

THE NATURAL WORLD AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

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Introduction

This work develops a few simple ideas demanding a rather complex manner of exposition and demonstration.

Modern man has no unified worldview. He lives in a double world, at once in his own naturally given environment and in a world created for him by modern natural science, based on the principle of mathematical laws governing nature. The disunion that has thus pervaded the whole of human life is the true source of our present spiritual crisis. It is understandable that thinkers and philosophers have often attempted somehow to overcome it, yet they have generally gone about this in a way meant to eliminate one of the two terms, to logically reduce one to the other, to present one—usually on the basis of causal arguments—as a consequence and a component of the other. These problems are alive particularly in modern positivism, which has however never formulated or attempted to solve them in a wholly unprejudiced manner.

Yet a solution other than by means of these alternatives is possible, a solution answering to our modern historical understanding of all reality: a solution which, instead of reducing the natural world to the world of science or vice versa, converts both to a third term. This third term can be nothing but the subjective activity that shapes both worlds, in different yet, in both cases, lawful, ordered ways. The unity underlying the crisis cannot be the unity of the things composing the world; rather, it must be the dynamic unity of the acts performed by the mind or spirit.

That being said, has not the history of modern philosophy beginning with Descartes brought such a variety of conceptions of the subject and its activity that any attempt to found rigorous philosophy on a subjective basis must, at first, seem hopeless? It can be shown, however, that the main conceptions of the subject, in particular those known to us from modern idealistic systems, all have good grounds and are stages on the way toward the ultimately creative region to which we as well propose to bring our problem. Whenever we encounter in serious thinkers divergent conceptions of subjectivity, it is a sign that the subjective level has not been rigorously purified, that the distinction between the result of subjective activity and this activity itself is as yet incomplete. Another important question is that of the subjective method. Is not subjectivism a synonym of arbitrariness? Is this not confirmed, for example, by a certain

fancifulness of the dialectic method? In answer to this objection, we shall try to show that there is a positive, analytical subjective method that has philosophical and not merely psychological significance. It is the method of what we call phenomenological analysis.

From these methodological presuppositions, we proceed to actual consideration of the relationship of man to the natural world. Though not explicitly aware of it, man possesses an overall schema of the universe around him. This overall schema has a typical, relatively constant structure, the main features of which we attempt to distinguish. The human world is characterized by the opposition of home and alien, by a temporal dimension and mood coloring. Things are given to us only within such a schema. The task is then to find, through reflection, the activities of the ultimate, independent subjectivity in which man's relation to the natural world is constituted. The activity that accompanies and makes possible the whole of human life is perception; however, perception itself is impossible without an extensive structure, it presupposes the original consciousness of time, in which both perceiving and the perceived take form and shape. It also proves necessary to determine and analyze the original tendencies and activities presupposed in the automatic, so to say, passive course of everyday experience, activities not necessarily bound to the intervention of the freely acting, i.e., decision-making self. The main issue here is to clarify the process of perceiving, unifying, and typifying that forms the necessary basis of all our experience. Problems of time, space, substratum, and causality in the natural world are also dealt with in this context.

After this examination of the foundations of our world, the next question is that of the activities that can be termed personal in the proper sense, those whereby the free person *rises above* what is immediately present to or immediately determining for it (above its organic tendencies). These activities are thought and linguistic expression. The fact that the person rises here above the immediately given implies that these activities are not possible in themselves, but only on such immediate foundations. Thought and language are an expression of human freedom, an expression of the fact that the world is at our disposal, that we are not purely passively determined by our environment and the tendencies emerging in it, but rather actively appropriate reality and dispose of it.

Philosophical and scientific theory becomes possible only on the basis of linguistic thought. Theoretical activity too has its objective result: theoretical concepts and judgments are cultural products, and their relation to thought-activities is similar to the relation between the realities of the natural world and activities of a receptive character (perceiving, unifying, and typifying). Theoretical thought always relates to a pre-

given, natural reality, but that does not always mean that it is merely a conceptual transcription of the given world. Philosophy alone is radical theory, aiming at conscious grasping of the essential in the world process, whereas the sciences often introduce hypotheses that have to do with our practical endeavors and may or may not subsequently prove valid. In no case, however, do our theories arise on their own; all necessarily presuppose the nourishing soil of the natural world and human life. We should not therefore hold the results of theories to be independently existing beings; we should not separate them from their life-function; rather it is out of this function that they must be understood.

Such are the broad lines of a demonstration that the unity of the world is not the unity of the materials composing it but rather of the spirit that shapes and sustains it.

