

DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Philosophical Fragments

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The Concept* of Enlightenment

Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity. Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world.* It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge. Bacon, "the father of experimental philosophy,"¹ brought these motifs together. He despised the exponents of tradition, who substituted belief for knowledge and were as unwilling to doubt as they were reckless in supplying answers. All this, he said, stood in the way of "the happy match between the mind of man and the nature of things," with the result that humanity was unable to use its knowledge for the betterment of its condition. Such inventions as had been made—Bacon cites printing, artillery, and the compass—had been arrived at more by chance than by systematic enquiry into nature. Knowledge obtained through such enquiry would not only be exempt from the influence of wealth and power but would establish man as the master of nature:

Therefore, no doubt, the sovereignty of man lieth hid in knowledge; wherein many things are reserved, which kings with their treasure cannot buy, nor with their force command; their spials and intelligencers can give no news of them, their seamen and discoverers cannot sail where they grow: now we govern nature in opinions, but we are thrall unto her in necessity: but if we would be led by her in invention, we should command her by action.²

Although not a mathematician, Bacon well understood the scientific temper which was to come after him. The "happy match" between human understanding and the nature of things that he envisaged is a patriarchal one: the mind, conquering superstition, is to rule over disenchanted nature. Knowledge, which is power, knows no limits, either in its enslavement* of creation or in its deference to worldly masters. Just as it serves all the purposes of the bourgeois economy both in factories and on the battlefield, it is at the disposal of entrepreneurs regardless of their origins. Kings control technology no more directly than do merchants: it is as democratic as the economic system* with which it evolved. Technology is the essence of this knowledge. It aims to produce neither concepts nor images, nor the joy of understanding, but method, exploitation of the labor of others,* capital. The "many things" which, according to Bacon, knowledge still held in store are themselves mere instruments: the radio as a sublimated printing press, the dive bomber as a more effective form of artillery, remote control as a more reliable compass. What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts. Ruthless toward itself, the Enlightenment has eradicated the last remnant of its own self-awareness. Only thought which does violence to itself is hard enough to shatter myths. Faced by the present triumph of the factual mentality, Bacon's nominalist credo would have smacked of metaphysics and would have been convicted of the same vanity for which he criticized scholasticism. Power and knowledge are synonymous.³ For Bacon as for Luther, "knowledge that tendeth but to satisfaction, is but as a courtesan, which is for pleasure, and not for fruit or generation." Its concern is not "satisfaction, which men call truth," but "operation," the effective procedure. The "true end, scope or office of knowledge" does not consist in "any plausible, delectable, reverend or admired discourse, or any satisfactory arguments, but in effecting and working, and in discovery of particulars not revealed before, for the better endowment and help of man's life."⁴ There shall be neither mystery nor any desire to reveal mystery.

The disenchantment of the world means the extirpation of animism. Xenophanes mocked the multiplicity of gods because they resembled their creators, men, in all their idiosyncrasies and faults, and the latest logic denounces the words of language, which bear the stamp of impressions, as counterfeit coin that would be better replaced by neutral counters. The

world becomes chaos, and synthesis salvation. No difference is said to exist between the totemic animal, the dreams of the spirit-seer,* and the absolute Idea. On their way toward modern science human beings have discarded meaning. The concept is replaced by the formula, the cause by rules and probability. Causality was only the last philosophical concept on which scientific criticism tested its strength, because it alone of the old ideas still stood in the way of such criticism, the latest secular form of the creative principle. To define substance and quality, activity and suffering, being and existence in terms appropriate to the time has been a concern of philosophy since Bacon; but science could manage without such categories. They were left behind as *idola theatri* of the old metaphysics and even in their time were monuments to entities and powers from prehistory. In that distant time life and death had been interpreted and interwoven in myths. The categories by which Western philosophy defined its timeless order of nature marked out the positions which had once been occupied by Ocnus and Persephone, Ariadne and Nereus. The moment of transition is recorded in the pre-Socratic cosmologies. The moist, the undivided, the air and fire which they take to be the primal stuff of nature are early rationalizations precipitated from the mythical vision. Just as the images of generation from water and earth, that had come to the Greeks from the Nile, were converted by these cosmologies into Hylozoic principles and elements, the whole ambiguous profusion of mythical demons was intellectualized to become the pure form of ontological entities. Even the patriarchal gods of Olympus were finally assimilated by the philosophical *logos* as the Platonic Forms. But the Enlightenment discerned the old powers in the Platonic and Aristotelian heritage of metaphysics and suppressed the universal categories' claims to truth as superstition. In the authority of universal concepts the Enlightenment detected a fear of the demons through whose effigies human beings had tried to influence nature in magic rituals. From now on matter was finally to be controlled without the illusion of immanent powers or hidden properties. For enlightenment, anything which does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion. Once the movement is able to develop unhampered by external oppression, there is no holding it back. Its own ideas of human rights then fare no better than the older universals. Any intellectual resistance it encounters merely increases its strength.⁵ The reason is that enlightenment also recognizes itself in the old myths. No matter which myths are invoked

against it, by being used as arguments they are made to acknowledge the very principle of corrosive rationality of which enlightenment stands accused. Enlightenment is totalitarian.

Enlightenment has always regarded anthropomorphism, the projection of subjective properties onto nature, as the basis of myth.⁶ The supernatural, spirits and demons, are taken to be reflections of human beings who allow themselves to be frightened by natural phenomena. According to enlightened thinking, the multiplicity of mythical figures can be reduced to a single common denominator, the subject. Oedipus's answer to the riddle of the Sphinx—"That being is man"—is repeated indiscriminately as enlightenment's stereotyped message, whether in response to a piece of objective meaning, a schematic order, a fear of evil powers, or a hope of salvation. For the Enlightenment, only what can be encompassed by unity has the status of an existent or an event; its ideal is the system from which everything and anything follows. Its rationalist and empiricist versions do not differ on that point. Although the various schools may have interpreted its axioms differently, the structure of unitary science has always been the same. Despite the pluralism of the different fields of research, Bacon's postulate of *una scientia universalis*⁷ is as hostile to anything which cannot be connected as Leibniz's *mathesis universalis* is to discontinuity. The multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter. For Bacon, too, there was a clear logical connection, through degrees of generality, linking the highest principles to propositions based on observation. De Maistre mocks him for harboring this "idolized ladder."⁸ Formal logic was the high school of unification. It offered Enlightenment thinkers a schema for making the world calculable. The mythologizing equation of Forms with numbers in Plato's last writings expresses the longing of all demythologizing: number became enlightenment's canon. The same equations govern bourgeois justice and commodity exchange. "Is not the rule, '*Si inaequalibus aequalia addas, omnia erunt inaequalia*,' [If you add like to unlike you will always end up with unlike] an axiom of justice as well as of mathematics? And is there not a true coincidence between commutative and distributive justice, and arithmetical and geometrical proportion?"⁹ Bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence. It makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities. For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion; modern posi-

tivism consigns it to poetry. Unity remains the watchword from Parmenides to Russell. All gods and qualities must be destroyed.

But the myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were themselves its products. The scientific calculation of events annuls the account of them which thought had once given in myth. Myth sought to report, to name, to tell of origins—but therefore also to narrate, record, explain. This tendency was reinforced by the recording and collecting of myths. From a record, they soon became a teaching. Each ritual contains a representation of how things happen and of the specific process which is to be influenced by magic. In the earliest popular epics this theoretical element of ritual became autonomous. The myths which the tragic dramatists drew on were already marked by the discipline and power which Bacon celebrated as the goal. The local spirits and demons had been replaced by heaven and its hierarchy, the incantatory practices of the magician by the carefully graduated sacrifice and the labor of enslaved men mediated by command. The Olympian deities are no longer directly identical with elements, but signify them. In Homer Zeus controls the daytime sky, Apollo guides the sun; Helios and Eos are already passing over into allegory. The gods detach themselves from substances to become their quintessence. From now on, being is split between *logos*—which, with the advance of philosophy, contracts to a monad, a mere reference point—and the mass of things and creatures in the external world. The single distinction between man's own existence and reality swallows up all others. Without regard for differences, the world is made subject to man. In this the Jewish story of creation and the Olympian religion are at one: “. . . and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”¹⁰ “O Zeus, Father Zeus, yours is the dominion of the heavens; you oversee the works of men, both the wicked and the just, and the unruly animals, you who uphold righteousness.”¹¹ “It is so ordained that one atones at once, another later; but even should one escape the doom threatened by the gods, it will surely come to pass one day, and innocents shall expiate his deed, whether his children or a later generation.”¹² Only those who subject themselves utterly pass muster with the gods. The awakening of the subject is bought with the recognition of power as the principle of all relationships. In face of the unity of such reason the distinction between God and man is reduced to an irrelevance, as

reason has steadfastly indicated since the earliest critique of Homer. In their mastery of nature, the creative God and the ordering mind are alike.

- Man's likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the lordly gaze, in the command.

Myth becomes enlightenment and nature mere objectivity. Human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted. Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their "in-itself" becomes "for him." In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature. Neither it nor the unity of the subject was presupposed by magical incantation. The rites of the shaman were directed at the wind, the rain, the snake outside or the demon inside the sick person, not at materials or specimens. The spirit which practiced magic was not single or identical; it changed with the cult masks which represented the multiplicity of spirits. Magic is bloody untruth, but in it domination is not yet disclaimed by transforming itself into a pure truth underlying the world which it enslaves. The magician imitates demons; to frighten or placate them he makes intimidating or appeasing gestures. Although his task was impersonation he did not claim to be made in the image of the invisible power, as does civilized man, whose modest hunting ground then shrinks to the unified cosmos, in which nothing exists but prey. Only when made in such an image does man attain the identity of the self which cannot be lost in identification with the other but takes possession of itself once and for all as an impenetrable mask. It is the identity of mind and its correlative, the unity of nature, which subdues the abundance of qualities. Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity. Magic implies specific representation. What is done to the spear, the hair, the name of the enemy, is also to befall his person; the sacrificial animal is slain in place of the god. The substitution which takes place in sacrifice marks a step toward discursive logic. Even though the hind which was offered up for the daughter, the lamb for the firstborn, necessarily still had qualities of its own, it already represented the genus. It manifested the arbitrariness of the specimen. But the sanctity of the *hic et nunc*, the uniqueness of the

chosen victim which coincides with its representative status, distinguishes it radically, makes it non-exchangeable even in the exchange. Science puts an end to this. In it there is no specific representation: something which is a sacrificial animal cannot be a god. Representation gives way to universal fungibility. An atom is smashed not as a representative but as a specimen of matter, and the rabbit suffering the torment of the laboratory is seen not as a representative but, mistakenly, as a mere exemplar. Because in functional science the differences are so fluid that everything is submerged in one and the same matter, the scientific object is petrified, whereas the rigid ritual of former times appears supple in its substitution of one thing for another. The world of magic still retained differences whose traces have vanished even in linguistic forms.¹³ The manifold affinities between existing things are supplanted by the single relationship between the subject who confers meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and its accidental bearer. At the magical stage dream and image were not regarded as mere signs of things but were linked to them by resemblance or name. The relationship was not one of intention but of kinship. Magic like science is concerned with ends, but it pursues them through mimesis, not through an increasing distance from the object. It certainly is not founded on the "omnipotence of thought," which the primitive is supposed to impute to himself like the neurotic;¹⁴ there can be no "over-valuation of psychical acts" in relation to reality where thought and reality are not radically distinguished. The "unshakable confidence in the possibility of controlling the world"¹⁵ which Freud anachronistically attributes to magic applies only to the more realistic form of world domination achieved by the greater astuteness of science. The autonomy of thought in relation to objects, as manifested in the reality-adequacy of the Ego, was a prerequisite for the replacement of the localized practices of the medicine man by all-embracing industrial technology.*

As a totality set out in language and laying claim to a truth which suppressed the older mythical faith of popular religion, the solar, patriarchal myth was itself an enlightenment, fully comparable on that level to the philosophical one. But now it paid the price. Mythology itself set in motion the endless process of enlightenment by which, with ineluctable necessity, every definite theoretical view is subjected to the annihilating criticism that it is only a belief, until even the concepts of mind, truth, and, indeed, enlightenment itself have been reduced to animistic magic.

The principle of the fated necessity which caused the downfall of the mythical hero, and finally evolved as the logical conclusion from the oracular utterance, not only predominates, refined to the cogency of formal logic, in every rationalistic system of Western philosophy but also presides over the succession of systems which begins with the hierarchy of the gods and, in a permanent twilight of the idols, hands down a single identical content: wrath against those of insufficient righteousness.* Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth. It seeks to escape the trial of fate and retribution by itself exacting retribution on that trial. In myths, everything that happens must atone for the fact of having happened. It is no different in enlightenment: no sooner has a fact been established than it is rendered insignificant. The doctrine that action equals reaction continued to maintain the power of repetition over existence long after humankind had shed the illusion that, by repetition, it could identify itself with repeated existence and so escape its power. But the more the illusion of magic vanishes, the more implacably repetition, in the guise of regularity, imprisons human beings in the cycle now objectified in the laws of nature, to which they believe they owe their security as free subjects. The principle of immanence, the explanation of every event as repetition, which enlightenment upholds against mythical imagination, is that of myth itself. The arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played out, all the great thoughts have been thought, all possible discoveries can be construed in advance, and human beings are defined by self-preservation through adaptation—this barren wisdom merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects: the sanction of fate which, through retribution, incessantly reinstates what always was. Whatever might be different is made the same. That is the verdict which critically sets the boundaries to possible experience. The identity of everything with everything is bought at the cost that nothing can at the same time be identical to itself. Enlightenment dissolves away the injustice of the old inequality of unmediated mastery, but at the same time perpetuates it in universal mediation, by relating every existing thing to every other. It brings about the situation for which Kierkegaard praised his Protestant ethic and which, in the legend-cycle of Hercules, constitutes one of the primal images of

mythical violence: it amputates the incommensurable. Not merely are qualities dissolved in thought, but human beings are forced into real conformity. The blessing that the market does not ask about birth is paid for in the exchange society by the fact that the possibilities conferred by birth are molded to fit the production of goods that can be bought on the market. Each human being has been endowed with a self of his or her own, different from all others, so that it could all the more surely be made the same. But because that self never quite fitted the mold, enlightenment throughout the liberalistic period has always sympathized with social coercion. The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual and in the scorn poured on the type of society which could make people into individuals. The horde, a term which doubtless* is to be found in the Hitler Youth organization, is not a relapse into the old barbarism but the triumph of repressive *égalité*, the degeneration of the equality of rights into the wrong inflicted by equals. The fake myth of fascism reveals itself as the genuine myth of prehistory, in that the genuine myth beheld retribution while the false one wreaks it blindly on its victims. Any attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion. That has been the trajectory of European civilization. Abstraction, the instrument of enlightenment, stands in the same relationship to its objects as fate, whose concept it eradicates: as liquidation. Under the leveling rule of abstraction, which makes everything in nature repeatable, and of industry, for which abstraction prepared the way, the liberated finally themselves become the "herd" (*Trupp*), which Hegel¹⁶ identified as the outcome of enlightenment.

