted to reconstitute; but it is also different (though linked to it by a fundamental correlation) from the origin that is outlined, in a sort of retrospective beyond, through the historicity of beings. Far from leading back, or even merely pointing, towards a peak – whether real or virtual – of identity, far from indicating the moment of the Same at which the dispersion of the Other has not yet come into play, the original in man is that which articulates him from the very outset upon something other than himself; it is that which introduces into his experience contents and forms older than him, which he cannot master; it is that which, by binding him to multiple, intersecting, often mutually irreducible chronologies, scatters him through time and pinions him at the centre of the duration of things. Paradoxically, the original, in man, does not herald the time of his birth, or the most ancient kernel of his experience: it links him to that which does not have the same time as himself; and it sets free in him everything that is not contemporaneous with him; it indicates ceaselessly, and in an ever-renewed proliferation, that things began long before him, and that for this very reason, and since his experience is wholly constituted and limited by things, no one can ever assign him an origin. Now, this impossibility itself has two aspects: on the one hand, it signifies that the origin of things is always pushed further back, since it goes back to a calendar upon which man does not figure; but, on the other hand, it signifies that man, as opposed to the things whose glittering birth time allows to show in all its density, is the being without origin, who has ‘neither country nor date’, whose birth is never accessible because it never took ‘place’. What is conveyed in the immediacy of the original is, therefore, that man is cut off from the origin that would make him contemporaneous with his own existence: amid all the things that are born in time and no doubt die in time, he, cut off from all origin, is already there. So that it is in him that things (those same things that hang over him) find their beginning: rather than a cut, made at some given moment in duration, he is the opening from which time in general can be reconstituted, duration can flow,

and things, at the appropriate moment, can make their appearance. Though, in the empirical order, things are always set back from him, so that they are unapprehendable at their zero point, nevertheless man finds himself fundamentally set back in relation to that setting back of things, and it is by this means that they are able to weigh down upon the immediacy of the original experience with their solid anteriority.

A task is thereby set for thought: that of contesting the origin of things, but of contesting it in order to give it a foundation, by rediscovering the mode upon which the possibility of time is constituted – that origin without origin or beginning, on the basis of which everything is able to come into being. Such a task implies the calling into question of everything that pertains to time, everything that has formed within it, everything that resides within its mobile element, in such a way as to make visible that rent, devoid of chronology and history, from which time issued. Time would then be suspended within that thought, which nevertheless cannot escape from it since it is never contemporaneous with the origin; but this suspension would have the power to revolve the reciprocal relation of origin and thought; and as it pivoted upon itself, the origin, becoming what thought has yet to think, and always afresh, would be forever promised in an imminence always nearer yet never accomplished. In that case the origin is that which is returning, the repetition towards which thought is moving, the return of that which has already always begun, the proximity of a light that has been shining since the beginning of time. Thus, for the third time, the origin is visible through time; but this time it is the recession into the future, the injunction that thought receives and imposes upon itself to advance with dove-like steps towards that which has never ceased to render it possible, to keep watch in front of itself, on the ever-receding line of its horizon, for the day from which it came and from which it is coming in such profusion.

At the very moment when it became possible for it to denounce as fantasies the ideal geneses described in the eighteenth century, modern thought was establishing a problematics of the origin at once extremely complex and extremely tangled; this problematics has served as the foundation for our experience of time, and, since the nineteenth century, as the starting-point of all our attempts to re-apprehend what beginning and re-beginning, the recession and the presence of the

beginning, the return and the end, could be in the human sphere. In fact, modern thought established a relation to the origin that was inverse for man and for things: in this way it sanctioned – but outwitted in advance and preserved all its power of contestation with regard to them – the positivist attempts to insert man's chronology within that of things, in such a way that the unity of time would be restored and that man's origin would be no more than a date, a fold, in the sequential series of beings (placing that origin, and with it the appearance of culture, the dawn of civilizations, within the stream of biological evolution); it sanctioned also the inverse and complementary endeavour to align the experience man has of things, the knowledge he has acquired of them, and the sciences he has thus been able to constitute, in accordance with chronology (so that though all man's beginnings have their locus within the time of things, his individual or cultural time makes it possible, in a psychological or historical genesis, to define the moment at which things meet the face of their truth for the first time); in each of these two alignments, the origin of things and the origin of man are subordinated to each other; but the mere fact that there are two possible and irreconcilable alignments indicates the fundamental asymmetry that characterizes modern thought on origin. Moreover, this thought brings into a final light and, as it were, into an essentially reticent clarity, a certain stratum of the original in which no origin was in fact present, but in which man's time (which has no beginning) made manifest, for a possible memory, the time of things (which has no memory). This leads to a double temptation: to psychologize all knowledge, of whatever kind, and to make psychology into a sort of general science of all the sciences; or, inversely, to describe this original stratum in a style that avoids all positivism in such a way as to make it possible, on this basis, to disturb the positivity of all science and to use the fundamental, insuperable character of this experience as a weapon against it. But in setting itself the task of restoring the domain of the original, modern thought immediately encounters the recession of the origin; and, paradoxically, it proposes the solution of advancing in the direction of this ever-deepening recession; it tries to make it appear on the far side of experience, as that which sustains it by its very retreat, as that which is nearest to its most visible possibility, as that which is, within thought, imminent; and if the recession of the origin