Stating the Problem

The problem of philosophy is the world as a whole. This thesis, in agreement with historical fact, arouses immediate resistance in us who have been educated by modern science. The sciences have partitioned the world among them, and specialized scientific thought alone is regarded as exact, rigorously controllable and, therefore, theoretically significant. The thinking of the whole, classical ontology, has exploded under the pressure of criticism, but nothing consistent has taken its place in our cultural awareness. It is, indeed, typical of modern existence that there is no *definite* worldview proper to our way of life and that, unlike antiquity and the Middle Ages, modern society has no one total image, or idea, of the order of reality. Such hints of a unified view as there are are of a considerably negativized and simplified complexion in comparison with other worldviews: the closure of the ancient and medieval world has been ruled out, life and mankind dislodged from the center of understanding, the lifeless has supplanted the living, God is no longer accepted as an explanatory concept. It can, of course, be said that all these changes in our picture of the world have a single aim, and, hence, one and the same orientation: the disanthropomorphization of the world. Things in the world are not to be understood in the same way as we understand other beings analogous to ourselves, fellow men or living creatures in general; on the contrary, this mode of understanding should be distrusted on principle. What has changed is not *merely* the picture of the world but rather the very principles of understanding things. And the change affects also our overall relationship to reality. Ancient or medieval man, theoretically reflecting on the world, did not doubt that his thinking referred fundamentally to the same set of things present to him in naive, theoretically unmediated sense-experiencing. We ourselves have lost this certainty, or at least it is lacking in our present society as a whole.—Can we, in this situation, still practice philosophy, and what meaning can philosophy have for us? Can our consciousness of reality be unified by something other than the fundamental rules of the natural-scientific method? Can philosophy, in this situation, also hope to have some social effect?

The answer to all these questions is yes, on two conditions: that *unity* is something we need and something we can bring about—in philosophy—by our own efforts. The need for unity is, of course, a practical

requirement. The need for philosophy is profoundly related to the praxis of human life, and today's man does not come to philosophize through mere wonder, *thaumazein*,¹ but rather on account of the inner difficulties of his spiritual life, on account of his general life-attunement. We propose here to explore in this way, with respect to the existential misery of our time, the birth of one of the trends of modern philosophy. Let it be said straightaway that our interpretation of the situation does not spring from any romantic appreciation (or depreciation) of the present; it is merely an attempt, based on both historical findings and psychological analysis, at reconstructing the ideal type of the present nihilistic mood. We regard as the fundamental constituent of this mood, or life-feeling, man's overall relationship to reality, the way he comes to terms with the milieu in which he lives. There is in this relationship a peculiar duplicity, which must first be described. In order to do so, we shall have to introduce certain fundamental concepts.

1. The Naive Life-World and the World of Science

Before an explicit theoretical interest is awakened in man, he has already acquired an image of the world, which takes shape without any conscious elaboration on his part. This image itself has two components: one that can be called "givenness," the other a complementary element of explanation or interpretation. The element of givenness comprises all formed sense-material, all past and present intuitive experience of one's own and of others; we include in the explanatory element all naive and spontaneous extension of the domain of genuine experience in quasi-experiences. This naive extrapolating cannot be termed theorizing, or only *cum grano salis*, for the theoretical tendency has not yet crystallized and become differentiated from other tendencies, and the critical exigency remains dormant. Yet there is here already spontaneous thought production, which goes beyond the limits of practical utility. Before all explicit thinking, primitives and children form, on the things of the world, opinions that they are often unable to distinguish from givens, and which, as personal development progresses, may automatically give way to clearer, more elaborate views. Of course, the structure of this interpretive element differs for people at various stages of the historical process; and many believe that even the categorial structure of the element of givenness shows essential differences. Yet the fact remains—and it alone interests us here in exposing and formulating the problem—that prior to all theorizing in the sense of the explicit positing of theoretical problems, objectivity

is already given to us through multifarious sorts of experience, and that we imagine that we have immediate access to this objectivity and a certain freedom in disposing of it on the basis of our personal aims and decisions; life in this naive world is life among *realities*, and though our anticipations are frequently corrected, that in no way modifies the overall character of our living with things. Since this entire domain of realities is given naturally, i.e., without our explicit theoretical intervention, calling on no theoretical efforts or skills, we call it the “natural” or naive world; its most characteristic feature is precisely that it is *there* for us without any act of our free will, by virtue of the mere fact of our experience, prior to any theoretical attitude. We call the attitude of this simple, naive experience the “natural” attitude; traditionally, it is also termed the natural worldview or world-concept.

It must be said here, with regard to a currently very widespread life-feeling, that man who has experienced modern science no longer lives simply in the naive natural world; the habitus of his overall relationship to reality is not the natural worldview. This, however, is not to be attributed to the fact of theorizing; theorizing had been going on long before man abandoned the natural worldview with its way of seeing immediately given reality and life in the heart of the real. There had, of course, been Parmenides of Elea, but also Aristotle, whose ingenious synthesis of idea and reality “saved the phenomena”² for over a thousand years. The reason why modern man, i.e., man having gone through the tradition of the main ideas of modern natural science, no longer lives in the natural worldview, is that our natural science is not simply a development but rather a radical *reconstruction* of the naive and natural world of common sense. It has often been pointed out that the tendency of modern natural science, in particular physics, has something in common with Eleatism. However, the analogy lies not only in the conception of being as an eternal, omnitemporal thought-object, but also in the human consequence of splitting the life-milieu in two, between life in a world of truth and life in a world of mere appearance. The naive world is similarly devalued in both cases. Descartes’s struggle against “confused ideas” is not merely a fight against Aristotelianism; the historical opposition here conceals a deeper one—the conflict between the scientific world and the naive world. What had hitherto been deemed reality is real no longer; reality, at least in its ultimate root, is something else—above all it obeys mathematical laws, it is to be understood *sub specie* of a formal mathematical model. All concepts and principles contrary to this model must be—and progressively are—barred from the reflection on true reality. The one and only thing that comes into account is mathematical mechanism, the “opus quod operatur Deus a principio usque ad finem, summaria nempe naturae lex,”³ the