The distance of subject from object, the presupposition of abstraction, is founded on the distance from things which the ruler attains by means of the ruled. The songs of Homer and the hymns of the *Rig Veda* date from the time of territorial dominion and its strongholds, when a warlike race of overlords imposed itself on the defeated indigenous population.¹⁷ The supreme god among gods came into being with this civil world in which the king, as leader of the arms-bearing nobility, tied the subjugated people* to the land while doctors, soothsayers, artisans, and traders took care of circulation. With the end of nomadism the social order is established on the basis of fixed property. Power and labor diverge. A property owner like Odysseus "controls from a distance a numerous, finely graded personnel of ox herds, shepherds, swineherds, and servants. In

the evening, having looked out from his castle to see the countryside lit up by a thousand fires, he can go to his rest in peace. He knows that his loyal servants are watching to keep away wild animals and to drive away thieves from the enclosures which they are there to protect."¹⁸ The generality of the ideas developed by discursive logic, power in the sphere of the concept, is built on the foundation of power in reality. The superseding of the old diffuse notions of the magical heritage by conceptual unity expresses a condition of life defined by the freeborn citizen and articulated by command. The self which learned about order and subordination through the subjugation of the world soon equated truth in general with classifying thought, without whose fixed distinctions it cannot exist. Along with mimetic magic it tabooed the knowledge which really apprehends the object. Its hatred is directed at the image of the vanquished primeval world and its imaginary happiness. The dark, chthonic gods of the original inhabitants are banished to the hell into which the earth is transformed under the religions of Indra and Zeus, with their worship of sun and light.

But heaven and hell were linked. The name Zeus was applied both to a god of the underworld and to a god of light in cults which did not exclude each other,¹⁹ and the Olympian gods maintained all kinds of commerce with the chthonic deities. In the same way, the good and evil powers, the holy and the unholy, were not unambiguously distinguished. They were bound together like genesis and decline, life and death, summer and winter. The murky, undivided entity worshipped as the principle of *mana* at the earliest known stages of humanity lived on in the bright world of the Greek religion. Primal and undifferentiated, it is everything unknown and alien; it is that which transcends the bounds of experience, the part of things which is more than their immediately perceived existence. What the primitive experiences as supernatural is not a spiritual substance in contradistinction to the material world but the complex concatenation of nature in contrast to its individual link.* The cry of terror called forth by the unfamiliar becomes its name. It fixes the transcendence of the unknown in relation to the known, permanently linking horror to holiness. The doubling of nature into appearance and essence, effect and force, made possible by myth no less than by science, springs from human fear, the expression of which becomes its explanation. This does not mean that the soul is transposed into nature, as psychologism would have us believe; *mana*, the moving spirit, is not a projection but the echo of the real pre-

ponderance of nature in the weak psyches of primitive people. The split between animate and inanimate, the assigning of demons and deities to certain specific places, arises from this preanimism. Even the division of subject and object is prefigured in it. If the tree is addressed no longer as simply a tree but as evidence of something else, a location of *mana*, language expresses the contradiction that it is at the same time itself and something other than itself, identical and not identical.²⁰ Through the deity speech is transformed from tautology into language. The concept, usually defined as the unity of the features of what it subsumes, was rather, from the first, a product of dialectical thinking, in which each thing is what it is only by becoming what it is not. This was the primal form of the objectifying definition, in which concept and thing became separate, the same definition which was already far advanced in the Homeric epic and trips over its own excesses in modern positive science. But this dialectic remains powerless as long as it emerges from the cry of terror, which is the doubling, the mere tautology of terror itself. The gods cannot take away fear from human beings, the petrified cries of whom they bear as their names. Humans believe themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown. This has determined the path of demythologization, of enlightenment, which equates the living with the nonliving as myth had equated the nonliving with the living. Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized. The pure immanence of positivism, its ultimate product, is nothing other than a form of universal taboo. Nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the "outside" is the real source of fear. If the revenge of primitive people for a murder committed on a member of their family could sometimes be assuaged by admitting the murderer into that family,²¹ both the murder and its remedy mean the absorption of alien blood into one's own, the establishment of immanence. The mythical dualism does not lead outside the circle of existence. The world controlled by *mana*, and even the worlds of Indian and Greek myth, are issueless and eternally the same. All birth is paid for with death, all fortune with misfortune. While men and gods may attempt in their short span to assess their fates by a measure other than blind destiny, existence triumphs over them in the end. Even their justice, wrested from calamity, bears its features; it corresponds to the way in which human beings, primitives no less than Greeks and barbarians, looked upon their world from within a society of oppression and poverty. Hence, for both mythical and enlight-

ened justice, guilt and atonement, happiness and misfortune, are seen as the two sides of an equation. Justice gives way to law. The shaman wards off a danger with its likeness. Equivalence is his instrument; and equivalence regulates punishment and reward within civilization. The imagery of myths, too, can be traced back without exception to natural conditions. Just as the constellation Gemini, like all the other symbols of duality, refers to the inescapable cycle of nature; just as this cycle itself has its primeval sign in the symbol of the egg from which those later symbols are sprung, the Scales (Libra) held by Zeus, which symbolize the justice of the entire patriarchal world, point back to mere nature. The step from chaos to civilization, in which natural conditions exert their power no longer directly but through the consciousness of human beings, changed nothing in the principle of equivalence. Indeed, human beings atoned for this very step by worshipping that to which previously, like all other creatures, they had been merely subjected. Earlier, fetishes had been subject to the law of equivalence. Now equivalence itself becomes a fetish. The blindfold over the eyes of Justitia means not only that justice brooks no interference but that it does not originate in freedom.

The teachings of the priests were symbolic in the sense that in them sign and image coincided. As the hieroglyphs attest, the word originally also had a pictorial function. This function was transferred to myths. They, like magic rites, refer to the repetitive cycle of nature. Nature as self-repetition is the core of the symbolic: an entity or a process which is conceived as eternal because it is reenacted again and again in the guise of the symbol. Inexhaustibility, endless renewal, and the permanence of what they signify are not only attributes of all symbols but their true content. Contrary to the Jewish *Genesis*, the representations of creation in which the world emerges from the primal mother, the cow or the egg, are symbolic. The scorn of the ancients for their all-too-human gods left their core untouched. The essence of the gods is not exhausted by individuality. They still had about them a quality of *mana*; they embodied nature as a universal power. With their preanimistic traits they intrude into the enlightenment. Beneath the modest veil of the Olympian *chronique scandaleuse* the doctrine of the commingling and colliding of elements had evolved; establishing itself at once as science, it turned the myths into figments of fantasy. With the clean separation between science and poetry

the division of labor which science had helped to establish was extended to language. For science the word is first of all a sign; it is then distributed among the various arts as sound, image, or word proper, but its unity can never be restored by the addition of these arts, by synaesthesia or total art.* As sign, language must resign itself to being calculation and, to know nature, must renounce the claim to resemble it. As image it must resign itself to being a likeness and, to be entirely nature, must renounce the claim to know it. With advancing enlightenment, only authentic works of art have been able to avoid the mere imitation of what already is. The prevailing antithesis between art and science, which rends the two apart as areas of culture in order to make them jointly manageable as areas of culture, finally causes them, through their internal tendencies as exact opposites, to converge. Science, in its neopositivist interpretation, becomes aestheticism, a system of isolated signs devoid of any intention transcending the system; it becomes the game which mathematicians have long since proudly declared their activity to be. Meanwhile, art as integral replication has pledged itself to positivist science, even in its specific techniques. It becomes, indeed, the world over again, an ideological doubling, a compliant reproduction. The separation of sign and image is inescapable. But if, with heedless complacency, it is hypostatized over again, then each of the isolated principles tends toward the destruction of truth.

Philosophy has perceived the chasm opened by this separation as the relationship between intuition and concept and repeatedly but vainly has attempted to close it; indeed, philosophy is defined by that attempt. Usually, however, it has sided with the tendency to which it owes its name. Plato banished poetry with the same severity with which positivism dismissed the doctrine of Forms. Homer, Plato argued, had procured neither public nor private reforms through his much-vaunted art, had neither won a war nor made an invention. We did not know, he said, of any numerous followers who had honored or loved him. Art had to demonstrate its usefulness.²² The making of images was proscribed by Plato as it was by the Jews. Both reason and religion outlaw the principle of magic. Even in its resigned detachment from existence, as art, it remains dishonorable; those who practice it become vagrants, latter-day nomads, who find no domicile among the settled. Nature is no longer to be influenced by likeness but mastered through work. Art has in common with magic the postulation of a special, self-contained sphere removed from the context of profane exis-

tence. Within it special laws prevail. Just as the sorcerer begins the ceremony by marking out from all its surroundings the place in which the sacred forces are to come into play, each work of art is closed off from reality by its own circumference. The very renunciation of external effects by which art is distinguished from magical sympathy binds art only more deeply to the heritage of magic. This renunciation places the pure image in opposition to corporeal existence, the elements of which the image sublates within itself. It is in the nature of the work of art, of aesthetic illusion, to be what was experienced as a new and terrible event in the magic of primitives: the appearance of the whole in the particular. The work of art constantly reenacts the duplication by which the thing appeared as something spiritual, a manifestation of *mana*. That constitutes its aura. As an expression of totality art claims the dignity of the absolute. This has occasionally led philosophy to rank it higher than conceptual knowledge. According to Schelling, art begins where knowledge leaves humans in the lurch. For him art is "the model of science, and wherever art is, there science must go."²³ According to his theory the separation of image and sign "is entirely abolished by each single representation of art."²⁴ The bourgeois world was rarely amenable to such confidence in art. Where it restricted knowledge, it generally did so to make room for faith, not art. It was through faith that the militant religiosity, of the modern age, of Torquemada, Luther, and Mohammed, sought to reconcile spirit and existence. But faith is a privative concept: it is abolished as faith if it does not continuously assert either its opposition to knowledge or its agreement with it. In being dependent on the limits set to knowledge, it is itself limited. The attempt made by faith under Protestantism to locate the principle of truth, which transcends faith and without which faith cannot exist, directly in the word itself, as in primeval times, and to restore the symbolic power of the word, was paid for by obedience to the word, but not in its sacred form. Because faith is unavoidably tied to knowledge as its friend or its foe, faith perpetuates the split in the struggle to overcome knowledge: its fanaticism is the mark of its untruth, the objective admission that anyone who *only* believes for that reason no longer believes. Bad conscience is second nature to it. The secret awareness of this necessary, inherent flaw, the immanent contradiction that lies in making a profession of reconciliation, is the reason why honesty in believers has always been a sensitive and dangerous affair. The horrors of fire and sword, of counter-

Reformation and Reformation, were perpetrated not as an exaggeration but as a realization of the principle of faith. Faith repeatedly shows itself of the same stamp as the world history it would like to command; indeed, in the modern period it has become that history's preferred means, its special ruse. Not only is the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century inexorable, as Hegel confirmed; so, too, as none knew better than he, is the movement of thought itself. The lowest insight, like the highest, contains the knowledge of its distance from the truth, which makes the apologist a liar. The paradox of faith degenerates finally into fraud, the myth of the twentieth century* and faith's irrationality into rational organization in the hands of the utterly enlightened as they steer society toward barbarism.

When language first entered history its masters were already priests and sorcerers. Anyone who affronted the symbols fell prey in the name of the unearthly powers to the earthly ones, represented by these appointed organs of society. What preceded that stage is shrouded in darkness. Wherever it is found in ethnology, the terror from which *mana* was born was already sanctioned, at least by the tribal elders. Unidentical, fluid *mana* was solidified, violently materialized by men. Soon the sorcerers had populated every place with its emanations and coordinated the multiplicity of sacred realms with that of sacred rites. With the spirit-world and its peculiarities they extended their esoteric knowledge and their power. The sacred essence was transferred to the sorcerers who managed it. In the first stages of nomadism the members of the tribe still played an independent part in influencing the course of nature. The men tracked prey while the women performed tasks which did not require rigid commands. How much violence preceded the habituation to even so simple an order cannot be known. In that order the world was already divided into zones of power and of the profane. The course of natural events as an emanation of *mana* had already been elevated to a norm demanding submission. But if the nomadic savage, despite his subjection, could still participate in the magic which defined the limits of that world, and could disguise himself as his quarry in order to stalk it, in later periods the intercourse with spirits and the subjection were assigned to different classes of humanity: power to one side, obedience to the other. The recurring, never-changing natural processes were drummed into the subjects, either by other tribes or by their own cliques, as the rhythm of work, to the beat of the club and the rod, which reechoed in every barbaric drum, in each monotonous rit-

ual. The symbols take on the expression of the fetish. The repetition of nature which they signify always manifests itself in later times as the permanence of social compulsion, which the symbols represent. The dread objectified in the fixed image becomes a sign of the consolidated power of the privileged.* But general concepts continued to symbolize that power even when they had shed all pictorial traits. Even the deductive form of science mirrors hierarchy and compulsion. Just as the first categories represented the organized tribe and its power over the individual, the entire logical order, with its chains of inference and dependence, the superordination and coordination of concepts, is founded on the corresponding conditions in social reality, that is, on the division of labor.²⁵ Of course, this social character of intellectual forms is not, as Durkheim argues, an expression of social solidarity but evidence of the impenetrable unity of society and power. Power confers increased cohesion and strength on the social whole in which it is established. The division of labor, through which power manifests itself socially, serves the self-preservation of the dominated whole. But this necessarily turns the whole, as a whole, and the operation of its immanent reason, into a means of enforcing the particular interest. Power confronts the individual as the universal, as the reason which informs reality. The power of all the members of society, to whom as individuals no other way is open, is constantly summated, through the division of labor imposed on them, in the realization of the whole, whose rationality is thereby multiplied over again. What is done to all by the few always takes the form of the subduing of individuals by the many: the oppression of society always bears the features of oppression by a collective. It is this unity of collectivity and power, and not the immediate social universal, solidarity, which is precipitated in intellectual forms. Through their claim to universal validity, the philosophical concepts with which Plato and Aristotle represented the world elevated the conditions which those concepts justified to the status of true reality. They originated, as Vico put it,²⁶ in the marketplace of Athens; they reflected with the same fidelity the laws of physics, the equality of freeborn citizens, and the inferiority of women, children, and slaves. Language itself endowed what it expressed, the conditions of domination, with the universality it had acquired as the means of intercourse in civil society. The metaphysical emphasis, the sanction by ideas and norms, was no more than a hypostatization of the rigidity and exclusivity which concepts have necessarily

taken on wherever language has consolidated the community of the rulers for the enforcement of commands. As a means of reinforcing the social power of language, ideas became more superfluous the more that power increased, and the language of science put an end to them altogether. Conscious justification lacked the suggestive power which springs from dread of the fetish. The unity of collectivity and power now revealed itself in the generality which faulty content necessarily takes on in language, whether metaphysical or scientific. The metaphysical apologia at least betrayed the injustice of the established order through the incongruence of concept and reality. The impartiality of scientific language deprived what was powerless of the strength to make itself heard and merely provided the existing order with a neutral sign for itself. Such neutrality is more metaphysical than metaphysics. Enlightenment finally devoured not only symbols but also their successors, universal concepts, and left nothing of metaphysics behind except the abstract fear of the collective from which it had sprung. Concepts in face of enlightenment are like those living on unearned income in face of industrial trusts:* none can feel secure. If logical positivism still allowed some latitude for probability, ethnological positivism already equates probability with essence. "Our vague ideas of chance and quintessence are pale relics of that far richer notion,"²⁷ that is, of the magical substance.