is thus posited in its greatest clarity, is it not the origin itself that is set free and travels backwards until it reaches itself again, in the dynasty of its archaism? This is why modern thought is doomed, at every level, to its great preoccupation with recurrence, to its concern with recommencement, to that strange, stationary anxiety which forces upon it the duty of repeating repetition. Thus from Hegel to Marx and Spengler we find the developing theme of a thought which, by the movement in which it is accomplished – totality attained, violent recovery at the extreme point of poverty, solar decline – curves over upon itself, illuminates its own plenitude, brings its circle to completion, recognizes itself in all the strange figures of its odyssey, and accepts its disappearance into that same ocean from which it sprang; in opposition to this return, which, even though it is not happy, is perfect, we find the experience of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, in which the return is posited only in the extreme recession of the origin – in that region where the gods have turned away, where the desert is increasing, where the *τεχνη* has established the dominion of its will; so that what we are concerned with here is neither a completion nor a curve, but rather that ceaseless rending open which frees the origin in exactly that degree to which it recedes; the extreme is therefore what is nearest. But whether this stratum of the original, revealed by modern thought in the very movement in which it invented man, is a promise of fulfilment and perfect plenitude or restores the void of the origin – the void created both by its recession and by its approach – in any case, what it prescribes as thought is something like the ‘Same’: through the domain of the original, which articulates human experience upon the time of nature and life, upon history, upon the sedimented past of cultures, modern thought makes it its task to return to man in his identity, in that plenitude or in that nothing which he is himself, to history and time in the repetition which they render impossible but which they force us to conceive, and to being in that which it is.

And by this means, in this infinite task of conceiving of the origin in what is nearest to it and what is furthest from it, thought reveals that man is not contemporaneous with what makes him be – or with that upon the basis of which he is; but that he is within a power that disperses him, draws him far away from his own origin, but promises it to him in an imminence that will perhaps be forever snatched from

him; now, this power is not foreign to him; it does not reside outside him in the serenity of eternal and ceaselessly recommenced origins, for then the origin would be effectively posited; this power is that of his own being. Time – the time that he himself is – cuts him off not only from the dawn from which he sprang but also from that other dawn promised him as still to come. It is clear how this fundamental time – this time on the basis of which time can be given to experience – is different from that which was active in the philosophy of representation: then, time dispersed representation, since it imposed the form of a linear sequence upon it; but representation was able to reconstitute itself for itself in imagination, and thus to duplicate itself perfectly and to subjugate time; the image made it possible to reapprehend time in its entirety, to recover what had been conceded to succession, and to construct a knowledge as true as that of an eternal understanding. In the modern experience, on the contrary, the retreat of the origin is more fundamental than all experience, since it is in it that experience shines and manifests its positivity; it is because man is not contemporaneous with his being that things are presented to him with a time that is proper to them. And here we meet once again the initial theme of finitude. But this finitude, which was expressed first of all by the weight of things upon man – by the fact that he was dominated by life, history, and language – now appears at a more fundamental level: it is the insurmountable relation of man's being with time.

Thus, by rediscovering finitude in its interrogation of the origin, modern thought closes the great quadrilateral it began to outline when the Western *episteme* broke up at the end of the eighteenth century: the connection of the positivities with finitude, the reduplication of the empirical and the transcendental, the perpetual relation of the *cogito* to the unthought, the retreat and return of the origin, define for us man's mode of being. It is in the analysis of that mode of being, and no longer in the analysis of representation, that reflection since the nineteenth century has sought a philosophical foundation for the possibility of knowledge.