mathematical structure of what happens. What then is to become of the natural attitude and the world corresponding to the natural view? The question, of course, still arises. The first and, still today, most widespread interpretation is causal-psychological. The naive world is the result of a causal connection (in a broad sense that does not exclude “psychophysical parallelism”) between certain “physical” and “psychical” processes; it is the subjective phenomenon of objectivity. There is a certain degree of conformity between the objective and the naive world, but it is a purely structural (having to do with the structure of relationships), by no means a qualitative conformity. What is important for us, though, is the *orientation* of this explanation: going back from the results of natural science to “subjective givens,” which are lawfully correlated with them.

2. The Impact of the Scientific Worldview on Our Life-Feeling

Our purpose here is not to elucidate the genesis and essence of scientific explanation in modern times but rather its influence on our feeling of life. As is clear from the foregoing, the first and strongest effect is to mark our naive world as nonoriginal, derivative. This is not to say that we are aware, at every step, that its qualities and structures “de facto” do not exist, that they are mere “phenomena”; but the whole of our lived-experiencing of things and of ourselves is branded with a character of nonoriginality and semblance. It is a life remote from the true, creative world forces, distrustful of its own immediate understanding. To be sure, man himself, in his true essence, is also part of nature, part of an existent geometrical system obeying—though its composition often changes *in concreto* even in the eyes of science—a principle of comprehension that remains essentially the same and is merely purified from historical dross. As part of nature, man is viewed in relation to the system of possible actions he can receive and perform, i.e., of changes he can undergo and bring about, and these actions, in turn, are studied as to their objective lawfulness, in order to obtain an objective rule of the forces governing and constraining man without his awareness. From the standpoint of this understanding, the subjective feeling of freedom has no noetic value, it is a mere *effectus non efficax*. The frequently stressed contradiction between the feeling of freedom and the objective assessment of man is basically, for modern humanity, a conflict between the two worlds, the naive and the scientific. From the standpoint of scientific objectivism, of course, there is no conflict, since naive life has a priori, in competition with the principles of the scientific reconstruction of reality, no noetic value. The

naive world, conceived of as a partial (albeit structural) image of nature's reality, can contain nothing that cannot be objectively categorized and explained, it can never count as an argument against objectivism. The question is, however, whether it can indeed be conceived of in this way, and whether this conception itself does not always do violence to our original, natural life-feeling, which is a distinctive experience and, as such, may have a noetic claim worth considering. Important here is the feeling and recognition that, on the basis of the objectivist explanation of humanity, I ought in fact never to feel free; at least, freedom does not have the meaning attributed to it by naive man, it is not spontaneity of decision and liberty in disposing of my possibilities of cognition and choice but rather, e.g., independence from outside constraint.⁴ It is important then that, in this peculiar conflict without contact, the scientific view can induce a profound change in the very foundations of the life-feeling; man lives in the fundamental apperception of his unfreedom, he feels himself the agent of objective forces, perceives himself not as a person but rather as a thing. Without our explicit awareness, there has been a substitution of our lived-experiences, a confusion that can then easily blind us to their deeper nature. Without going outside himself, man has become reified, alienated from his natural life-feeling; he becomes—at least at the surface of his being—what he holds himself to be. We shall call this reification, this conception of man as a thing, as a complex of objective forces, *self-alienation*. Out of it follows yet another phenomenon: *self-abdication*. Self-abdication is a reliance on “nature” where man directs neither himself nor others from a *personal* standpoint but rather gives himself up to the impulses that carry him. Since he does not live out of himself—rather life is something he *receives*—the question of the *overall meaning* of life lacks all real significance; “meaning” here means following impulses, which is done automatically in any case. Reflection has no fundamental importance for life; it is wholly in the service of action, as every personal decision follows from a *vis a tergo*, a natural necessity underlying lived-experiences. Work and activity are not so much a means toward a freely grasped goal as rather, on the one hand, a means of satisfying natural or, better, nature's tendencies, and, on the other hand, an escape from the vanity of reflection⁵ and other of life's temptations: partly a vital necessity, partly a distraction. The lowered sense of self carries with it a weakening of the feeling of the threat posed to man by objective forces and of the uniqueness of life, a spreading of the objective barrenness into our very lived-experience. It is as if all the diversity of life were ringing with an unvaried tone of indifferent nothingness which makes all things equal and does justice to life's pure seeming with its uneven distribution of interests and disinterest, lights and shadows.—The fact that even such

consciousness of abdication leaves room for a stabbing anxiety (about the finitude of existence) is simply more evidence of the inner conflicts in which human self-alienation becomes entangled. Alienated man finds it difficult to enter into the spirit of his self-prescribed role, or rather, the role prescribed to him by the objectivist view of his essence; life within him flees this graveyard reconciliation, and as he is unable to free himself from his self-apperception, he endeavors at least to turn a blind eye and forget his situation in the thousand distractions so abundantly offered by modern life.