Enlightenment as a nominalist tendency stops short before the *nomen*, the non-extensive, restricted concept, the proper name. Although²⁸ it cannot be established with certainty whether proper names were originally generic names, as some maintain, the former have not yet shared the fate of the latter. The substantial ego repudiated by Hume and Mach is not the same thing as the name. In the Jewish religion, in which the idea of the patriarchy is heightened to the point of annihilating myth, the link between name and essence is still acknowledged in the prohibition on uttering the name of God. The disenchanted world of Judaism propitiates magic by negating it in the idea of God. The Jewish religion brooks no word which might bring solace to the despair of all mortality. It places all hope in the prohibition on invoking falsity as God, the finite as the infinite, the lie as truth. The pledge of salvation lies in the rejection of any faith which claims to depict it, knowledge in the denunciation of illusion. Negation, however, is not abstract. The indiscriminate denial of anything positive, the stereotyped formula of nothingness as used by Buddhism,

ignores the ban on calling the absolute by its name no less than its opposite, pantheism, or the latter's caricature, bourgeois skepticism. Explanations of the world as nothingness or as the entire cosmos are mythologies, and the guaranteed paths to redemption sublimated magical practices. The self-satisfaction of knowing in advance, and the transfiguration of negativity as redemption, are untrue forms of the resistance to deception. The right of the image is rescued in the faithful observance of its prohibition. Such observance, "determinate negation,"²⁹ is not exempted from the enticements of intuition by the sovereignty of the abstract concept, as is skepticism, for which falsehood and truth are equally void. Unlike rigorism, determinate negation does not simply reject imperfect representations of the absolute, idols, by confronting them with the idea they are unable to match. Rather, dialectic discloses each image as script. It teaches us to read from its features the admission of falseness which cancels its power and hands it over to truth. Language thereby becomes more than a mere system of signs. With the concept of determinate negation Hegel gave prominence to an element which distinguishes enlightenment from the positivist decay to which he consigned it. However, by finally postulating the known result of the whole process of negation, totality in the system and in history, as the absolute, he violated the prohibition and himself succumbed to mythology.

That fate befell not only his philosophy, as the apotheosis of advancing thought, but enlightenment itself, in the form of the sober matter-of-factness by which it purported to distinguish itself from Hegel and from metaphysics in general. For enlightenment is totalitarian as only a system can be. Its untruth does not lie in the analytical method, the reduction to elements, the decomposition through reflection, as its Romantic enemies had maintained from the first, but in its assumption that the trial is prejudged. When in mathematics the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value* has been assigned. Nature, before and after quantum theory, is what can be registered mathematically; even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems. In the preemptive identification of the thoroughly mathematized world with truth, enlightenment believes itself safe from the return of the mythical. It equates thought with mathematics. The latter is thereby cut loose, as it were, turned into an absolute authority. "An infinite world, in this case a

world of idealities, is conceived as one in which objects are not accessible individually to our cognition in an imperfect and accidental way but are attained by a rational, systematically unified method which finally apprehends each object—in an infinite progression—fully as its own in-itself. . . . In Galileo's mathematization of nature, *nature itself* is idealized on the model of the new mathematics. In modern terms, it becomes a mathematical manifold."³⁰ Thought is reified as an autonomous, automatic process, aping the machine it has itself produced, so that it can finally be replaced by the machine. Enlightenment³¹ pushed aside the classical demand to "think thinking"—Fichte's philosophy is its radical fulfillment—because it distracted philosophers from the command to control praxis, which Fichte himself had wanted to enforce. Mathematical procedure became a kind of ritual of thought. Despite its axiomatic self-limitation, it installed itself as necessary and objective: mathematics made thought into a thing—a tool, to use its own term. Through this mimesis, however, in which thought makes the world resemble itself, the actual has become so much the only concern that even the denial of God falls under the same judgment as metaphysics. For positivism, which has assumed the judicial office of enlightened reason, to speculate about intelligible worlds is no longer merely forbidden but senseless prattle. Positivism—fortunately for it—does not need to be atheistic, since objectified thought cannot even pose the question of the existence of God. The positivist sensor turns a blind eye to official worship, as a special, knowledge-free zone of social activity, just as willingly as to art—but never to denial, even when it has a claim to be knowledge. For the scientific temper, any deviation of thought from the business of manipulating the actual, any stepping outside the jurisdiction of existence, is no less senseless and self-destructive than it would be for the magician to step outside the magic circle drawn for his incantation; and in both cases violation of the taboo carries a heavy price for the offender. The mastery of nature draws the circle in which the critique of pure reason holds thought spellbound. Kant combined the doctrine of thought's restlessly toilsome progress toward infinity with insistence on its insufficiency and eternal limitation. The wisdom he imparted is oracular: There is no being in the world that knowledge cannot penetrate, but what can be penetrated by knowledge is not being. Philosophical judgment, according to Kant, aims at the new yet recognizes nothing new, since it always merely repeats what reason has placed into

objects beforehand. However, this thought, protected within the departments of science from the dreams of a spirit-seer,* has to pay the price: world domination over nature turns against the thinking subject itself; nothing is left of it except that ever-unchanging "I think," which must accompany all my conceptions. Both subject and object are nullified. The abstract self, which alone confers the legal right to record and systematize, is confronted by nothing but abstract material, which has no other property than to be the substrate of that right. The equation of mind and world is finally resolved, but only in the sense that both sides cancel out. The reduction of thought to a mathematical apparatus condemns the world to be its own measure. What appears as the triumph of subjectivity, the subjection of all existing things to logical formalism, is bought-with the obedient subordination of reason to what is immediately at hand. To grasp existing things as such, not merely to note their abstract spatial-temporal relationships, by which they can then be seized, but, on the contrary, to think of them as surface, as mediated conceptual moments which are only fulfilled by revealing their social, historical, and human meaning—this whole aspiration of knowledge is abandoned. Knowledge does not consist in mere perception, classification, and calculation but precisely in the determining negation of whatever is directly at hand. Instead of such negation, mathematical formalism, whose medium, number, is the most abstract form of the immediate, arrests thought at mere immediacy. The actual is validated, knowledge confines itself to repeating it, thought makes itself mere tautology. The more completely the machinery of thought subjugates existence, the more blindly it is satisfied with reproducing it. Enlightenment thereby regresses to the mythology it has never been able to escape. For mythology had reflected in its forms the essence of the existing order—cyclical motion, fate, domination of the world as truth—and had renounced hope. In the terseness of the mythical image, as in the clarity of the scientific formula, the eternity of the actual is confirmed and mere existence is pronounced as the meaning it obstructs. The world as a gigantic analytical judgment, the only surviving dream of science, is of the same kind as the cosmic myth which linked the alternation of spring and autumn to the abduction of Persephone. The uniqueness of the mythical event, which was intended to legitimize the factual one, is a deception. Originally, the rape of the goddess was directly equated with the dying of nature. It was repeated each autumn, and even the repetition

was not a succession of separate events, but the same one each time. With the consolidation of temporal consciousness the process was fixed as a unique event in the past, and ritual assuagement of the terror of death in each new cycle of seasons was sought in the recourse to the distant past. But such separation is powerless. The postulation of the single past event endows the cycle with a quality of inevitability, and the terror radiating from the ancient event spreads over the whole process as its mere repetition. The subsumption of the actual, whether under mythical prehistory or under mathematical formalism, the symbolic relating of the present to the mythical event in the rite or to the abstract category in science, makes the new appear as something predetermined which therefore is really the old. It is not existence that is without hope, but knowledge which appropriates and perpetuates existence as a schema in the pictorial or mathematical symbol.

In the enlightened world, mythology has permeated the sphere of the profane. Existence, thoroughly cleansed of demons and their conceptual descendants, takes on, in its gleaming naturalness, the numinous character which former ages attributed to demons. Justified in the guise of brutal facts as something eternally immune to intervention, the social injustice from which those facts arise is as sacrosanct today as the medicine man once was under the protection of his gods. Not only is domination paid for with the estrangement of human beings from the dominated objects, but the relationships of human beings, including the relationship of individuals to themselves, have themselves been bewitched by the objectification of mind. Individuals shrink to the nodal points of conventional reactions and the modes of operation objectively expected of them. Animism had endowed things with souls; industrialism makes souls into things.* On its own account, even in advance of total planning, the economic apparatus endows commodities with the values which decide the behavior of people. Since, with the ending of free exchange, commodities have forfeited all economic qualities except their fetish character, this character has spread like a cataract across the life of society in all its aspects. The countless agencies of mass production and its culture* impress standardized behavior on the individual as the only natural, decent, and rational one. Individuals define themselves now only as things, statistical elements, successes or failures. Their criterion is self-preservation, successful or unsuccessful adaptation to the objectivity of their function and the

schemata assigned to it. Everything which is different, from the idea to criminality, is exposed to the force of the collective, which keeps watch from the classroom to the trade union. Yet even the threatening collective is merely a part of the deceptive surface, beneath which are concealed the powers which manipulate the collective as an agent of violence. Its brutality, which keeps the individual up to the mark, no more represents the true quality of people than value* represents that of commodities. The demonically distorted form which things and human beings have taken on in the clear light of unprejudiced knowledge points back to domination, to the principle which already imparted the qualities of *mana* to spirits and deities and trapped the human gaze in the fakery of sorcerers and medicine men. The fatalism by which incomprehensible death was sanctioned in primeval times has now passed over into utterly comprehensible life. The noonday panic fear in which nature suddenly appeared to humans as an all-encompassing power has found its counterpart in the panic which is ready to break out at any moment today: human beings expect the world, which is without issue, to be set ablaze by a universal power which they themselves are and over which they are powerless.

Enlightenment's mythic terror springs from a horror of myth. It detects myth not only in semantically unclarified concepts and words, as linguistic criticism imagines, but in any human utterance which has no place in the functional context of self-preservation. Spinoza's proposition: "the endeavor of preserving oneself is the first and only basis of virtue,"³² contains the true maxim of all Western civilization, in which the religious and philosophical differences of the bourgeoisie are laid to rest. The self which, after the methodical extirpation of all natural traces as mythological, was no longer supposed to be either a body or blood or a soul or even a natural ego but was sublimated into a transcendental or logical subject, formed the reference point of reason, the legislating authority of action. In the judgment of enlightenment as of Protestantism, those who entrust themselves directly to life, without any rational reference to self-preservation, revert to the realm of prehistory. Impulse as such, according to this view, is as mythical as superstition, and worship of any God not postulated by the self, as aberrant as drunkenness. For both—worship and self-immersion in immediate natural existence—progress holds the same fate in store. It has anathematized the self-forgetfulness both of thought and of

pleasure. In the bourgeois economy the social work of each individual is mediated by the principle of the self; for some this labor is supposed to yield increased capital, for others the strength for extra work. But the more heavily the process of self-preservation is based on the bourgeois division of labor, the more it enforces the self-alienation of individuals, who must mold themselves to the technical apparatus body and soul. Enlightened thinking has an answer for this, too: finally, the transcendental subject of knowledge, as the last reminder of subjectivity, is itself seemingly abolished and replaced by the operations of the automatic mechanisms of order, which therefore run all the more smoothly. Subjectivity has volatilized itself into the logic of supposedly optional rules, to gain more absolute control. Positivism, which finally did not shrink from laying hands on the idlest fancy of all, thought itself, eliminated the last intervening agency between individual action and the social norm. The technical process, to which the subject has been reified after the eradication of that process from consciousness, is as free from the ambiguous meanings of mythical thought as from meaning altogether, since reason itself has become merely an aid to the all-encompassing economic apparatus.* Reason serves as a universal tool for the fabrication of all other tools, rigidly purpose-directed and as calamitous as the precisely calculated operations of material production, the results of which for human beings escape all calculation. Reason's old ambition to be purely an instrument of purposes has finally been fulfilled. The exclusivity of logical laws stems from this obdurate adherence to function and ultimately from the compulsive character of self-preservation. The latter is constantly magnified into the choice between survival and doom, a choice which is reflected even in the principle that, of two contradictory propositions, only one can be true and the other false. The formalism of this principle and the entire logic established around it stem from the opacity and entanglement of interests in a society in which the maintenance of forms and the preservation of individuals only fortuitously coincide. The expulsion of thought from logic ratifies in the lecture hall the reification of human beings in factory and office. In this way the taboo encroaches on the power imposing it, enlightenment on mind, which it itself is. But nature as true self-preservation is thereby unleashed, in the individual as in the collective fate of crisis and war, by the process which promised to extirpate it. If unitary knowledge* is the only norm which theory has left, praxis must be handed over to the

unfettered operations of world history. The self, entirely encompassed by civilization, is dissolved in an element composed of the very inhumanity which civilization has sought from the first to escape. The oldest fear, that of losing one's own name, is being fulfilled. For civilization, purely natural existence, both animal and vegetative, was the absolute danger. Mimetic, mythical, and metaphysical forms of behavior were successively regarded as stages of world history which had been left behind, and the idea of reverting to them held the terror that the self would be changed back into the mere nature from which it had extricated itself with unspeakable exertions and which for that reason filled it with unspeakable dread. Over the millennia the living memory of prehistory, of its nomadic period and even more of the truly prepatriarchal stages, has been expunged from human consciousness with the most terrible punishments. The enlightened spirit replaced fire and the wheel by the stigma it attached to all irrationality, which led to perdition. Its hedonism was moderate, extremes being no less repugnant to enlightenment than to Aristotle. The bourgeois ideal of naturalness is based not on amorphous nature but on the virtue of the middle way. For this ideal, promiscuity and asceticism, superfluity and hunger, although opposites, are directly identical as powers of disintegration. By subordinating life in its entirety to the requirements of its preservation, the controlling minority guarantees, with its own security, the continuation of the whole. From Homer to modernity the ruling spirit has sought to steer between the Scylla of relapse into simple reproduction and the Charybdis of unfettered fulfillment; from the first it has mistrusted any guiding star other than the lesser evil. The German neopagans and administrators of war fever want to reinstate pleasure.* But since, under the work-pressure of the millennium now ending, pleasure has learned to hate itself, in its totalitarian emancipation it remains mean and mutilated through self-contempt.* It is still in the grip of the self-preservation inculcated in it by the reason which has now been deposed. At the turning points of Western civilization, whenever new peoples and classes have more heavily repressed myth, from the beginnings of the Olympian religion to the Renaissance, the Reformation, and bourgeois atheism, the fear of unsubdued, threatening nature—a fear resulting from nature's very materialization and objectification—has been belittled as animist superstition, and the control of internal and external nature has been made the absolute purpose of life. Now that self-preservation has been finally automated, reason is dismissed

by those who, as controllers of production, have taken over its inheritance and fear it in the disinherited. The essence of enlightenment is the choice between alternatives, and the inescapability of this choice is that of power. Human beings have always had to choose between their subjugation to nature and its subjugation to the self. With the spread of the bourgeois commodity economy the dark horizon of myth is illuminated by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose icy rays the seeds of the new barbarism are germinating. Under the compulsion of power, human labor has always led away from myth and, under power, has always fallen back under its spell.