VII DISCOURSE AND MAN'S BEING

It may be observed that these four theoretical segments (analysis of finitude, of empirico-transcendental repetition, of the unthought, and of origin) stand in a certain relation to the four subordinate domains which together constituted the general theory of language in the Classical age.³ A relation which is at first glance one of resemblance and symmetry. It will be remembered that the theory of the *verb* explained how language could overflow its own boundaries and affirm being – in a movement which, in return, assured the very being of language, since the latter could establish itself and open up its space only where there already existed, at least in a hidden form, a foundation provided by the verb *to be*; the analysis of *finitude* explains in the same way how man's being finds itself determined by positivities which are exterior to it and which link it to the density of things, but how, in return, it is finite being that gives any determination the possibility of appearing in its positive truth. Whereas the theory of *articulation* showed how the patterning of words and of the things they represent could occur without a hiatus between them, the analysis of the *empirico-transcendental reduplication* shows how what is given in experience and what renders experience possible correspond to one another in an endless oscillation. The quest for the primary *designations* of language drew out from the silent and innermost heart of words, syllables, and sounds themselves, a dormant representation that formed, as it were, their forgotten soul (which it was necessary to bring back to light, to make speak and sing once more, in order to attain a greater exactitude of thought, a more miraculous power of poetry); in a similar way, for modern thought, the inert density of the *unthought* is always inhabited in a certain manner by a *cogito*, and this thought, dormant within what is not thought, must be brought to life again and stretched out in the sovereignty of the 'I think'. Lastly, there was a theory of *derivation* in Classical reflection on language: this showed how language, from the beginning of its history and perhaps in the instant of its origin, at the very point when it began to speak, shifted inside its own space, pivoted around on itself away from its primary representation, and deposited its words, even the very oldest of them, only when they had already been deployed in the figures of rhetoric; corresponding to that analysis, we now find the

effort to conceive of an ever-elusive *origin*, to advance towards that place where man's being is always maintained, in relation to man himself, in a remoteness and a distance that constitute him.

But this play of correspondences must not be allowed to delude us. We must not imagine that the Classical analysis of discourse has continued without modification through the ages merely by applying itself to a new object; that the force of some historical weight has maintained it in its identity, despite so many adjacent mutations. In fact, the four theoretical segments that outlined the space of general grammar have not been preserved: but they were dissociated, they changed both their function and their level, they modified the entire domain of their validity when, at the end of the eighteenth century, the theory of representation was eclipsed. In the Classical age, the function of general grammar was to show how a language could be introduced into the sequential chain of representations, a language that, while manifesting itself in the simple and absolutely tenuous line of discourse, presupposed forms of simultaneity (affirmation of existences and coexistences; patterning of things represented and formation of generalities; original and inerasable relation between words and things; displacement of words within their rhetorical space). In contrast, the analysis of man's mode of being as it has developed since the nineteenth century does not reside within a theory of representation; its task, on the contrary, is to show how things in general can be given to representation, in what conditions, upon what ground, within what limits they can appear in a positivity more profound than the various modes of perception; and what is then revealed, in this coexistence of man and things, through the great spatial expanse opened up by representation, is man's radical finitude, the dispersion that at the same time separates him from his origin and promises it to him, and the insuperable distance of time. The analytic of man is not a resumption of the analysis of discourse as constituted elsewhere and handed down by tradition. The presence or absence of a theory of representation, or, more exactly, the primary character or derived position of that theory, modifies the equilibrium of the system from top to bottom. As long as representation goes without question as the general element of thought, the theory of discourse serves at the same time, and in one and the same movement, as the foundation of all possible grammar and as a theory of knowledge.

But as soon as the primacy of representation disappears, then the theory of discourse is dissociated, and one can encounter its disincarnated and metamorphosed form on two separate levels. On the empirical level, the four constituent segments are still to be found, but the function they perform has been wholly inverted:⁴ replacing the analysis of the verb's privileged position, of its power to make discourse emerge from itself and become rooted in the being of representation, we find the analysis of an internal grammatical structure which is immanent in each language and constitutes it as an autonomous being, in other words upon itself; similarly, the analysis of the articulation common to words and things has been replaced by the theory of inflections and the attempt to establish laws of mutation proper to words alone; the theory of the radical has been substituted for the analysis of the representative root; finally, where before there was the search for the boundless continuity of derivation, the lateral kinship of languages has been revealed. In other words, everything that had functioned within the dimension of the relation between things (as they are represented) and words (with their representative value) has now been drawn back into language and given the task of providing it with an internal legality. At foundation level, the four segments of the theory of discourse are still to be found: as in the Classical age, they still serve in this new analytic of the human being to express the relation to things; but this time the modification is the inverse of what it was previously; it is no longer a matter of replacing them in a space interior to language, but of freeing them from the domain of representation within which they were trapped, and of bringing them into play in that dimension of exteriority in which man appears as a finite, determined being, trapped in the density of what he does not think, and subject, in his very being, to the dispersion of time.