There is no need to further portray the consequences of this conception. Man is, to a certain extent, pliant, and he can attempt to live even in defiance of the natural order of his own being; but when this gets him entangled in dispiriting conflicts, it is clear that he does need unity. This then provides a first indication for our problem setting, showing the need for philosophy as a unity function for our splintered consciousness, blundering from the naive to the scientific world and back, living out its unfortunate existence in between the two positions experienced as opposites. The unity function has in itself a practical significance; it is clear that the conception we have just described is far too tolerant of the grosser tendencies of human nature and does not appear as suitable ground for the genesis and development of a strong self.

3. Attempt at a Historical Typology of Possible Solutions

The confusion brought about, paradoxically, by the scientific revolution, i.e., by the doctrine of "clear and distinct" ideas, was not long in leading modern thinkers to a sharper awareness of the difference between the naive and the scientized world. Some sensed quite early on that the relation between the two could not be settled with dogmatic bluntness in favor of one or the other. But a long time went by before the problem of the natural worldview was stated in more or less adequate terms, namely, in such a way that the natural worldview itself became a problem not to be dismissed by a handful of preconceived judgments. The debate on the natural worldview requires above all the apprehension, the analysis, and the restitution of the given state of affairs; the natural world must be described as accurately as possible in its fundamental structures, examined as to the mutual relationships of its various components and aspects. Until relatively recently, no philosopher had set the task of providing such a description, and when this was finally done, the means were at first inadequate. Nonetheless, we can see the problem emerging already in

the early days of modern philosophy. Berkeley vehemently attacked the Cartesian cleavage between the *mundus sensibilis* of our immediate intuition and the *mundus intelligibilis* of scientific reason.⁶ He set out to disarm this dualism at all costs—even if it meant sacrificing the reality of things in general. Berkeley missed the problem he was essentially aiming at because he understood it too broadly: as a matter of fact, the dualism lies not in the idea of an independent object, not in the idea of a material substance, but rather in the idea of a *mathematically conceived* material substratum. Taking the problem too broadly, Berkeley did not himself avoid the pitfalls of objectivism in his conception of psychical life as a collection of ideas, an understanding which, stemming from Locke's semi-sensualism, does not belie its historical origin in the very metaphysical dualism Berkeley was opposing. Such a self-enclosed collection of ideas, conceived of as atoms, contains nothing specifically subjective; rather, it is a simple qualitative complex.⁷ Berkeley then reduces all being to this immensely impoverished and interpretatively falsified mental sphere; he thus frees himself of the dual world without devaluing science. He achieves this by means of two principles: (1) it is through our impressions that we know all we know of things, and (2) the connection of what we call things (and the same is analogously true of causes) is not real but rather semantic, a connection of signs. The impressions of "things" are nothing but signs for other impressions, lawfully connected to the former. Basically, Berkeley thus helps himself out by doing away with the naive concept of substance, or thing, by means of an artificial interpretation which has certain features in common with the substantial relation yet fails to grasp it in what is characteristic of it.⁸ Like the relation of things, the semantic relation too proceeds from the sensible to that which is not directly perceived, from the apparent to the hidden, but the relation of things includes moreover other moments, it is an extremely intricate complex of significations, whereas Berkeley orders the world with geometrical simplicity. The question of the reason for the world's being structured in classes and laws then boils down for him to the question of the divine intelligence that governs the world. Things and laws are, so to say, the words and phrases of the divine language in which God communicates with his creatures. Berkeley thus solves the metaphysical problem of the nature of what is by means of the concept of a divine grammar.

Berkeley's position was soon recognized as dependent on Cartesianism. The Scottish philosophers in particular became sharply aware of this appurtenance and protested against it. Thomas Reid points out the genealogy that runs from Descartes to Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and he sees the beginning of what he terms "the universal deluge" as something to be found already in Descartes.⁹ It is certainly cor-