The intertwinement of myth, power, and labor is preserved in one of the tales of Homer. Book XII of the *Odyssey* tells how Odysseus sailed past the Sirens. Their allurements are that of losing oneself in the past. But the hero exposed to it has come of age in suffering. In the multitude of mortal dangers which he has had to endure, the unity of his own life, the identity of the person, have been hardened. The realms of time have been separated for him like water, earth, and air. The tide of what has been has receded from the rock of the present, and the future lies veiled in cloud on the horizon. What Odysseus has left behind him has passed into the world of shades: so close is the self to the primeval myth from whose embrace it has wrested itself that its own lived past becomes a mythical prehistory. It seeks to combat this by a fixed order of time. The tripartite division is intended to liberate the present moment from the power of the past by banishing the latter beyond the absolute boundary of the irrecoverable and placing it, as usable knowledge, in the service of the present. The urge to rescue the past as something living, instead of using it as the material of progress, has been satisfied only in art, in which even history, as a representation of past life, is included. As long as art does not insist on being treated as knowledge, and thus exclude itself from praxis, it is tolerated by social praxis in the same way as pleasure. But the Sirens' song has not yet been deprived of power as art. They have knowledge "of all that has ever happened on this fruitful earth"³³ and especially of what has befallen Odysseus himself: "For we know all that the Argives and the Trojans suffered on the broad plain of Troy by the will of the gods."³⁴ By directly invoking the recent past, and with the irresistible promise of pleasure which their song contains, the Sirens threaten the patriarchal order, which gives each person back their life only in exchange for their full measure of

time. When only unfailing presence of mind wrests survival from nature, anyone who follows the Sirens' phantasmagoria is lost. If the Sirens know everything that has happened, they demand the future as its price, and their promise of a happy homecoming is the deception by which the past entraps a humanity filled with longing. Odysseus has been warned by Circe, the divinity of regression to animal form, whom he has withstood and who therefore gives him the strength to withstand other powers of dissolution. But the lure of the Sirens remains overpowering. No one who hears their song can escape. Humanity had to inflict terrible injuries on itself before the self—the identical, purpose-directed, masculine character of human beings—was created, and something of this process is repeated in every childhood. The effort to hold itself together attends the ego at all its stages, and the temptation to be rid of the ego has always gone hand-in-hand with the blind determination to preserve it. Narcotic intoxication, in which the euphoric suspension of the self is expiated by deathlike sleep, is one of the oldest social transactions mediating between self-preservation and self-annihilation, an attempt by the self to survive itself. The fear of losing the self, and suspending with it the boundary between oneself and other life, the aversion to death and destruction, is twinned with a promise of joy which has threatened civilization at every moment. The way of civilization has been that of obedience and work, over which fulfillment shines everlastingly as mere illusion, as beauty deprived of power. Odysseus's idea, equally inimical to his death and to his happiness, shows awareness of this. He knows only two possibilities of escape. One he prescribes to his comrades. He plugs their ears with wax and orders them to row with all their might. Anyone who wishes to survive must not listen to the temptation of the irrecoverable, and is unable to listen only if he is unable to hear. Society has always made sure that this was the case. Workers must look ahead with alert concentration and ignore anything which lies to one side. The urge toward distraction must be grimly sublimated in redoubled exertions. Thus the workers are made practical. The other possibility Odysseus chooses for himself, the landowner, who has others to work for him. He listens, but does so while bound helplessly to the mast, and the stronger the allurements grow the more tightly he has himself bound, just as later the bourgeois denied themselves happiness the closer it drew to them with the increase in their own power. What he hears has no consequences for him; he can signal to his men to untie him only by

movements of his head, but it is too late. His comrades, who themselves cannot hear, know only of the danger of the song, not of its beauty, and leave him tied to the mast to save both him and themselves. They reproduce the life of the oppressor as a part of their own, while he cannot step outside his social role. The bonds by which he has irrevocably fettered himself to praxis at the same time keep the Sirens at a distance from praxis: their lure is neutralized as a mere object of contemplation, as art. The fettered man listens to a concert, as immobilized as audiences later, and his enthusiastic call for liberation goes unheard as applause. In this way the enjoyment of art and manual work diverge as the primeval world is left behind. The epic already contains the correct theory. Between the cultural heritage and enforced work there is a precise correlation, and both are founded on the inescapable compulsion toward the social control of nature.

Measures like those taken on Odysseus's ship in face of the Sirens are a prescient allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment. Just as the capacity to be represented is the measure of power, the mightiest person being the one who can be represented in the most functions, so it is also the vehicle of both progress and regression. Under the given conditions, exclusion from work means mutilation, not only for the unemployed but also for people at the opposite social pole. Those at the top experience the existence with which they no longer need to concern themselves as a mere substrate, and are wholly ossified as the self which issues commands. Primitive man experienced the natural thing only as the fugitive object of desire, "but the lord, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it."³⁵ Odysseus is represented in the sphere of work. Just as he cannot give way to the lure of self-abandonment, as owner he also forfeits participation in work and finally even control over it, while his companions, despite their closeness to things, cannot enjoy their work because it is performed under compulsion, in despair, with their senses forcibly stopped. The servant is subjugated in body and soul, the master regresses. No system of domination has so far been able to escape this price, and the circularity of history in its progress is explained in part by this debilitation, which is the concomitant of power. Humanity, whose skills and knowledge become differentiated with the division of labor, is

thereby forced back to more primitive anthropological stages, since, with the technical facilitation of existence, the continuance of domination demands the fixation of instincts by greater repression. Fantasy withers. The calamity is not that individuals have fallen behind society or its material production. Where the development of the machine has become that of the machinery of control, so that technical and social tendencies, always intertwined, converge in the total encompassing of human beings, those who have lagged behind represent not only untruth. Adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress, to be its own antithesis. The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression.

This regression is not confined to the experience of the sensuous world, an experience tied to physical proximity, but also affects the autocratic intellect, which detaches itself from sensuous experience in order to subjugate it. The standardization of the intellectual function through which the mastery of the senses is accomplished, the acquiescence of thought to the production of unanimity, implies an impoverishment of thought no less than of experience; the separation of the two realms leaves both damaged. A consequence of the restriction of thought to organization and administration, rehearsed by the those in charge from artful (Odysseus to artless chairmen of the board, is the stupidity which afflicts the great as soon as they have to perform tasks other than the manipulation of the small. Mind becomes in reality the instrument of power and self-mastery for which bourgeois philosophy has always mistaken it. The deafness which has continued to afflict the submissive proletarians since the myth is matched by the immobility of those in command. The over-ripeness of society lives on the immaturity of the ruled. The more complex and sensitive the social, economic, and scientific mechanism, to the operation of which the system of production has long since attuned the body, the more impoverished are the experiences of which the body is capable. The elimination of qualities, their conversion into functions, is transferred by rationalized modes of work to the human capacity for experience, which tends to revert to that of amphibians. The regression of the masses today lies in their inability to hear with their own ears what has not already been heard, to touch with their hands what has not previously been grasped; it is the new form of blindness which supersedes that of van-

quished myth. Through the mediation of the total society, which encompasses all relationships and impulses, human beings are being turned back into precisely what the developmental law of society, the principle of the self, had opposed: mere examples of the species, identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity. The rowers, unable to speak to one another, are all harnessed to the same rhythms, like modern workers in factories, cinemas, and the collective. It is the concrete conditions of work in society* which enforce conformism—not the conscious influences which additionally render the oppressed stupid and deflect them from the truth. The powerlessness of the workers is not merely a ruse of the rulers but the logical consequence of industrial society, into which the efforts to escape it have finally transformed the ancient concept of fate.

This logical necessity, however, is not conclusive. It remains tied to domination, as both its reflection and its tool. Its truth, therefore, is no less questionable than its evidence is inescapable. Thought, however, has always been equal to the task of concretely demonstrating its own equivocal nature. It is the servant which the master cannot control at will. Domination, in becoming reified as law and organization, first when humans formed settlements and later in the commodity economy, has had to limit itself. The instrument is becoming autonomous: independently of the will of the rulers,* the mediating agency of mind moderates the immediacy of economic injustice.* The instruments of power—language, weapons, and finally machines—which are intended to hold everyone in their grasp, must in their turn be grasped by everyone. In this way, the moment of rationality in domination also asserts itself as something different from it. The thing-like quality of the means, which makes the means universally available, its “objective validity” for everyone, itself implies a criticism of the domination from which thought has arisen as its means. On the way from mythology to logistics, thought has lost the element of reflection on itself, and machinery mutilates people today, even if it also feeds them. In the form of machines, however, alienated reason is moving toward a society which reconciles thought, in its solidification as an apparatus both material and intellectual, with a liberated living element, and relates it to society itself as its true subject. The particularist origin and the universal perspective of thought have always been inseparable. Today, with the transformation of the world into industry, the per-

spective of the universal, the social realization of thought, is so fully open to view that thought is repudiated by the rulers themselves as mere ideology. It is a telltale manifestation of the bad conscience of the cliques in whom economic necessity is finally embodied* that its revelations, from the "intuitions" of the *Führer* to the "dynamic worldview," no longer acknowledge their own atrocities as necessary consequences of logical regularities, in resolute contrast to earlier bourgeois apologetics. The mythological lies about "mission" and "fate"* which they use instead do not even express a complete untruth: it is no longer the objective laws of the market which govern the actions of industrialists and drive humanity toward catastrophe. Rather, the conscious decisions of the company chairmen* execute capitalism's old law of value, and thus its fate, as resultants no less compulsive than the blindest price mechanisms. The rulers themselves do not believe in objective necessity, even if they sometimes call their machinations by that name. They posture as engineers of world history. Only their subjects accept the existing development, which renders them a degree more powerless with each prescribed increase in their standard of living, as inviolably necessary. Now that the livelihood of those still* needed to operate the machines can be provided with a minimal part of the working time which the masters of society have at their disposal, the superfluous remainder, the overwhelming mass of the population, are trained as additional guards of the system, so that they can be used today and tomorrow as material for its grand designs. They are kept alive as an army of unemployed. Their reduction to mere objects of administration, which preforms every department of modern life right down to language and perception, conjures up an illusion of objective necessity before which they believe themselves powerless. Poverty* as the antithesis between power and impotence is growing beyond measure, together with the capacity permanently to abolish poverty. From the commanding heights of the economy* to the latest professional rackets,* the tangled mass of cliques and institutions which ensures the indefinite continuation of the status quo is impenetrable to each individual. Even for a union boss, to say nothing of a manager, a proletarian is no more than a superfluous specimen, should he catch his notice at all, while the union boss in turn must live in terror of his own liquidation.

The absurdity of a state of affairs in which the power of the system over human beings increases with every step they take away from the

power of nature denounces the reason of the reasonable* society as obsolete. That reason's necessity is illusion, no less than the freedom of the industrialists, which reveals its ultimately compulsive nature in their inescapable struggles and pacts. This* illusion, in which utterly enlightened humanity is losing itself, cannot be dispelled by a thinking which, as an instrument of power, has to choose between command and obedience. Although unable to escape the entanglement in which it was trapped in prehistory, that thinking* is nevertheless capable of recognizing the logic of either/or, of consequence and antinomy, by means of which it emancipated itself radically from nature, as that same nature, unreconciled and self-estranged. Precisely by virtue of its irresistible logic, thought, in whose compulsive mechanism nature is reflected and perpetuated, also reflects itself as a nature oblivious of itself, as a mechanism of compulsion. Of course, mental representation is only an instrument. In thought, human beings distance themselves from nature in order to arrange it in such a way that it can be mastered. Like the material tool which, as a thing, is held fast as that thing in different situations and thereby separates the world, as something chaotic, multiple, and disparate, from that which is known, single, and identical, so the concept is the idea-tool which fits into things at the very point from which one can take hold of them. Thought thus becomes illusory whenever it seeks to deny its function of separating, distancing, and objectifying. All mystical union remains a deception, the impotently inward trace of the forfeited revolution. But while enlightenment is right in opposing any hypostatization of utopia and in dispassionately denouncing power as division, the split between subject and object, which it will not allow to be bridged, becomes the index of the untruth both of itself and of truth.* The proscribing of superstition has always signified not only the progress of domination but its exposure. Enlightenment is more than enlightenment, it is nature made audible in its estrangement. In mind's self-recognition as nature divided from itself, nature, as in prehistory, is calling to itself, but no longer directly by its supposed name, which, in the guise of *mana*, means omnipotence, but as something blind and mutilated. In the mastery of nature, without which mind does not exist, enslavement to nature persists. By modestly confessing itself to be power and thus being taken back into nature, mind rids itself of the very claim to mastery which had enslaved it to nature. Although humanity may be unable to interrupt its flight away from neces-

sity and into progress and civilization without forfeiting knowledge itself, at least it no longer mistakes the ramparts it has constructed against necessity, the institutions and practices of domination which have always rebounded against society from the subjugation of nature, for guarantors of the coming freedom. Each advance of civilization has renewed not only mastery but also the prospect of its alleviation. However, while real history is woven from real suffering, which certainly does not diminish in proportion to the increase in the means of abolishing it, the fulfillment of that prospect depends on the concept. For not only does the concept, as science, distance human beings from nature, but, as the self-reflection of thought—which, in the form of science, remains fettered to the blind economic tendency—it enables the distance which perpetuates injustice to be measured. Through this remembrance of nature within the subject, a remembrance which contains the unrecognized truth of all culture, enlightenment is opposed in principle to power, and even in the time of Vanini the call to hold back enlightenment was uttered less from fear of exact science than from hatred of licentious thought, which had escaped the spell of nature by confessing itself to be nature's own dread of itself. The priests have always avenged *mana* on any exponent of enlightenment who propitiated *mana* by showing fear before the frightening entity which bore that name, and in their hubris the augurs of enlightenment were at one with the priests. Enlightenment in its bourgeois form had given itself up to its positivist moment long before Turgot and d'Alembert. It was never immune to confusing freedom with the business of self-preservation. The suspension of the concept, whether done in the name of progress or of culture, which had both long since formed a secret alliance against truth, gave free rein to the lie. In a world which merely verified recorded evidence and preserved thought, debased to the achievement of great minds, as a kind of superannuated headline, the lie was no longer distinguishable from a truth neutralized as cultural heritage.