From the moment when it was no longer in continuity with a theory of representation, the Classical analysis of discourse found itself, as it were, split in two: on the one hand, it invested itself in an empirical knowledge of grammatical forms; and, on the other, it became an analytic of finitude; but neither of these two transferences could take place without a total inversion of function. We are now in a position to understand, in all its implications, the incompatibility that reigns between the existence of Classical discourse (based upon the

unquestioned evidence of representation) and the existence of man as it is presented in modern thought (and with the anthropological reflection that it sanctions): something like an analytic of man's mode of being became possible only after the analysis of representative discourse had been dissociated, transferred, and inverted. And we can also sense how man's being, thus defined and posited, is weighed down by the contemporary reappearance of language in the enigma of its unity and its being as by a threat. Is the task ahead of us to advance towards a mode of thought, unknown hitherto in our culture, that will make it possible to reflect at the same time, without discontinuity or contradiction, upon man's being and the being of language? – If that is so, we must take the very greatest precautions to avoid anything that might be a naïve return to the Classical theory of discourse (a return all the more tempting, it must be said, because we are so ill-equipped to conceive of the shining but crude being of language, whereas the old theory of representation is there, already constituted, offering us a place in which that being can be lodged and allowed to dissolve into pure function). But the right to conceive both of the being of language and of the being of man may be forever excluded; there may be, as it were, an inerasable hiatus at that point (precisely that hiatus in which we exist and talk), so that it would be necessary to dismiss as fantasy any anthropology in which there was any question of the being of language, or any conception of language or signification which attempted to connect with, manifest, and free the being proper to man. It is perhaps here that the most important philosophical choice of our period has its roots – a choice that can be made only in the test of a future reflection. For nothing can tell us in advance upon which side the through road lies. The only thing we know at the moment, in all certainty, is that in Western culture the being of man and the being of language have never, at any time, been able to coexist and to articulate themselves one upon the other. Their incompatibility has been one of the fundamental features of our thought.

However, the mutation of the analysis of Discourse into an analytic of finitude has one other consequence. The Classical theory of the sign and the word had to show how representations, which succeeded one another in a chain so narrow and so tightly knit that distinctions did not appear, with the result that they were all, in short, alike, could be

spread out to form a permanent table of stable differences and limited identities; it was a matter of a genesis of Difference starting from the secretly varied monotony of the Like. The analytic of finitude has an exactly inverse role: in showing that man is determined, it is concerned with showing that the foundation of those determinations is man's very being in its radical limitations; it must also show that the contents of experience are already their own conditions, that thought, from the very beginning, haunts the unthought that eludes them, and that it is always striving to recover; it shows how that origin of which man is never the contemporary is at the same time withdrawn and given as an imminence: in short, it is always concerned with showing how the Other, the Distant, is also the Near and the Same. Thus we have moved from a reflection upon the order of Differences (with the analysis it presupposes and that ontology of continuity and that insistence upon a full, unbroken being deployed in its perfection that presuppose a metaphysics) to a thought of the Same, still to be conquered in its contradiction: which implies (apart from the ethics already mentioned) a dialectic and that form of ontology which, since it has no need of continuity and has to reflect upon being only in its limited forms or in its distance, can and must do without metaphysics. Calling to one another and answering one another throughout modern thought and throughout its history, we find a dialectical interplay and an ontology without metaphysics: for modern thought is one that moves no longer towards the never-completed formation of Difference, but towards the ever-to-be-accomplished unveiling of the Same. Now, such an unveiling is not accomplished without the simultaneous appearance of the Double, and that hiatus, minuscule and yet invincible, which resides in the 'and' of retreat and return, of thought and the unthought, of the empirical and the transcendental, of what belongs to the order of positivity and what belongs to the order of foundations. Identity separated from itself by a distance which, in one sense, is interior to it, but, in another, constitutes it, and repetition which posits identity as a datum, but in the form of distance, are without doubt at the heart of that modern thought to which the discovery of time has so hastily been attributed. In fact, if we look a little more closely, we perceive that Classical thought related the possibility of spatializing things in a table to that property possessed by pure representative

succession to recall itself on the basis of itself, to fold back upon itself, and to constitute a simultaneity on the basis of a continuous time: time became the foundation of space. In modern thought, what is revealed at the foundation of the history of things and of the historicity proper to man is the distance creating a vacuum within the Same, it is the hiatus that disperses and regroups it at the two ends of itself. It is this profound spatiality that makes it possible for modern thought still to conceive of time – to know it as succession, to promise it to itself as fulfilment, origin, or return.