rect that the idea Reid is above all combating, i.e., the necessity to prove the existence of the “external world,” has its source in the reification of the subjective that finds its first systematic expression in Descartes as representative of an elaborated system of the mathematical conception of the world: the mind here is even more radically separated from the world than in Platonism, but at the same time it becomes a nonmaterial, nonspatial *thing*. However, as to the reason for the paradoxical fact that the mind, radically separated from all the rest of reality, has to use its own ideas of the object in order to prove to itself the ontological scope of its claim to objective knowledge, Reid does not locate it correctly in Descartes’s fundamental mathematicism, but rather in what he calls “the ideal system,” i.e., in Descartes’s subjectivism, which has a totally different and, as we shall show below, much deeper meaning. While accurately sensing the enemy, Reid thus fails to see where he can be attacked; he is concerned only with presenting a different solution to the same—ill-posed—problem. According to Reid, the pretensions of modern philosophy are absurd, since it abandons the one and only field which nurtures the growth of philosophy: the ground of common sense, containing the principles of all possible knowledge, whether in science or practical life. Reid refuses to admit that something extraordinary happened in our world with the advent of modern natural science. He asserts outright that the man who first ascertained that cold makes water freeze proceeded in the same way as Newton in discovering the law of gravity or the properties of light. He blames all the uncertainty of the human sense of self, already observable in his time, on the hubris of philosophers who disregard the demands of common sense and seek to make philosophy independent of it—a project Reid compares to the revolt of the Titans against Zeus almighty. So, though he has (like his French predecessor Claude Buffier)¹⁰ chosen the right opponent, the true author of the disunion he proposes to remedy, Reid does not do battle with the proper weapons. If we were to look to him for positive indications, we would find his results commensurate with the method employed: Reid makes some admittedly subtle analytical observations,¹¹ but on the whole his analyses remain within a Lockean conceptual schematism. There is no real description of the world of common sense in Reid; he does not even acknowledge the problem.

Reid and his followers are inconsistent champions of the natural worldview, determined to defend it against the pretensions of philosophy but not against the claims of science, which has set itself up as ontology. The problem of the natural worldview was never made fully clear in the school of Scottish “common-sense” philosophy; for proof of this, we have but to consider the objections raised by Hamilton, for example, against Reid’s timid leanings toward naive realism¹²—all in all, the

school's standpoint does not essentially diverge from Locke's position. Nonetheless, the sharp impression that modern philosophy is somehow unnatural in its very roots is one of the determining facts of the spiritual situation of the late eighteenth century; Reid's philosophy, itself a consequence of this impression, certainly contributed in turn to reinforcing it. The openly irrationalistic philosophical trends, among which Jacobi should be singled out as an emblematic figure, follow the same line. Jacobi represents yet another typical attitude toward our problem, an attitude that can still nowadays be encountered: the natural worldview alone is in touch with reality, all rational elaboration of this world, i.e., both science and philosophy working with and in the name of scientific principles, being discredited as sterile, of purely instrumental value. Not that rational elaboration is denied binding force, but it can only deal with things that it has arranged and fitted into its own schemata. What science understands is understandable but not real; science does away with the "clear obscure" of things, their individuality, their life, the unsaid of their relations and determinations. The philosopher should not fall under the illusion that he knows how to explain the essence of things, that he can tell what being is. The essential function of philosophy is simply to *uncover* what is,¹³ to pursue the analysis as far as it can go, up to what cannot be analyzed, to the ultimate phenomenon which is essentially inaccessible, unconceivable for abstract reason.—It is interesting to find almost the same formula Jacobi uses to define the task of the philosopher in the passage of Goethe's *Theory of Colors* dealing with the philosophical significance of his investigation: "vom Philosophen glauben wir Dank zu verdienen, daß wir gesucht, die Phänomene bis zu ihren Urquellen zu verfolgen, bis dorthin, wo sie bloß erscheinen und sind und wo sich nichts weiter an ihnen erklären läßt."¹⁴ Goethe's aversion for the *more mathematico* explanation of nature is well known; yet Goethe is no advocate of anti-scientism and irrationalism in general; he does not claim, like Jacobi, that the attempt to understand nature can lead only to a mechanical conception of the world; rather, his guiding idea is a *reform of science*, which should be brought closer to the natural world, built on foundations fundamentally different from the mathematical essence of natural science. This new science of nature does not rely on the principle of clear and distinct ideas; the unfathomable remains alive in it, in the very heart of nature, and we come closest to this heart, not in the crystalline clarity of intellectual constructions, but rather in grasping the primal phenomena as means, in Hegel's words, to "lead the black Absolute . . . out into the light of day,"¹⁵ means that are at once ideal and real, intellectual and sensible, intelligible and experientially given. It is clear that this is an attempt to recover intimacy with nature, to grasp its inner rhythm,