But to recognize power even within thought itself as unreconciled nature would be to relax the necessity which even socialism, in a concession to reactionary common sense, prematurely confirmed as eternal.* In declaring necessity the sole basis of the future and banishing mind, in the best idealist fashion, to the far pinnacle of the superstructure, socialism clung all too desperately to the heritage of bourgeois philosophy. The relationship of necessity to the realm of freedom was therefore treated as

merely quantitative, mechanical, while nature, posited as wholly alien, as in the earliest mythology, became totalitarian, absorbing socialism along with freedom. By sacrificing thought, which in its reified form as mathematics, machinery, organization, avenges itself on a humanity forgetful of it, enlightenment forfeited its own realization. By subjecting everything particular to its discipline, it left the uncomprehended whole free to rebound as mastery over things against the life and consciousness of human beings. But a true praxis capable of overturning the status quo depends on theory's refusal to yield to the oblivion in which society allows thought to ossify. It is not the material preconditions of fulfillment, unfettered technology* as such, which make fulfillment uncertain. That is the argument of sociologists who are trying to devise yet another antidote, even a collectivist one, in order control that antidote.³⁶ The fault lies in a social context which induces blindness. The mythical scientific respect of peoples for the given reality, which they themselves constantly create, finally becomes itself a positive fact, a fortress before which even the revolutionary imagination feels shamed as utopianism, and degenerates to a compliant trust in the objective tendency of history. As the instrument of this adaptation, as a mere assemblage of means, enlightenment is as destructive as its Romantic enemies claim. It will only fulfill itself if it forswears its last complicity with them and dares to abolish the false absolute, the principle of blind power. The spirit of such unyielding theory would be able to turn back from its goal even the spirit of pitiless progress. Its herald, Bacon, dreamed of the many things "which kings with their treasure cannot buy, nor with their force command, [of which] their spials and intelligencers can give no news."* Just as he wished, those things have been given to the bourgeois, the enlightened heirs of the kings. In multiplying violence through the mediation of the market, the bourgeois economy has also multiplied its things and its forces to the point where not merely kings or even the bourgeoisie are sufficient to administrate them: all human beings are needed. From the power of things they finally learn to forgo power. Enlightenment consummates and abolishes itself when the closest practical objectives reveal themselves to be the most distant goal already attained, and the lands of which "their spials and intelligencers can give no news"—that is, nature misunderstood by masterful science—are remembered as those of origin. Today, when Bacon's utopia, in which "we should command nature in action," has been fulfilled on a telluric scale, the

essence of the compulsion which he ascribed to unmastered nature is becoming apparent. It was power itself. Knowledge, in which, for Bacon, "the sovereignty of man" unquestionably lay hidden, can now devote itself to dissolving that power. But in face of this possibility enlightenment, in the service of the present, is turning itself into an outright deception of the masses.



Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment

Just as the story of the Sirens illustrates the intertwinement of myth and rational labor, the *Odyssey* as a whole bears witness to the dialectic of enlightenment. In its oldest stratum, especially, the epic shows clear links to myth: the adventures are drawn from popular tradition. But as the Homeric spirit takes over and “organizes” the myths, it comes into contradiction with them. The familiar equation of epic and myth, which in any case has been undermined by recent classical philology, proves wholly misleading when subjected to philosophical critique. The two concepts diverge. They mark two phases of an historical process, which are still visible at the joints where editors have stitched the epic together. The Homeric discourse creates a universality of language, if it does not already presuppose it; it disintegrates the hierarchical order of society through the exoteric form of its depiction, even and especially when it glorifies that order. The celebration of the wrath of Achilles and the wanderings of Odysseus is already a nostalgic stylization of what can no longer be celebrated; and the hero of the adventures turns out to be the prototype of the bourgeois individual, whose concept originates in the unwavering self-assertion of which the protagonist driven to wander the earth is the primeval model. Finally, the epic, which in terms of the philosophy of history is the counterpart of the novel, exhibits features reminiscent of that genre, and the venerable cosmos of the Homeric world, a world charged with meaning, reveals itself as an achievement of classifying rea-

son, which destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order which is used to reflect it.

Understanding of the element of bourgeois enlightenment in Homer has been advanced by the German late-Romantic interpretation of antiquity based on the early writings of Nietzsche. Like few others since Hegel, Nietzsche recognized the dialectic of enlightenment. He formulated the ambivalent relationship of enlightenment to power. Enlightenment must be "drummed into the people, so that the priests all turn into priests with a bad conscience—and likewise with the state. That is the task of enlightenment: to show up the pompous behavior of princes and statesmen as a deliberate lie."¹ However, enlightenment had always been a means employed by the "great artists of government (Confucius in China, the Roman Empire, Napoleon, the Papacy, when it was concerned with power and not just with the world) . . . The self-deception of the masses in this respect—for instance, in all democracies—is highly advantageous: making people small and governable is hailed as 'progress!'"² As this twofold character of enlightenment emerged more clearly as a basic motif of history, its concept, that of advancing thought, was traced back to the beginning of recorded history. However, whereas Nietzsche's attitude to enlightenment, and thus to Homer, remained ambivalent; whereas he perceived in enlightenment both the universal movement of sovereign mind, whose supreme exponent he believed himself to be, and a "nihilistic," life-denying power, only the second moment was taken over by his pre-fascist followers and perverted into ideology. This ideology became a blind eulogy of blind life, which imposes a praxis by which everything living is suppressed. This is seen in the cultural fascists' attitude to Homer. In the Homeric depiction of feudal conditions they detect a democratic element, brand the work a product of seafarers and traders, and condemn the Ionian epic for its of overly rational discourse and its communication of the commonplace. Nevertheless, the evil eye of these sympathizers with all seemingly immediate power, who reject mediation and "liberalism" of any degree, discerns an element of truth. Connections with reason, liberality, and middle-class qualities do indeed extend incomparably further back than is assumed by historians who date the concept of the burgher from the end of medieval feudalism. In identifying the burgher where earlier bourgeois humanism had imagined some pristine dawn of culture, which was taken to legitimize that humanism, the neo-Romantic reaction

equates world history with enlightenment. The fashionable ideology, whose most urgent concern is to liquidate enlightenment, thus pays it involuntary homage. It is forced to acknowledge enlightened thinking even in the remotest past. For the bad conscience of present-day devotees of the archaic it is especially the earliest traces of enlightenment which threaten to unleash the process they seek to hold back, but which they themselves obviously promote.

But a recognition of Homer's antimythological, enlightened character, his opposition to chthonic mythology, remains untrue because limited. Rudolf Borchardt,* for example, the most prominent and therefore the most impotent of the esoteric apologists of German heavy industry, prematurely breaks off his analysis in the service of repressive ideology. He fails to perceive that the primal powers he extols themselves represent a stage of enlightenment. By indiscriminately denouncing the epic as a form of novel he overlooks what epic and myth actually have in common: power and exploitation. The ignoble qualities he condemns in the epic, mediation and circulation, are only a further development of the dubious nobility he idolizes in myth: naked force. The alleged authenticity of the archaic, with its principle of blood and sacrifice, is already tainted by the devious bad conscience of power characteristic of the "national regeneration" today, which uses primeval times for self-advertising. The original myth itself contains the moment of mendacity which triumphs in the fraudulent myth of fascism and which the latter imputes to enlightenment. But no work bears more eloquent witness to the intertwinement of enlightenment and myth than that of Homer, the basic text of European civilization. In Homer, epic and myth, form and subject matter do not simply diverge; they conduct an argument. The aesthetic dualism of the work gives evidence of the historical-philosophical tendency. "The Apollonian Homer is merely a continuation of the general human artistic process to which we owe individuation."³

Myths are precipitated in the different strata of Homer's subject matter; but at the same time the reporting of them, the unity imposed on the diffuse legends, traces the path of the subject's flight from the mythical powers. This is already true, in a profound sense, of the *Iliad*. The anger of the mythical son of a goddess against the rational* warrior king and organizer; the hero's undisciplined inactivity; finally, the enlistment of the victorious, doomed hero in a cause which is national, Hellenic, and no

longer tribal, an allegiance mediated by mythic loyalty to his dead comrade—all these reflect the intertwinement of history and prehistory. The same development is still more vividly present in the *Odyssey*, since it is closer in form to the picaresque novel. The contrast between the single surviving ego and the multiplicity of fate reflects the antithesis between enlightenment and myth. The hero's peregrinations from Troy to Ithaca trace the path of the self through myths, a self infinitely weak in comparison to the force of nature and still in the process of formation as self-consciousness. The primeval world is secularized as the space he measures out; the old demons populate only the distant margins and islands of the civilized Mediterranean, retreating into the forms of rock and cave from which they had originally sprung in the face of primal dread. The adventures bestow names on each of these places, and the names give rise to a rational overview of space. The shipwrecked, tremulous navigator anticipates the work of the compass. His powerlessness, leaving no part of the sea unknown, aims to undermine the ruling powers. But, in the eyes of the man who has thus come of age, the plain untruth of the myths, the fact that sea and earth are not actually populated by demons but are a magic delusion propagated by traditional popular religion, becomes something merely "aberrant" in contrast to his unambiguous purpose of self-preservation, of returning to his homeland and fixed property. All the adventures Odysseus survives are dangerous temptations deflecting the self from the path of its logic. Again and again he gives way to them, experimenting like a novice incapable of learning—sometimes, indeed, out of foolish curiosity, like a mime insatiably trying out roles. "But where danger threatens / That which saves from it also grows":⁴ the knowledge which makes up his identity and enables him to survive has its substance in the experience of diversity, distraction, disintegration; the knowing survivor is also the man who exposes himself most daringly to the threat of death, thus gaining the hardness and the strength to live. That is the secret underlying the conflict between epic and myth: the self does not exist simply in rigid antithesis to adventure but takes on its solidity only through this antithesis, and its unity through the very multiplicity which myth in its oneness denies.⁵ Odysseus, like the heroes of all true novels after him, throws himself away, so to speak, in order to win himself; he achieves his estrangement from nature by abandoning himself to nature, trying his strength against it in all his adventures; ironically, it is implacable nature

that he now commands, which triumphs on his return home as the implacable judge, avenging the heritage of the very powers he has escaped. At the Homeric stage, the identity of the self is so much a function of the nonidentical, of dissociated, unarticulated myths, that it must derive itself from them. The element which shapes and organizes individuality internally, time, is still so weak that the unity of the adventures remains an outward one, their sequence being formed by the spatial changes of scene, the succession of sites of local divinities on which the hero is flung by the storm. Whenever, at later historical stages, the self has again experienced such weakness, or narration has presupposed it in the reader, the manner of depicting life has slipped back into the form of successive adventures. Laboriously and revocably, in the image of the journey, historical time has detached itself from space, the irrevocable schema of all mythical time.

The faculty by which the self survives adventures, throwing itself away in order to preserve itself, is cunning. The seafarer Odysseus outwits the natural deities as the civilized traveler was later to swindle savages, offering them colored beads for ivory. It is true that Odysseus is only occasionally seen bartering, when gifts of hospitality are given and received. In Homer the gift which accompanies hospitality falls midway between exchange and sacrifice. Like a sacrificial act it is intended to compensate for wrongfully spilled blood, whether of the stranger or of settlers defeated by pirates, and represents an oath of truce. At the same time, however, the gift to the host anticipates the principle of equivalence: the host receives really or symbolically the equivalent value of the service he has performed, while the guest takes away provisions which, in principle, are intended to enable him to reach home. Even though the host receives no direct compensation for this, he can expect the same treatment to be given to him or his kinsmen one day: as a sacrifice to elemental deities the hospitality gift is at the same time a rudimentary insurance against them. The extensive but perilous nautical activities of the early Greeks were the pragmatic reason for the custom. Even Poseidon, Odysseus's elemental foe, thinks in terms of equivalence, constantly complaining that the gifts received by Odysseus at the stations of his journey are worth more than his full share of the spoils of Troy would have been had he been allowed to carry it home without hindrance from Poseidon. And in Homer this kind of rationalization can be traced back to the sacrificial acts themselves. Hecatombs of a certain size are intended to secure the goodwill of partic-

ular deities. If exchange represents the secularization of sacrifice, the sacrifice itself, like the magic schema of rational exchange, appears as a human contrivance intended to control the gods, who are overthrown precisely by the system created to honor them.⁶

The moment of fraud in sacrifice is the prototype of Odyssean cunning, just as many of Odysseus's ruses are wrapped up, as it were, in an offering to natural deities.⁷ The deities are duped not only by the hero but also by the solar gods. Odysseus's Olympian friends take advantage of Poseidon's sojourn among the Ethiopians, the backwoodsmen who still worship him and offer him bloody sacrifices, in order to escort Odysseus in safety. Even the sacrifice which Poseidon is glad to accept involves deception: the amorphous sea-god's confinement to a certain locality, the sacred precinct, also restricts his power, and in exchange for sating himself on Ethiopian oxen he is denied the opportunity to cool his temper on Odysseus. All sacrificial acts, deliberately planned by humans, deceive the god for whom they are performed: by imposing on him the primacy of human purposes they dissolve away his power, and the fraud against him passes over seamlessly into that perpetrated by unbelieving priests against believing congregations. Cunning originates in the cult. Odysseus himself acts as both victim and priest. By calculating the risk he incurs as victim, he is able to negate the power to which the risk exposes him. By such bargaining he retrieves the life he has staked. However, deception, cunning, and rationality do not form a simple antithesis to the archaism of sacrifice. Only the moment of fraud in sacrifice, perhaps the innermost reason for the illusory character of myth, is raised to self-consciousness through Odysseus. The awareness that the symbolic communication with the deity through sacrifice was not real must have been age-old. The representative character of sacrifice, glorified by fashionable irrationalists, cannot be separated from the deification of the sacrificial victim, from the fraudulent priestly rationalization of murder through the apotheosis of the chosen victim. Something of this fraud, which elevates the perishable person as bearer of the divine substance, has always been detectable in the ego, which owes its existence to the sacrifice of the present moment to the future. Its substance is as illusory as the immortality of the slaughtered victim. Nor without reason was Odysseus regarded by many as a deity.*