VIII THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SLEEP

Anthropology as an analytic of man has certainly played a constituent role in modern thought, since to a large extent we are still not free from it. It became necessary at the moment when representation lost the power to determine, on its own and in a single movement, the interplay of its syntheses and analyses. It was necessary for empirical syntheses to be performed elsewhere than within the sovereignty of the 'I think'. They had to be required at precisely the point at which that sovereignty reached its limit, that is, in man's finitude – a finitude that is as much that of consciousness as that of the living, speaking, labouring individual. This had already been formulated by Kant in his *Logic*, when to his traditional trilogy of questions he added an ultimate one: the three critical questions (What can I know? What must I do? What am I permitted to hope?) then found themselves referred to a fourth, and inscribed, as it were, 'to its account': *Was ist der Mensch?*⁵

This question, as we have seen, runs through thought from the early nineteenth century: this is because it produces, surreptitiously and in advance, the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental, even though Kant had demonstrated the division between them. By means of this question, a form of reflection was constituted which is mixed in its levels and characteristic of modern philosophy. The concern it has for man, which it lays claim to not only in its discourse but in its pathos, the care with which it attempts to define him as a living being, an individual at work, or a speaking subject, herald the long-awaited return of a human reign only to the high-minded few; in fact, it

concerns, rather more prosaically and less morally, an empirico-critical reduplication by means of which an attempt is made to make the man of nature, of exchange, or of discourse, serve as the foundation of his own finitude. In this Fold, the transcendental function is doubled over so that it covers with its dominating network the inert, grey space of empiricity; inversely, empirical contents are given life, gradually pull themselves upright, and are immediately subsumed in a discourse which carries their transcendental presumption into the distance. And so we find philosophy falling asleep once more in the hollow of this Fold; this time not the sleep of Dogmatism, but that of Anthropology. All empirical knowledge, provided it concerns man, can serve as a possible philosophical field in which the foundation of knowledge, the definition of its limits, and, in the end, the truth of all truth must be discoverable. The anthropological configuration of modern philosophy consists in doubling over dogmatism, in dividing it into two different levels each lending support to and limiting the other: the pre-critical analysis of what man is in his essence becomes the analytic of everything that can, in general, be presented to man's experience.

In order to awaken thought from such a sleep – so deep that thought experiences it paradoxically as vigilance, so wholly does it confuse the circularity of a dogmatism folded over upon itself in order to find a basis for itself within itself with the agility and anxiety of a radically philosophical thought – in order to recall it to the possibilities of its earliest dawning, there is no other way than to destroy the anthropological 'quadrilateral' in its very foundations. We know, in any case, that all efforts to think afresh are in fact directed at that obstacle: whether it is a matter of crossing the anthropological field, tearing ourselves free from it with the help of what it expresses, and rediscovering a purified ontology or a radical thought of being; or whether, rejecting not only psychologism and historicism, but all concrete forms of the anthropological prejudice, we attempt to question afresh the limits of thought, and to renew contact in this way with the project for a general critique of reason. Perhaps we should see the first attempt at this uprooting of Anthropology – to which, no doubt, contemporary thought is dedicated – in the Nietzschean experience: by means of a philological critique, by means of a certain form of biologism, Nietzsche

rediscovered the point at which man and God belong to one another, at which the death of the second is synonymous with the disappearance of the first, and at which the promise of the superman signifies first and foremost the imminence of the death of man. In this, Nietzsche, offering this future to us as both promise and task, marks the threshold beyond which contemporary philosophy can begin thinking again; and he will no doubt continue for a long while to dominate its advance. If the discovery of the Return is indeed the end of philosophy, then the end of man, for its part, is the return of the beginning of philosophy. It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think.

Anthropology constitutes perhaps the fundamental arrangement that has governed and controlled the path of philosophical thought from Kant until our own day. This arrangement is essential, since it forms part of our history; but it is disintegrating before our eyes, since we are beginning to recognize and denounce in it, in a critical mode, both a forgetfulness of the opening that made it possible and a stubborn obstacle standing obstinately in the way of an imminent new form of thought. To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can answer only with a philosophical laugh – which means, to a certain extent, a silent one.

NOTES

1 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of morals*, I, section 5.

2 The Kantian moment is the link between the two: it is the discovery that the

subject, in so far as he is reasonable, applies to himself his own law, which is the universal law.

3 Cf. p. 115 above.

4 Cf. p. 295 above.

5 Kant, *Logik* (*Werke*, ed. Cassirer, vol. VIII, p. 343).