to deepen the natural bonds that link us with it rather than severing them systematically through science. Thus, Goethe's science of nature is both a return to the Renaissance and a gateway to the scientific endeavors of the German idealist philosophers—endeavors that, notwithstanding their lack of success, are significant and symptomatic with respect to our problem, revealing of the profound crisis caused by modern objectivism and mathematicism in the economy of our spiritual life, endeavors that will one day have to be explored in depth precisely from the standpoint of this problem, evaluated in all their richness and pertinently exploited, in search of viable paths. We cannot here even outline, let alone classify this whole movement; it has, however, one common feature, shared also with Goethe, whose philosophy of nature has rightly been called an introduction to the thought-world of German idealism:¹⁶ an insufficient awareness of the positive significance of modern mathematical natural science, the feeling that this whole episode could be overcome and forgotten once and for all, as one forgets an intellectual error. On this point even German idealism lacks a concrete view of the historical process of the spirit as creative and positive even in its nay-saying. In actual fact, the reconstruction of nature following the Galilean and Cartesian tradition went forward well-nigh undisturbed, and in the blinding light of its intellectual and practical successes, attempts at a science of a different type and orientation faded to insignificance. The problem though remained. Three possible ways out—Reid's refusal to acknowledge the problem, Jacobi's irrationalism which is its own judge, and Goethe's reform of science—having been closed, there remained to try once again on the basis of the intellectual means made available by modern science itself; there remained to attempt an explanation of the naive world not only *on the basis of* but as identical with the mathematical world. As in Berkeley, we encounter here a transformation of naive experience, a reinterpretation which, this notwithstanding, sets itself the task of apprehending naive experience as it is and reinstating it in its rights.

Richard Avenarius's critique of pure experience¹⁷ is a far-reaching attempt of this kind. According to Avenarius, it can be shown, on the basis of an analysis of the experience of our natural and human environment, that there are not two worlds, two realities. For Avenarius, the difference between the physical and the psychic¹⁸ is not absolute, as both are part of the same reality: the psychic is merely a particular function of the "oscillations" of the nervous system (taken as a logically necessary presupposition of experience, not as a material thing in itself). Avenarius seeks to apply this standpoint consistently in examining all psychologically accessible experience. At no point does he conceal his naturalistic program; on the contrary, he displays it in nearly every line of his writings; his ideal is to

introduce scientific lawfulness into reflection on what was formerly called the subject, consciousness. Avenarius does not use these terms; they are *idola* that crumble and fall given true analytical consistency, which knows only “elements,” “characters,” “things,” and “thoughts.” Avenarius is a subtle analyst of detail, but he fails to see the depths of the problem, having already solved it in the putting.¹⁹ The same is true of his intellectual twin Ernst Mach, whose analysis of “sensations”²⁰ led, as is well known, to the discovery of the qualities of the form, or Gestalt; it was thus, psychologically, a very fruitful investigation, though its grounds were philosophically debatable, to say the least.—These thinkers have been criticized, not without reason, for having taken experience apart and not knowing how to put it back together again. If experience is always a manifold of elements, what is it that binds them together?²¹ Clearly, it cannot be yet another element, as the same question would arise about it, etc.

Already Avenarius tried to heighten the precision and clarity of his attempted interpretation of naive experience by adopting a formal mode of expression using algorithmic formulas. The philosophers who apply logicism to the analysis of experience go much farther in the same direction. We cannot, in these pages aiming merely at a general typological characterization of the various standpoints toward our problem, discuss in detail the essence and development of Russian, English, and American neorealism. We must be content to show, by means of a few examples, how our problem retains the function of a starting point and how the already mentioned tendencies are brought to bear on its solution. Some currently influential doctrines would require a detailed analysis if we were to show how they can be reduced to a combination of such tendencies; these are doctrines aiming at a synthesis, where the radical consequences, of interest to us, tend to be less conspicuous. For this reason, we shall not discuss Bergson or Whitehead. Nor do we intend to retrace the history of naturalistic extremism in its individual proponents. May we be allowed just to briefly outline a few characteristic points. Here we meet with Bertrand Russell and his attempt to present cognition of the external world as a field for the application of the scientific method in philosophy.²² Starting from Berkeley’s critique of substantialism (a critique bearing, as we have seen, the mark of the dualism of the natural and the scientific world), Russell renews the question of inference from the “subjective” to the “objective” sphere. For this purpose, he first undertakes a rough analysis of what is given in everyday (“sensible”) experience, distinguishing “hard” and “soft” data. Hard data are “sensible qualities,” soft data are objects of common sense, such as furniture, tools, mountains, etc. Russell then takes hard data alone as a starting point from which to reach objects. He holds objects to be logical constructions from “hard data.”

Construction in the common-sense world differs from scientific construction only by its lack of precision. The refusal of this imprecision entails the collapse first of the category of substance—replaced by the notion of a series of aspects obeying physical laws—then of the concepts of space and time as supposedly independent entities. In this way, Russell reaches a standpoint that involves only “data” and logical constructions. The *entire* world is then reduced to this standpoint; the dividing line between the subject and the object has been erased, common sense is in the right in the material respect (as concerns the data), science in the formal respect.