For as long as individuals are sacrificed, for as long as the sacrifice contains the antithesis between collective and individual, deception is

objectively implicit in it. If the belief in the representative character of sacrifice springs from recollection of the nonoriginal quality of the self, from its emergence through the history of domination, at the same time, in relation to the fully developed self, this belief becomes untruth: the self is precisely the human being to whom the magic power of representation is no longer attributed. The formation of the self severs the fluctuating connection with nature which the sacrifice of the self is supposed to establish. Each sacrifice is a restoration of the past, and is given the lie by the historical reality in which it is performed. The venerable belief in sacrifice is probably itself a behavior pattern drilled into the subjugated, by which they reenact against themselves the wrong done to them in order to be able to bear it. Sacrifice as representative restoration does not reinstate immediate communication, which had been merely interrupted, as present-day mythologies claim; rather, the institution of sacrifice is itself the mark of an historical catastrophe, an act of violence done equally to human beings and to nature. Cunning is nothing other than the subjective continuation of the objective untruth of sacrifice, which it supersedes. That untruth may not have been always only untruth. At one stage⁸ of prehistory sacrifices may have possessed a kind of bloody rationality, which even then, however, could hardly have been separated from the thirst for privilege. The theory of sacrifice prevalent today relates it to the idea of a collective body, the tribe, into which the spilled blood of the tribe's sacrificed member is supposed to flow back. While totemism was an ideology even in its own time, it nevertheless marks a real state in which the dominant reason required sacrificial victims. It is a state of archaic shortage, in which human sacrifice can hardly be distinguished from cannibalism. At some times the numerically increased collective can keep itself alive only by consuming human flesh; perhaps, in some ethnic and social groups, pleasure was linked in some way to cannibalism, a link to which only the aversion to human flesh now bears witness. Customs from later times, such as the *ver sacrum*, whereby a whole age-group of young men was forced into exile with accompanying rites at times of hunger, bear clear traces of such barbaric, idealized rationality. Long before the emergence of mythical popular religions, that rationality must have revealed itself as illusory; as systematic hunting provided the tribe with enough animals to make devouring its own members superfluous, it must have been the medicine men who deluded the shrewd hunters and trappers into believing that people

still needed to be consumed.⁹ The magic, collective interpretation of sacrifice, which entirely denies the rationality of sacrifice, is its rationalization; but the straightforward assumption of enlightened thinking that what today is ideology may once have been truth is too uncritical:¹⁰ the newest ideologies are a mere reprise of the oldest, which long antedate those hitherto known, in the same way as the development of the class society refutes the previously sanctioned ideologies. The frequently cited irrationality of sacrifice is no more than an expression of the fact that the praxis of sacrifice outlasted its rational necessity, which was replaced by particular interests. This split between the rational and the irrational aspects of sacrifice gave cunning a point at which to take hold. Demythologization always takes the form of the irresistible revelation of the fertility and the superfluity of sacrifices.

If the principle of sacrifice was proved transient by its irrationality, at the same time it survives through its rationality. This rationality has transformed itself, not disappeared. The self wrests itself from dissolution in blind nature, whose claims are constantly reasserted by sacrifice. But it still remains trapped in the context of the natural, one living thing seeking to overcome another. Bargaining one's way out of sacrifice by means of self-preserving rationality is a form of exchange no less than was sacrifice itself. The identical, enduring self which springs from the conquest of sacrifice is itself the product of a hard, petrified sacrificial ritual in which the human being, by opposing its consciousness to its natural context, celebrates itself. That much is true of the famous story in Nordic mythology according to which Odin was hung from a tree as a sacrifice to himself, and of Klages's thesis that every sacrifice is a sacrifice of the god to the god, as is still apparent in Christology, the monotheistic disguise of myth.¹¹ The difference is that the stratum of mythology in which the self manifests itself as a sacrifice to itself expresses not so much the original conception of popular religions as the absorption of myth into civilization. In class society, the self's hostility to sacrifice included a sacrifice of the self, since it was paid for by a denial of nature in the human being for the sake of mastery over extrahuman nature and over other human beings. This very denial, the core of all civilizing rationality, is the germ cell of proliferating mythical irrationality: with the denial of nature in human beings, not only the *telos* of the external mastery of nature but also the *telos* of one's own life becomes confused and opaque. At the moment when human beings

cut themselves off from the consciousness of themselves as nature, all the purposes for which they keep themselves alive—social progress, the heightening of material and intellectual forces, indeed, consciousness itself—become void, and the enthronement of the means as the end, which in late capitalism is taking on the character of overt madness, is already detectable in the earliest history of subjectivity. The human being's mastery of itself, on which the self is founded, practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained, because the substance which is mastered, suppressed, and disintegrated by self-preservation is nothing other than the living entity, of which the achievements of self-preservation can only be defined as functions—in other words, self-preservation destroys the very thing which is to be preserved. The antireason of totalitarian capitalism, whose technique of satisfying needs, in their objectified form determined by domination, makes the satisfaction of needs impossible and tends toward the extermination of humanity—this antireason appears prototypically in the hero who escapes the sacrifice by sacrificing himself. The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice—in other words, the history of renunciation. All who renounce give away more of their life than is given back to them, more than the life they preserve. This process unfolds within the framework of wrong society. In that society everyone is one too many, and is cheated. But society's predicament* is that the person who escaped the universal, unequal, and unjust exchange, who did not renounce but immediately seized the undiminished whole, would thereby lose everything, even the meager residue of oneself granted by self-preservation. All the superfluous sacrifices are needed: against sacrifice. Even Odysseus is a sacrificial victim, the self which incessantly suppresses its impulses,¹² and thus he lets slip his own life, that he saves only to recall it as a path of error. Nevertheless, he is sacrificed, also, for the abolition of sacrifice. His lordly renunciation, as a struggle with myth, is representative of a society which no longer needs renunciation and domination—which masters itself not in order to do violence to itself and others but for the sake of reconciliation.

The transformation of the sacrificial victim into subjectivity is done under the aegis of the same cunning which always had its share in sacrifice. In the untruth of guile the deception inherent in sacrifice becomes an element of character; it becomes the mutilation of the cheat [*Vér-*

schlagener], whose shifty look still cowers from the blows [*Schläge*] self-preservation has brought down on him. This look expresses the relation of mind to physical strength. The bearer of mind, the one who issues commands—as Odysseus almost always appears—is in all cases physically weaker than the primeval powers with which he has to wrestle for his life, despite all the reports of his heroic deeds. The occasions when naked bodily strength is celebrated, the fistfight with the beggar Irus instigated by the Suitors and the drawing of the great bow, are sporting in nature. Self-preservation and physical strength have diverged: Odysseus's athletic accomplishments are those of the gentleman who, free of practical cares, can train himself in lordly self-mastery. Precisely the strength which is detached from self-preservation benefits self-preservation: in the struggle with the feeble, gluttonous, undisciplined vagabond or with those who have basked in idleness, Odysseus inflicts on the stay-at-homes symbolically what organized landowning has long since done to them in reality, and legitimizes himself as a nobleman.⁶ But when he encounters primeval powers which are neither domesticated nor weakened by indolence, he faces a harder test. He can never engage the exotically persisting mythical powers in physical combat. He has to accept as a given reality the sacrificial ceremony in which he is repeatedly caught up: he is unable to break it. Instead, he makes sacrifice the formal precondition of his own rational decision. This decision is always carried out within the terms of the primeval judgment on which the sacrificial situation is based. That the old sacrifice has meanwhile become irrational presents itself to the cleverness of the weaker party as the stupidity of ritual. The ritual remains accepted, its letter is strictly observed. But its now senseless judgment refutes itself, since its terms constantly leave scope for evasion. The superiority of nature in the competitive struggle is repeatedly confirmed by the very mind which has mastered nature. All bourgeois enlightenment is agreed in its demand for sobriety, respect for facts, a correct appraisal of relative strength. Wishful thinking is banned. The reason, however, is that all power in class society is beset by the gnawing consciousness of its powerlessness in face of physical nature and its social successor, the many. Only deliberate adaptation to it brings nature under the power of the physically weaker. The reason that represses mimesis is not merely its opposite. It is itself mimesis: of death. The subjective mind which disintegrates the spiritualization of nature masters spiritless nature only by imitating its

rigidity, disintegrating itself as animistic. Imitation enters the service of power when even the human being becomes an anthropomorphism for human beings. The pattern of Odysseus's guile is mastery of nature by such adaptation. In the assessment of power relationships that admits defeat in advance and makes survival virtually dependent on death, the principle of bourgeois disillusionment, the external schema for the internalization of sacrifice, is already latent. The nimble-witted man survives only at the cost of his own dream, which he forfeits by disintegrating his own magic along with that of the powers outside him. He can never have the whole, he must always be able to wait, to be patient, to renounce; he may not eat the lotus or the cattle of Hyperion, and when he steers through the narrows he must include in his calculation the loss of the companions snatched from the ship by Scylla. He wriggles through—that is his survival, and all the renown he gains in his own and others' eyes merely confirms that the honor of heroism is won only by the humbling of the urge to attain entire, universal, undivided happiness.

The formula for Odysseus's cunning is that the detached, instrumental mind, by submissively embracing nature, renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her. The mythical monsters under whose power he falls represent, as it were, petrified contracts and legal claims dating from primeval times. In the developed patriarchal era the earlier popular religion manifests itself in these scattered relics: beneath the Olympian heaven they have become figures of abstract fate, of a necessity remote from sensuous experience. The fact that it would be impossible to choose any route other than that between Scylla and Charybdis may be interpreted rationalistically as the mythical representation of the preponderant power of sea currents over the little ships of ancient times. But translated into the objectifying language of myth, it means that the natural relationship between strength and powerlessness has already taken on the character of a legal relationship. Scylla and Charybdis have a claim on whatever comes between their teeth, just as Circe has a right to metamorphose those who are not immune, or Polyphemus a right to the bodies of his guests. Every mythical figure is compelled to do the same thing over and over again. Each of them is constituted by repetition: its failure would mean their end. They all bear features of the fate which, in the myths of punishment in the underworld, is meted out by Olympian judgment to Tantalus, Sisyphus, and the Danaids. They are figures of compulsion: the horrors they com-

init are the curse which has fallen on them. Mythical inevitability is defined by the equivalence between the curse, the abominable act which expiates it, and the guilt arising from that act, which reproduces the curse. All law in history up to now bears the trace of this pattern. In myth each moment of the cycle pays off the preceding moment and thereby helps to establish the continuity of guilt as law. Against this Odysseus fights. The self represents rational universality against the inevitability of fate. But as it finds the universal and the inevitable already inextricably entwined, its rationality necessarily takes a restrictive form, that of an exception. It has to extricate itself from the legal terms encompassing and threatening it, terms which, in a sense, are inscribed in every mythical figure. Odysseus satisfies the legal statutes, but in such a way that by conceding their power he deprives them of it. It is impossible to hear the Sirens and not succumb to them: they cannot be defied. Defiance and beguilement are one and the same, and whoever defies them is lost to the very myth he challenges. Cunning, however, is defiance made rational. Odysseus does not try to steer a different course to the one past the Sirens' island. Nor does he try to insist on the superiority of his knowledge and listen freely to the temptresses, believing his freedom protection enough. He cowers, the ship takes its preordained, fateful course, and he realizes that however he may consciously distance himself from nature, as a listener [*Hörender*] he remains under its spell. He complies with the contract of his bondage [*Hörigkeit*] and, bound to the mast, struggles to throw himself into the arms of the seductresses. But he has found a loophole in the agreement, through which he eludes it while fulfilling its terms. The primeval contract did not specify whether the mariner sailing past should be bound or unbound while listening to the song. The use of bonds belongs to a later era, in which prisoners were not killed straightaway. Technically enlightened, Odysseus acknowledges the archaic supremacy of the song by having himself bound. By yielding to the song of pleasure he thwarts both it and death. The bound listener is drawn to the Sirens like any other. But he has taken the precaution not to succumb to them even while he succumbs. Despite the power of his desire, which reflects the power of the demigoddesses themselves, he cannot go to them, just as his companions at the oars, their ears stopped with wax, are deaf not only to the demigoddesses but to the desperate cries of their commander. The Sirens have a life of their own, but in this bourgeois prehistory it has already been neutral-

ized as the yearning of those who pass it by. The epic does not say what happens to the singers once the ship has passed. But in a tragedy this would have been their last hour, as it was for the Sphinx when Oedipus solved the riddle, fulfilling her command and thereby causing her downfall. For the law of the mythical figures, being that of the stronger, depends on the impossibility of fulfilling their statutes. If they are fulfilled, then the myths are finished, down to their most distant descendants. Since the happily hapless meeting of Odysseus with the Sirens all songs have ailed; the whole of western music suffers from the absurdity of song in civilization, yet the motive force of all art-music is song.

With the dissolution of the contract through its literal fulfilment a change occurs in the historical situation of language: it begins to pass over into designation. Mythical fate had been one with the spoken word. Within the sphere of ideas in which mythical figures executed the unalterable edicts of fate, the distinction between word and object was unknown. The word was thought to have direct power over the thing, expression merged with intention. Cunning, however, consists in exploiting the difference. One clings to the word in order to change the thing. In this way consciousness arises out of intention: in his extremity Odysseus becomes aware of dualism, as he discovers that an identical word can mean different things. Since the name *Udeis* can mean either "hero" or "nobody," the hero is able to break the spell of the name. Unchangeable words remain formulae for the implacable continuities of nature. In magic their fixity was intended to challenge that of fate, which it reflected. The opposition between the word and what it imitated was already implicit in this challenge. At the Homeric stage that opposition became decisive. Odysseus discovered in words what in fully developed bourgeois society is called *formalism*: their perennial ability to designate is bought at the cost of distancing themselves from any particular content which fulfills them, so that they refer from a distance to all possible contents, both to nobody and to Odysseus himself. From the formalism of mythical names and statutes, which, indifferent like nature, seek to rule over human beings and history, emerges nominalism, the prototype of bourgeois thinking. Self-preserving guile lives on the argument between word and thing. Odysseus's two contradictory actions in his meeting with Polyphemus, his obedience to his name and his repudiation of it, are really the same thing. He declares allegiance to himself by disowning himself as Nobody; he

saves his life by making himself disappear. This adaptation to death through language contains the schema of modern mathematics.