Russell is inconsistent in invoking simply “animal belief” when it comes down to overstepping the set of our *own* hard data, i.e., in the question of “solipsism,” which, given his approach to the problem, is unavoidable and can receive no answer. Carnap²³ is more consistent here, declaring the question a pseudoproblem (since it cannot even be formulated in rigorously logical terms) and undertaking to construct (“constitute”) the world on a private-psychical basis. Most important for this whole thought style are, however, Wittgenstein’s considerations on the nature of the world and the nature of language.²⁴

Wittgenstein’s treatise is, in brief, an ontological theory of logic. The nature of logic ensues here from the structure of the world, but it can also be said, the other way round, that there is nothing more appropriate than an inquiry into the essence of logic for elucidating the nature of the world. The world is the totality of facts; facts are combinations of “things”; things have content and form; form is space, time, and “color.” (Color corresponds to the qualitative aspect of reality as given by the senses.) The world is not the totality of things but of facts: this is important, as every fact involves a relation and every relation has a certain formal structure. It is this formal structure that makes possible language, which is nothing other than a logical *picture* of the world. There is a logical picture where there is agreement in structure between two facts.²⁵ Thus, a sentence directly shows the structure of the fact that is its meaning. Sentences in general have meaning only on the general condition of it being ultimately possible to resolve even their most complex expressions into expressions that show the structure of the elementary facts of which the world is composed. If the expression is in a form such that its individual signs unequivocally correspond to the objects of the pictured fact, then we have to do with a fully analyzed sentence. Every sentence can be ultimately reduced to a fully analyzed form, thereby guaranteeing agreement between the thing and its picture. The entire world is expressible, but on the condition that the expression itself is part of the world, subject to the same general laws. A sentence has meaning only if it can be verified by the direct comparison of two facts: the sentence and its object. The whole

of logic follows simply from the rules of picturing. “In logic it is not we who express, by means of signs, what we want, but in logic the nature of the essentially necessary signs itself asserts.”²⁶ The so-called laws of logic are tautologies, i.e., combinations of sentential signs valid for all possible combinations of the truth-values of the elementary propositions. In logic, something of the very essence of the world is shown simply because the fundamental structure of nature is logical. One can never resist logic, nor sin against logic. A thought is always logical.

Wittgenstein’s theses, which look like wholly unprejudiced logical considerations and yet, as we see, in fact contain, implicit in their starting point, an entire objectivist, mathematical theory of being, were to provide the basis for a new polemical campaign ardently waged by certain members of the “Vienna Circle” against all “metaphysics.” It is a polemic which denies the so-called metaphysical propositions, those featuring concepts such as “principle,” “God,” “the absolute,” “nothingness,” etc., not only truth but—on the basis of Wittgenstein’s considerations on language as a logical picture of things—any meaning whatever. It must be emphasized here that these logicians take the word “meaning” in an uncommon acceptance, which presupposes their specific metaphysical theses (the logical atomism described above) as well as their theses on the nature of language. Nowhere, however, has there been a sustained attempt to show that this concept of meaning coincides with common, everyday use; these thinkers themselves are far from such a position. Up against the fact that people have for thousands of years taken propositions containing metaphysical names to be meaningful, they resort to a doubtless too facile comparison of metaphysics to music evoking emotions and moods; these authors deny that there is on any account thought going on here.²⁷

Starting with Wittgenstein, the consideration of the role of language in the economy of world-representations becomes fundamental to the objectivists. From this angle, the problem of a unified worldview presents itself as the question of a unified language of science. Modern advocates of scientific objectivism affirm that knowledge in all possible scientific fields can be expressed in the language of mathematical physics; such is the thesis of “physicalism,” which thus rules out “subjective” experiences, once and for all, from the province of objects of clear and distinct knowledge. It cannot be denied that one of the fundamental tendencies of modern science is indeed thought through here to its conclusions: the universality of physics as a unified theory opposed to the sphere of “mere data” (it too now unified and leveled) brings to completion, in the thesis of a unified language of physics, the mathematical reconstruction of the world begun by Galileo and Descartes. It is a consistently constructed thesis, unlikely to be shaken by any criticism from within. One can, how-

ever, recall its historical origins and the dogmatic metaphysical character thereby attached to it. It can be shown, in addition, that the physicalist system can never encompass the world of naive lived-experience, which must always be somehow abstractively preserved so as to measure up to the image of immediate experience conceived by the “empiricist.” How is he to prove that this so bountiful naive world, always a whole, with all its articulations, practical characters, features of familiarity, mood coloration, etc., is merely some sort of inarticulate physics? Physicalism can ascertain a lawful correspondence but by no means the identity of the two worlds, that of construction and that of experiencing. After passing through the hands of the physicalist, our problem is thus back where it was to begin with—and man goes on reeling between two essentially different views of reality with all the practical consequences of this discrepancy, as indicated above.

4. Anticipating Our Own Proposed Solution

As the reader will have gathered from our portrayal of the attempts at achieving the unity of reality, these initiatives have not been successful. We believe that the reason for their failure is that all without exception begin by considering the nature of the object and go on from there to explain lived-experience, dispensing with the descriptive and analytical work necessary to apprehend such experience in its original form and its naive world. We shall attempt here to go the opposite way. We shall try to rediscover, under the sediments of modern objectivism, a concept containing a real key to the sought-for unity. For us, this concept is subjectivity. Certainly it has already been suggested centuries ago that subjectivity should be considered the fundamental level of philosophy, but let us make no mistake: the meaning of the Cartesian reflection is still a partially unsolved problem.²⁸ The following investigation pursues this meaning along the path followed by modern philosophy in its characteristic representatives. We must, however, first attempt to state what we expect from this philosophical anamnesis and why we look upon the subjective orientation as a way to reestablish the world’s unity, the breaking of which threatens modern man in that which, according to Dostoyevsky,²⁹ is most precious to him: his own self.