Cunning as a means of exchange, in which everything is done correctly, the contract is fulfilled yet the other party is cheated, points back to a form of economic activity which is found, if not in mythical prehistory, at least in early antiquity: the ancient practice of "occasional exchange" between self-sufficient households. "Surpluses are occasionally exchanged, but provisions are predominantly produced by the consumers themselves."¹³ The behavior of the adventurer *Odysseus* recalls that of the parties to the occasional exchange. Even in the pathetic guise of the beggar the feudal lord bears features of the oriental merchant¹⁴ who returns home with untold wealth because he has once, against tradition, stepped outside the confines of the domestic economy and "put to sea." The adventurous element in his undertaking is, in economic terms, nothing other than the irrational aspect his reason takes on in face of the prevailing traditional economic forms. This irrationality of reason has been precipitated in cunning, as the adaptation of bourgeois reason to any unreason which confronts it as a stronger power. The lone voyager armed with cunning is already *homo oeconomicus*, whom all reasonable people will one day resemble: for this reason the *Odyssey* is already a Robinsonade. Both these prototypical shipwrecked sailors make their weakness—that of the individual who breaks away from the collective—their social strength. Abandoned to the vagaries of the waves, helplessly cut off, they are forced by their isolation into a ruthless pursuit of their atomistic interest. They embody the principle of the capitalist economy* even before they make use of any worker;* but the salvaged goods they bring with them to the new venture idealize the truth that the entrepreneur* has always entered the competition armed with more than the industry of his hands. Their powerlessness in face of nature already functions as an ideology for their social predominance. *Odysseus's* defenselessness against the foaming sea sounds like a legitimization of the enrichment of the voyager at the expense of indigenous inhabitants. Bourgeois economics later enshrined this principle in the concept of risk: the possibility of foundering is seen as a moral justification for profit.* From the standpoint of the developed exchange society and its individuals, the adventures of *Odysseus* are no more than a depiction of the risks which line the path to success. *Odysseus* lives according to the ancient principle which originally constituted bourgeois society. One had

to choose between cheating and going under. Fraud was the stigma of reason, which betrayed its particular interest. The universal socialization for which the globetrotter Odysseus and the solo manufacturer Robinson Crusoe provide a preliminary sketch was attended from the first by the absolute loneliness which at the end of the bourgeois era is becoming overt. Radical socialization means radical alienation. Both Odysseus and Crusoe deal in totality: the former measures it out; the latter fabricates it. They can do so only in total isolation from all other human beings, who appear to both men only in estranged forms, as enemies or allies, but always as instruments, things.

One of the first adventures in the *nostos** proper does, admittedly, originate much further back, far beyond even the barbaric age of demonic masks and gods of magic. It is the story of the Lotus-eaters. Whoever tastes their food is as much in thrall as those who listen to the Sirens' song or are touched by the wand of Circe. But no harm is done to those who succumb: "Now it never entered the heads of these natives to kill my friends."¹⁵ They are threatened only by forgetfulness and loss of will. The curse condemns them to nothing worse than a primal state exempt from labor and struggle in the "fertile land":¹⁶ "As soon as each had eaten the honeyed fruit of the plant, all thoughts of reporting to us or escaping were banished from his mind. All they now wished for was to stay where they were with the Lotus-eaters, to browse on the lotus, and to forget that they had a home to return to."¹⁷ Self-preserving reason cannot permit such an idyll—reminiscent of the bliss induced by narcotics, by which subordinate classes have been made capable of enduring the unendurable in ossified social orders—among its own people. And indeed, it is only an illusion of bliss, a dull aimless vegetating, as impoverished as the life of animals. At best, it would be an absence of the awareness of unhappiness. But happiness contains truth within itself. It is in essence a result. It unfolds from suffering removed. The enduring Odysseus is therefore right not to endure life among the Lotus-eaters. Against them he asserts their own cause, the realization of utopia through historical work, whereas simply abiding within an image of bliss deprives them of their strength. But in being exerted by rationality, by Odysseus, this right is inevitably drawn into the realm of wrong. His immediate action is one which reasserts domination. Self-preserving reason can no more tolerate this bliss "near the rim of the world"¹⁸ than the more dangerous form it takes in later stages. The indo-

lent defectors are fetched back to the galleys: "I had to use force to bring them back to the ships, and they wept on the way, but once on board I dragged them under the benches and left them in irons."¹⁹ Lotus is an oriental food. Its thin-cut slices still play a part in Chinese and Indian cooking. Perhaps the temptation ascribed to it is no other than that of regression to the stage of gathering the fruits of the earth²⁰ and the sea, older than agriculture, cattle-rearing, or even hunting—older, in short, than any production. It is hardly an accident that the epic connects the idea of the life of idleness with the eating of flowers, whereas no such use is associated with them today. The eating of flowers, as is still customary during dessert in the East and is known to European children from baking with rosewater and from candied violets, bears the promise of a state in which the reproduction of life is independent of conscious self-preservation, the bliss of satiety uncoupled from the utility of planned nutrition. The memory of the remote and ancient joy which flashes up before the sense of smell is still inseparable from the extreme proximity of ingestion. It points back to earliest prehistory. No matter how copious the torments endured by the people of that time, they cannot conceive of a happiness not nourished by the image of that primal age: "So we left that country and sailed on sick at heart."²¹

The next figure on whose shore Odysseus is cast up [*verschlagen*]—being cast up and being cunning [*verschlagen*] are equivalents in Homer—is the Cyclops Polyphemus, who wears his single wheel-sized eye as a trace of the same primal world: the singleness of the eye suggests the nose and mouth, more primitive than the symmetry of eyes and ears²² without which, and the combining of their dual perceptions, no identification, depth, or objectivity is possible. But, compared to the Lotus-eaters, he represents a later, truly barbaric age, one of hunters and shepherds. For Homer, the definition of barbarism coincides with that of a state in which no systematic agriculture, and therefore no systematic, time-managing organization of work and society, has yet been achieved. He calls the Cyclopes "fierce, uncivilized people"²³ because—and his words seem to contain a secret confession of the guilt of civilization itself—they "never lift a hand to plant or plough but put their trust in Providence. All the crops they require spring up unsown and untilled, wheat and barley and the vines whose generous clusters give them wine when ripened for them by the timely rains."²⁴ Abundance needs no law, and civilization's accusa-

tion of anarchy sounds almost like a denunciation of abundance: "The Cyclopes have no assemblies for the making of laws, nor any settled customs, but live in hollow caverns in the mountain heights, where each man is lawgiver to his children and his wives, and nobody cares a jot for his neighbors."²⁵ This is already a patriarchal society based on kinship and the suppression of the physically weaker, but it is not yet organized on the model of fixed property and its hierarchy; it is the lack of contact between the cave dwellers which is the true reason for the absence of objective laws and which calls forth Homer's accusation of their mutual disregard and their state of savagery. In a later passage, however, the narrator's pragmatic fidelity to his story contradicts his civilized judgment: despite their disregard for one another, the tribe gather round the blinded Polyphemus's cave when they hear his anguished cry, and only Odysseus's trick with his name prevents the simpletons from coming to his aid.²⁶ Stupidity and lawlessness share a common definition: when Homer calls the Cyclops a "lawless-minded monster"²⁷ he does not mean simply that the Cyclops does not respect the laws of morality but that his thinking itself is lawless, unsystematic, rhapsodic—as when he is unable to perform the straightforward mental task of working out how his uninvited guests are able to leave his cave, by clinging underneath the sheep instead of riding on them; or to decipher the sophistic double meaning in Odysseus's false name. Polyphemus, although he trusts in the power of the Immortals, is a cannibal; accordingly, he refuses to show reverence for the gods despite his trust in them: "Stranger, you must be a fool, or must have come from very far afield"—in later times fools and strangers were less scrupulously distinguished, and ignorance of custom, like all foreignness, was branded straight away as folly—"to preach to me of fear or reverence for the gods. We Cyclopes care not a jot for Zeus with his aegis, nor for the rest of the blessed gods, since we are much stronger than they."²⁸ "We are stronger," Odysseus mockingly reports; but what the giant really meant was: "We are older." The power of the solar system is acknowledged, but much as a feudal lord might acknowledge that of bourgeois wealth, while tacitly regarding himself as more noble and failing to perceive that the wrong done to him is of the same kind as the wrong he himself represents. The nearby sea-god Poseidon, Polyphemus's father and Odysseus's enemy, is older than the universal Zeus in his remote heaven, and the feud between the elemental popular religion and the logocentric religion of laws is fought out,

so to speak, on the backs of the subjects. However, the lawless Polyphemos is not simply the villain he appears to be according to the taboos of civilization and as the giant Goliath appears in the fables of enlightened childhood. In the meager domain in which his self-preservation has taken on orderly habits, he is not without redeeming traits. When he puts the young sheep and goats to their mothers' udders, this practical action shows a concern for creaturely life itself, and the famous speech of the blinded Polyphemos in which he calls the leading ram his friend, asking whether it is the last to leave the cave because it is grieving for its master's eye, has a power and poignancy equaled only at the highest point of the *Odyssey*, when the homecoming Odysseus is recognized by the old dog Argus—despite the appalling brutality with which the speech ends. The giant's behavior has not yet been objectified as character. When Odysseus begs for hospitality he does not reply simply with an expression of savage hatred but only by refusing to respect a law which does not yet apply to him. He says merely that "it would not occur to him"²⁹ to spare Odysseus and his companions, and it is open to question whether his next question, about the whereabouts of Odysseus's ship, is as devious as Odysseus reports it to be. Boastful and beguiled, the drunken Polyphemos promises Odysseus gifts of hospitality,³⁰ and it is only the notion of Odysseus as Nobody that gives him the malicious idea of showing his hospitality by eating the leader last—perhaps because he has called himself Nobody and thus may be considered nonexistent in terms of the Cyclops's feeble wit.³¹ The physical crudity of the overpowerful creature is the source of his gullible trust. In this way the observance of the mythical law, always an injustice to the judged, also becomes an injustice to the natural power which imposes that law. Polyphemos and the other monsters that Odysseus outwits are models for the stupidly litigious devils of the Christian era, right down to Shylock and Mephistopheles. The giant's stupidity, the basis of his barbaric brutality as long as his cause prospers, represents something better once it is overthrown by one who should know better. Odysseus insinuates himself into Polyphemos's trust and thus subverts the captor's right to human flesh, according to the artful schema whereby the statute is breached in the observance: "Here, Cyclops, have some wine to wash down that meal of human flesh, and find out for yourself what kind of vintage was stored away in our ship's hold,"³² the bearer of culture recommends.

However, the adaptation of reason to its opposite, a state of con-

sciousness in which no firm identity has yet crystallized—represented by the bungling giant—culminates in the stratagem of the name. This is a widespread motif in folklore. In the Greek version it is a play on words; in a single word the name—Odysseus—and the intention—nobody—diverge. To modern ears *Odysseus* and *Udeis* still sound similar, and it is conceivable that in one of the dialects in which the story of the return to Ithaca was handed down, the name of the island's king did indeed sound the same as "nobody." The calculation that, once the deed was done, Polyphemus would answer "Nobody" when the tribe asked who was to blame, thus allowing the perpetrator to escape pursuit, is a thin rationalistic screen. In reality, Odysseus, the subject, denies his own identity, which makes him a subject, and preserves his life by mimicking the amorphous realm. He calls himself nobody because Polyphemus is not a self, and confusion of the name with the thing prevents the duped barbarian from escaping the trap: his cry for retribution remains magically tied to the name of the one on whom he wants to avenge himself, and this name condemns the cry to impotence. For by inserting his own intention into the name, Odysseus has withdrawn it from the magical sphere. But his self-assertion, as in the entire epic, as in all civilization, is self-repudiation. Thereby the self is drawn back into the same compulsive circle of natural connections from which it sought through adaptation to escape. The man who, for the sake of his own self, calls himself Nobody and manipulates resemblance to the natural state as a means of controlling nature, gives way to hubris. The artful Odysseus cannot do otherwise: as he flees, while still within the sphere controlled by the rock-hurling giant, he not only mocks Polyphemus but reveals to him his true name and origin, as if the primeval world still had such power over Odysseus, who always escaped only by the skin of his teeth, that he would fear to become Nobody again if he did not reestablish his own identity by means of the magical word which rational identity had just superseded. His friends try to restrain him from the folly of proclaiming his cleverness but do not succeed, and he narrowly escapes the hurled rocks, while the mention of his name probably brings down on him the hatred of Poseidon—who is hardly presented as omniscient. The cunning by which the clever man assumes the form of stupidity reverts to stupidity as soon as he discards that form. That is the dialectic of eloquence. From antiquity to fascism, Homer has been criticised for garrulousness—both in the hero and in the narrator. But the

Ionian has proved himself prophetically superior to Spartans old and new in his depiction of the doom which the fluency of the sly fox, the middleman, brings down on the latter. The speech which gets the better of physical strength is unable to curb itself. Its spate accompanies the stream of consciousness, thought itself, like a parody: thought's unwavering autonomy takes on a moment of manic folly when it enters reality as speech, as if thought and reality were synonymous, whereas the former has power over the latter only through distance. Such distance, however, is also suffering. For this reason the astute hero is always tempted to ignore the proverbial wisdom that silence is golden. He is driven objectively by the fear that, if he does not constantly uphold the fragile advantage the word has over violence, this advantage will be withdrawn by violence. For the word knows itself to be weaker than the nature it has duped. By talking too much he gives away the principle of violence and injustice underlying discourse and provokes in the feared adversary the very action he fears. The mythical compulsion acting on language in prehistory is perpetuated in the calamity which enlightened language brings on itself. "Udeis," who compulsively proclaims himself to be Odysseus, already bears features of the Jew who, in fear of death, continues to boast of a superiority which itself stems from the fear of death; revenge on the middleman stands not only at the end of bourgeois society but at its beginning, as the negative utopia toward which coercive violence tends in all its forms.

Unlike the stories of the escape from myth as an escape from barbaric cannibalism, the magical tale of Circe points back once more to the stage of actual magic. Magic disintegrates the self which falls back into its power and thus into the form of an earlier biological species. The power which causes the self's dissolution is, again, that of oblivion. With the fixed order of time, it gains control of the fixed will of the subject, which is based on that order. Circe seduces Odysseus's men into abandoning themselves to instinct, with which the animal form assumed by the victims has always been associated, while Circe has become the prototype of the courtesan, probably on the strength of the words of Hermes, which take her erotic initiatives for granted: "She will shrink from you in terror and invite you to her bed. Nor must you hesitate to accept the goddess' favors."³³ Circe's signature is ambiguity, and in the story she appears by turns as corrupter and helper; ambiguity is expressed even in her lineage: she is the daughter of Helios and the granddaughter of Oceanus.³⁴ In her

the elements of fire and water are not yet separated, and it is this indeterminacy—in contrast to the primacy of a particular aspect of nature, whether matriarchal or patriarchal—which constitutes the essence of promiscuity and of the courtesan, reappearing as a watery lunar reflection even in the gaze of a nineteenth-century prostitute.³⁵ The hetaera both bestows joy and destroys the autonomy of its recipient—that is her ambiguity. But she does not necessarily destroy the recipient himself: she holds fast to an older form of life.³⁶ Like the Lotus-eaters, Circe does not cause lethal harm to her guests, and even those she has turned into wild beasts are peaceable: “Prowling about the place were mountain wolves and lions, actually the drugged victims of Circe’s magic, for they not only refrained from attacking my men but rose on their hind legs to caress them, with much wagging of their long tails, like dogs fawning on their master, as he comes from table, for the tasty bits they know he always brings.”³⁷ The bewitched humans behave in a similar way to the wild animals which listen to the playing of Orpheus. The mythical command to which they have been subjected at the same time liberates the very nature which is suppressed in them. What is revoked by their relapse into myth is myth itself. The suppression of instinct which constitutes them as selves and separates them from beasts was the introverted form of the repression existing within the hopelessly closed cycle of nature, to which, according to an earlier theory, the name Circe alludes. But, as the idyll of the Lotus-eaters had done earlier, the violent magic which recalls them to an idealized prehistory not only makes them animals but brings about, in however delusive a form, a semblance of reconciliation. But because they were once men the civilizing epic cannot present their fate as anything other than a calamitous lapse, and in Homer’s account there is hardly a trace of the pleasure which went with it. It is all the more emphatically expunged the more civilized the victims themselves are.³⁸ Odysseus’s companions are not turned into sacred creatures of the wilderness, like earlier guests, but into squalid domestic animals, swine. The story of Circe may contain echoes of the chthonic cult of Demeter, for whom the pig was sacred.³⁹ But perhaps it is also the humanoid anatomy of the pig and its nakedness which explain this motif: as if the same taboo on mingling with the blood of similar species, which has survived among the Jews, already existed among the Ionians. Finally, one may think of the prohibition on cannibalism, since, as in Juvenal, the taste of human flesh has repeatedly been compared to

that of pigs. At any rate, later civilizations have always liked to apply the name of pig or swine to anyone whose impulses tended toward other pleasures than those sanctioned by society for its purposes. Magic and countermagic in the metamorphoses of Odysseus's companions are linked to herbs and wine, as intoxication and waking are to the sense of smell, which is increasingly suppressed and repressed and is closest not only to sex but to the remembrance of prehistory.⁴⁰ In the image of the pig, however, the joy of scent is distorted into the unfree snuffling⁴¹ of someone who has his nose to the ground and has renounced the upright posture. It is as if, in the ritual to which she subjects the men, the sorceress-courtesan were reenacting the one to which she herself is repeatedly subjected by patriarchal society. Like her, women are predisposed, under the pressure of civilization, to adopt its judgment on women and to denigrate sex. In the conflict between enlightenment and myth, the traces of which are preserved in the epic, the powerful seductress is at the same time weak, obsolete, and vulnerable and needs the enslaved beasts as her escort.⁴² As a representative of nature, woman in bourgeois society has become an enigma of irresistibility⁴³ and powerlessness. Thus she reflects back the vain lie of power, which substitutes the mastery over nature for reconciliation with it.

Marriage is society's middle way in dealing with this question: woman remains powerless in that her power is mediated to her only through her husband. Something of this is reflected in the defeat of the courtesan-goddess of the *Odyssey*, while the fully evolved marriage with Penelope, more recent in literary terms, represents a later stage in the objective structure of patriarchal arrangements. With the arrival of Odysseus on Aeaea,* the double meaning of the relationship of man to woman, of yearning to command, already takes on the form of an exchange underpinned by contracts. Odysseus resists Circe's magic. And he therefore receives actually what her magic promises only deceptively to those who fail to resist. Odysseus sleeps with her. But beforehand he makes her swear a solemn oath by the blessed gods. The oath is intended to protect the male from the mutilation which avenges the ban on promiscuity and male domination—although that domination, as a permanent suppression of instinct, symbolically performs the self-mutilation of the man in any case. Because of his resistance to metamorphosis, Circe accuses Odysseus of having "a heart in [his] breast which nothing enchants."⁴⁴ But she is also willing to submit to the man who has resisted her, the master, the self: "I beg you

now to put up your sword and come with me to my bed, so that in love and sleep we may learn to trust each other."⁴⁵ The price she places on the pleasure she bestows is the condition that pleasure should first have been spurned; the last hetaera emerges as the first female character. In the transition from legend to history she makes a decisive contribution to the bourgeois chill. Her behavior puts into effect the ban on love which later became all the more powerful the more love as ideology was obliged to dissimulate the hatred between the competing partners. In the world of exchange the one who gives more is in the wrong; but the one who loves is always the one who loves more. While the lover's sacrifice is glorified, the making of that sacrifice is jealously enforced. It is precisely in love itself that the lover is incriminated and punished. The inability to master himself and others demonstrated by his love is reason enough to deny him fulfillment. With society, loneliness reproduces itself on a wider scale. The mechanism operates even within the tenderest ramifications of feeling, until love itself, in order to have contact with another person at all, is forced to assume such coldness that it shatters at the moment of its realization. Circe's power, which subjugates men as her slaves, gives way to her enslavement to the man who, through renunciation, has refused to submit. The goddess Circe's influence over nature, ascribed to her by the poet, is reduced to priestly soothsaying and even to clever foresight with regard to coming nautical difficulties. This lives on in the caricature of feminine wisdom. In the end, the prophecies of the disempowered sorceress regarding the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis merely serve the purposes of male self-preservation.

How high a price was paid for the establishing of orderly arrangements for procreation is hinted at by the obscure passage on the behavior of Odysseus's friends when Circe had transformed them back into men as required by her contractual lord. First we read that "they not only became men again but looked younger and much handsomer and taller than before."⁴⁶ But those who are thus confirmed and strengthened in their manhood are not happy: "We were so moved that we all wept for happiness. It was a strange sound for those walls to echo."⁴⁷ The earliest wedding song, the accompaniment of the feast celebrating the rudimentary marriage which lasts only a year, may have sounded like this. The actual marriage to Penelope has more in common with it than might be supposed. Harlot and wife are complementary forms of female self-alienation

in the patriarchal world: the wife betrays pleasure to the fixed order of life and property, while the harlot, as her secret accomplice, brings within the property relationship that which the wife's property rights do not include—pleasure—by selling it. Circe and Calypso, the courtesans, are introduced as diligent weavers, thus resembling both mythical powers of fate and bourgeois housewives,⁴⁸ while Penelope, like a harlot, mistrustfully scrutinizes the returning Odysseus to make sure he is not really just an old beggar or even a god trying his luck. The much-lauded recognition scene is a truly patrician encounter: "For a long while Penelope, overwhelmed by wonder, sat there without a word. But her eyes were busy, at one moment resting full on his face, and at the next falling on the ragged clothes that made him seem a stranger once again."⁴⁹ There is no spontaneous upsurge of feeling; she is determined to avoid a mistake, which she can hardly afford under the weight of the order bearing down on her. This annoys the young Telemachus, who has not yet fully adapted himself to his future position yet already feels man enough to admonish his mother. By reproaching her with obstinacy and hardness, he exactly repeats the accusation of Circe against Odysseus. If the hetaera makes the patriarchal world order her own, the monogamous wife is not satisfied even with this and cannot rest until she has made herself conform to the male character. In this way the spouses settle their differences. The test she sets Odysseus concerns the immovable position of the marriage bed which her husband, as a young man, had constructed around an olive tree, a symbol of the unity of sex and property. With touching artfulness she refers to this bed as if it could be moved from the spot, whereupon her husband, "flaring up" and "rounding on" his wife, proceeds to give a circumstantial account of his durable amateur handiwork: as a prototypical bourgeois he is smart enough to have a hobby. It consists in a resumption of the craft work from which, within the framework of differentiated property relations, he has long since been exempted. He enjoys this occupation, as his freedom to perform superfluous tasks confirms his power over those who have to do such work in order to live. By this the ingenious Penelope recognizes him, flattering him with praise of his exceptional intelligence. But her flattery, which is not without a touch of mockery, is followed, in an abrupt caesura, by words which seek the reason for the suffering of all spouses in the gods' envy of the happiness guaranteed only by marriage, the "confirmation of the concept of permanence":⁵⁰ "All our unhappiness is due to the gods,

who couldn't bear to see us share the joys of youth and reach the threshold of old age together."⁵¹ Marriage represents not only the account-balancing order of the living but also solidarity and steadfastness in face of death. In it reconciliation grows up around subjugation, just as in history up to now true humanity has flourished only in conjunction with the barbaric element which is veiled by "humane values." Even if the contract between the spouses sets aside the old hostility only with difficulty, nevertheless the couple aging in peace merges into the image of Philemon and Baucis, as the smoke from the sacrificial altar is transmuted into that rising beneficently from the hearth. Undoubtedly, marriage forms part of the primal rock of myth at the base of civilization. But its mythic solidity and permanence jut from myth, as the small island realm rises from the endless sea.

The farthest point reached on the odyssey proper is no such home-ly refuge. It is Hades. The images which appear to the adventurer in the first visit to the Underworld* are of matriarchal shades⁵² who have been banished by the religion of light: his own mother, before whom Odysseus forces himself to maintain a purposive patriarchal hardness,⁵³ is followed by heroines from primeval times. The image of the mother, however, is powerless, blind, and speechless,⁵⁴ a phantom, like epic narrative at the moments when language gives way to images. Sacrificial blood is required as a pledge of living memory before the shades can speak, breaking free, however vainly and ephemerally, from mythic muteness. Only when subjectivity masters itself by recognizing the nullity of images does it begin to share the hope which images vainly promise. The Promised Land for Odysseus is not the archaic realm of images. Finally, all the images reveal their true essence as shades in the world of the dead, as illusion. Having recognized them as dead he dismisses them with the lordly gesture of self-preservation, banishing them from the sacrifice which he reserves for those who grant him knowledge which benefits his life. In such knowledge the power of myth, transposed into mental forms, survives only as imagination. The realm of the dead, where the disempowered myths gather, is farthest from his homeland, with which it can communicate only from the remotest distance. If one follows Kirchhoff in supposing that Odysseus's visit to the Underworld forms part of the oldest stratum of the epic, composed of actual legends,⁵⁵ then this oldest stratum also contains a tendency which—as in the tradition of the journeys to the Underworld of

Orpheus and Heracles—most decisively transcends myth. Indeed, the motif of forcing the gates of hell, of abolishing death, is the innermost cell of all antimythological thought. This antimythological element is contained in Teiresias's prophecy of the possible placation of Poseidon. Odysseus is to wander ever farther, carrying on his shoulder an oar, until he reaches a people "who know nothing of the sea and never use salt with their food."⁵⁶ When he meets another traveler who refers to the oar on his shoulder as a "winnowing fan," he will have reached the proper place to offer a sacrifice to Poseidon. The core of the prophecy is the mistaking of the oar for a winnowing fan. This must have struck the Ionian as compellingly comic. However, this comic effect, on which the reconciliation is made to depend, cannot have been directed at humans but at the wrathful Poseidon.⁵⁷ The misunderstanding is meant to amuse the fierce elemental god, in the hope that his anger might be dispersed in laughter. That would be analogous to the neighbor's advice in Grimm, explaining how a mother can rid herself of a changeling: "She should carry the changeling into the kitchen, set it on the hearth, light the fire and boil water in two eggshells. That would make the changeling laugh, and if he laughed then that would make an end of him."⁵⁸ If laughter up to now* has been a sign of violence, an outbreak of blind, obdurate nature, it nevertheless contains the opposite element, in that through laughter blind nature becomes aware of itself as such and thus abjures its destructive violence. This ambiguity of laughter is closely related to that of name; perhaps names are nothing but petrified laughter, as nicknames still are—the only ones in which the original act of name-giving still persists. Laughter is in league with the guilt of subjectivity, but in the suspension of law which it announces it also points beyond that complicity. It promises a passage to the homeland. It is a yearning for the homeland which sets in motion the adventures by which subjectivity, the prehistory of which is narrated in the *Odyssey*, escapes the primeval world. The fact that—despite the fascist lies to the contrary—the concept of homeland is opposed to myth constitutes the innermost paradox of epic. Precipitated in the epic is the memory of an historical age in which nomadism gave way to settlement, the precondition of any homeland. If the fixed order of property implicit in settlement is the source of human alienation, in which all homesickness and longing spring from a lost primal state, at the same time it is toward settlement and fixed property, on which alone the con-

cept of homeland is based, that all longing and homesickness are directed. Novalis's definition according to which all philosophy is homesickness holds good only if this longing is not dissipated in the phantasm of a lost original state, but homeland, and nature itself, are pictured as something that have had first to be wrested from myth. Homeland is a state of having escaped. For this reason the criticism that the Homeric legends "withdraw from the earth" is a warranty of their truth. They "turn to men."⁵⁹ The transposition of myths into the novel, as in the adventure story, does not falsify myth so much as drag it into the sphere of time, exposing the abyss which separates it from homeland and reconciliation. The vengeance wreaked by civilization on the primeval world has been terrible, and in this vengeance, the most horrifying document of which in Homer is to be found in the account of the mutilation of the goatherd Melanthios, civilization itself resembles the primeval world. It is not in the content of the deeds reported that civilization transcends that world. It is in the self-reflection which causes violence to pause at the moment of narrating such deeds. Speech itself, language as opposed to mythical song, the possibility of holding fast the past atrocity through memory, is the law of Homeric escape. Not without reason is the fleeing hero repeatedly introduced as narrator. The cold detachment of narrative, which describes even the horrible as if for entertainment, for the first time reveals in all their clarity the horrors which in song are solemnly confused with fate. But when speech pauses, the caesura allows the events narrated to be transformed into something long past, and causes to flash up a semblance of freedom that civilization has been unable wholly to extinguish ever since. Book XXII of the *Odyssey* describes the punishment meted out by the son of the island's king to the faithless maidservants who have sunk into harlotry. With an unmoved composure comparable in its inhumanity only to the *impassibilité* of the greatest narrative writers of the nineteenth century, the fate of the hanged victims is described and expressionlessly compared to the death of birds in a trap; and, as of the numb pause surrounding the narration at this point, it can truly be said that the rest of all speech is silence. This is followed by a statement reporting that "For a little while their feet kicked out, but not for very long."⁶⁰ The exactitude of the description, which already exhibits the coldness of anatomy and vivisection,⁶¹ keeps a record, as in a novel, of the twitching of the subjugated women, who, under the aegis of justice and law, are thrust down into the realm from

which Odysseus the judge has escaped. As a citizen reflecting on the execution, Homer comforts himself and his listeners, who are really readers, with the certified observation that the kicking did not last long—a moment, and all was over.⁶² But after the words “not for long” the inner flow of the narrative comes to rest. “Not for long?” the narrator asks by this device, giving the lie to his own composure. In being brought to a standstill, the report is prevented from forgetting the victims of the execution and lays bare the unspeakably endless torment of the single second in which the maids fought against death. No echo remains of the words “not for long” except Cicero’s *Quo usque tandem* [“How much longer (will you try our patience)?”], which later rhetoricians unwittingly desecrated by claiming that patience for themselves. But in the report of the infamous deed, hope lies in the fact that it is long past. Over the raveled skein of prehistory, barbarism, and culture, Homer passes the soothing hand of remembrance, bringing the solace of “once upon a time.” Only as the novel is the epic transmuted into fairy tale.