Let it be said to begin with that we do not understand subjectivism after the manner of Berkeley, who approached the reduction of objective entities to real finite subjects through a formal reinterpretation of experience. Our starting point considers the nature of experience in general,

which is always the experience of something real, something existing in the broadest sense of the word, be it “subjective” or “objective,” real or ideal, originarily given or present merely in an improper sense, etc. All that exists in all its variety is an object of experience. What then is *experience* in its ultimate essence? If, as we believe, its essential feature is that it has to do with what is, we can say that the function of understanding being surely appertains to it. Understanding the genesis of the experience of the existent would then mean inquiring into the function of understanding being. This, however, cannot be accomplished by the usual psychological method that can guide us only to certain immanent realities which, in their meaning, refer back to the objective world. Whenever we accomplish psychological reflection, we move within a certain limited domain of the existent, and so cannot trace the origin of the function of being as such. If such a task is to have any hope of success, we must resort to a deeper subjectivity, one that is not existent in the common sense of the word, one that is not a being among beings but rather constitutes in itself the universe of being in a lawful manner, each stage of this process lawfully presupposing the others. It thus becomes clear that we must distinguish two subjectivities, one creative, the other created (roughly speaking), and only regarding the latter will it be possible to say unequivocally with Descartes: *cogito-sum*.

We claim that such a methodical procedure is possible and that on its basis it becomes clear that the transcendental, i.e., preexistent subjectivity *is* the world. The task of philosophy is the reflective apprehension of this process. From that which is given us beforehand as human beings in the world we must proceed to the structures of transcendental subjectivity in which reality is formed. This, however, presupposes the apprehension and fixation of the structures of givenness itself. And that raises the task of describing the given world in the essential structures of all its regions. At the same time, it implies a certain privilege of the naive universe over the universe created in theoretical activities, and the naive universe is thereby legitimated to a large extent. However, the world, as universe, is no longer for us a dead object. Rather, it is a meaning created in an eternally flowing activity whose main modalities will be the theme of our analyses, feeling their way toward the center; thus we can no longer see being as a *fatum* but rather as a law drawn from our innermost core, as a creation which offers a certain space of freedom also to upsurges of new creativity. This, we believe, is what makes it possible to legitimize as well the scientific universe with its reconstructive tendencies; in any case, the universe of science should be explained on the basis of the common-sense universe and not vice versa.

Guided by this understanding, we shall have to break the deep-

rooted thought habits and intellectual clichés that so often lead us to gloss over fundamental questions of the analysis of experience with excessively simplified formulas. Sensualism, the doctrine of the atomistically objective character of sense-data, the nominalist theory of abstraction, and the positivist notion of thought as purely reflective, noncreative (a notion which brings with it the conception of language as a “logical picture of the world”) should be considered as clichés of this kind. Our attempt has thus both a positive and a negative side: a positive theory of the existent in its essential historicity, it is also, in a negative respect, a critique of the positivist conception of the world, which seems to us to make excessive use of such clichés handed down through history.

On the other hand, if we reject positivism as a philosophy building naively and uncritically on the results and the methodical assumptions of science, we cannot but criticize in the same way any attempt at absolutizing prescientific being. The most radical and thorough such attempt today is doubtless to be seen in the metaphysical and gnoseological theories of N. O. Lossky, his doctrine of intuition, the transsubjectivity of sense-qualities³⁰ and ideal being, etc. Here, the problem of the apprehension of the naive world is too quickly dismissed, and the problem of its understanding is not even posited; the naive attitude to the world is not taken as a *theme* for philosophical scrutiny but rather *presupposed* straightaway, and not systematically enough analyzed, in constructing a picture of the world. The philosophizing I has taken the a priori given of the naive world as an ontological norm and ground. We regard also this kind of ontologism—which, moreover, cannot ever raise the ontological question, since it has been answered in advance—as philosophically dangerous.

Should the philosophical program outlined here seem excessively poor, we believe our reflection warrants our holding things themselves to blame. The end result of our analyses is the thesis that metaphysics is possible only as a conscious reliving of the whole of reality; in our human situation, we can carry out this enormous task only in a region that may not even include the whole of human history. Indeed, when can we be certain to have truly understood extrahuman life? Yet the task we set ourselves is in itself endless, and it will never be converted to definitive formulas, since the activity of creative life will go on in us forever. The present work too is merely the first step in a program that is not proposed for the short term. It seeks but to present an orientation in the ideal prehistory of theoretical thought, without entering its realm as such. Between these two considerations there lies, as middle term, the consideration of human history, the philosophy of history, which will have to be made the foundation of a consideration regarding the development and creation