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MEDIATION AND IMMEDIACY IN HEGEL, MARX AND FEUERBACH

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1. The Consummation of Philosophy through Hegel and Its Abolition through Marx

Hegel completes the history of spirit in the sense of an ultimate plenitude gathering all previous events and thoughts into the unity of the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy. At the same time, however, Hegel's completion also has the sense of an eschatological end, in which the history of spirit finally comprehends itself.

The end as well as the beginning of his lectures on the history of philosophy show that Hegel has comprehended his own standpoint as that of philosophical completion and that he has brought the realm of thought to its conclusion. According to his schematization of the history of philosophy, his own system stands at the end of the third epoch, in the "old age of spirit." And in agreement with this system of epochs, Hegel's history of spirit is not given a merely provisional termination at a random point; it has been definitively and consciously "concluded." On this historical basis its logical form is also "syllogistic," a merging of beginning and end. This conclusion of the history of philosophy is—like the end of the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic*, and *Encyclopedia*—no mere arbitrary arrival at some place, but an arrival at a "goal" and therefore a "result." Like Proclus, Hegel unified the world of the Christian logos with the absolute totality of the concretely organized idea, thus concluding all three epochs. Only from this eschatological point of view can Hegel's conclusion of the *History of Philosophy* be understood in its full pathos and gravity:

The world spirit has now arrived at this point. The final philosophy is the result of all that has gone before; nothing has been lost, all principles are retained. This concrete idea is the result of the struggles of spirit through almost 2500 years [Thales was born in 640 B.C.] of spirit's most serious labor to become objective to itself, to recognize itself: *Tantae molis erat se ipsam cognoscere mentem*.¹

The ambiguity of Hegel's "consummation," meaning both fulfillment and conclusion, is revealed in the transformation of Virgil's "*Romanam condere gentem*" into "*se ipsam cognoscere mentem*." The sense of this reformulation is that the founding of the Roman Empire then demanded the same effort as is now demanded for spirit to found itself in its own realm.

Ten years after Hegel's death, in a dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus, the twenty-three year old Marx sought to come to terms with the situation created by Hegel. He asks: How is it still possible, after Hegel, to establish a philosophical standpoint which is neither imitative nor arbitrary? His answer: only by a fundamental examination of philosophy in its totalized, Hegelian form, and by an "abolition" of this philosophy which is, at the same time, its "actualization." Philosophy is always at such a "nodal point" when its abstract principle has become totally concrete, as once before in

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¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke* XV (1844 edition), *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 617ff.

Aristotle and now again in Hegel. The possibility of continued development is then interrupted; a full circle has been completed. Consequently, whoever does not see this necessity will have to deny that man can continue his spiritual life after such a philosophy. Only this insight makes comprehensible how, after Aristotle, a Zeno, Epicurus, and Sextus Empiricus, and after Hegel “the largely baseless, impoverished experiments of recent philosophers could come to the light of day.” In contrast with the Young Hegelians, who only sought a partial reformation of Hegel, Marx gained from history the insight that philosophy *as such* was at stake. In his dissertation, Marx writes: “At such times, the half-hearted ones [meaning philosophers like Ruge] hold opinions contrary to that of strong generals. They think they can recoup their losses through a reduction of forces, through ... a peaceful compromise with the real demands, whereas when Athens [that is, philosophy] was threatened with destruction, Themistocles [that is, Marx himself] induced the Athenians to leave their city and to found a new Athens [that is, a new kind of philosophy which in the old sense is no longer a philosophy at all] at sea, in another element,” that is, in the element of political and economic practice, which must now be understood as “what is.” And one must not forget that the age following such catastrophes is an age of iron,

fortunate if marked by the clash of Titans, but deplorable if like the centuries that drag on after great artistic epochs, for these busy themselves with copying in plaster and copper what was first born in Carrara marble.

Rightly and wrongly, Feuerbach stands in the shadow of Marx and Hegel. Rightly, because the conceptual articulation of his naturalism falls far behind Hegel’s philosophy of spirit and also behind Marx’s philosophy of labor; wrongly, because the primitiveness of his naturalistic thought derives an advantage over Hegel and Marx from the very fact that—under the title of “nature”—it makes a return to something immediate and elementary. For to ascend from the immediate and elementary to something mediated and derived is easier than the opposite: to find one’s way back from the multifariously mediated to something simple and immediate. However, since Feuerbach, as a disciple of Hegel, could make his way back to the immediateness of nature only via a detour, namely a critique of mediation, we must begin with a discussion of dialectical mediation in Hegel and Marx.

Marx deserves the credit for having developed and expressed the insight that the philosophy of the future can no longer be philosophy in the traditional sense of the word if Hegel’s metaphysics fulfills the legacy of all previous philosophy and if this fulfillment represents an irrevocable end. Philosophy becomes something entirely different: it becomes Marxism or scientific socialism, or, more generally, a theoretically guided practice designed to bring about a radical alteration of human society. Hegel’s theoretical pathos, expressed in the phrase “to recognize what is” (instead of postulating what should be) is irreconcilable with Marx’s thesis that the real task is to *change* the world and not simply to *interpret* it in various ways. This decisive difference cannot be relativized by pointing out that the practice which sets out to change the world implies and necessitates a theoretical understanding and a critique of that which is. It is impossible to be a Marxist in the spirit of Marx and at the same time a philosopher in the spirit of the tradition that was valid up to Hegel. When Marx, in the early philosophical manuscripts, speaks about the “abolition” of philosophy in Hegel’s double sense of the term and about the abolition of the contradictions in civil society which Hegel himself pointed out,

he is, to be sure, using Hegel's language; yet what he really means and intends is not the preserving and at the same time annihilating elevation of these contradictions into a higher comprehensive unity, but—very undialectically—their total removal.² Marx takes over the task of the philosophy which ended with Hegel and puts revolutionary Marxism, as reason becoming practical, in the place of the whole previous tradition. And this tradition has indeed come to an end when the priority of theory over practice acknowledged from Aristotle to Hegel reverses itself and when social-historical practice unmasks theory as ideology.³ Only the utopian Marxism of a Marcuse, a Horkheimer, or an Adorno, which instead of making any practical decisions cultivates a permanent critique of all that is, can labor under the illusion of operating upon the basis of Hegel's dialectic and at the same time sustaining Marx's concern in a sublimated manner.

But despite the fundamental irreconcilability of philosophical and Marxist thought, one must not fail to notice that Marx's critical-revolutionary program was philosophically built on Hegelian conceptions and that Marx in his own way remained a disciple of Hegel even after he had "settled accounts" with his philosophical conscience and written *Das Kapital*. The analysis of the fetishist character of commodities is a prime example of Hegelian dialectics.⁴ The question is: In what sense did Marx remain a disciple of Hegel? Certainly not by schoolboy imitations or historico-philological interpretations of the master which make a great display of scholarly accuracy but take no independent position. Nor did he proceed from the "experience of consciousness" in order finally to bring skepticism to its fulfillment in the absolute knowledge of the absolute. His starting point was rather the experience of the social relations of production and his goal was a communist society. The two fundamental and correlated presuppositions which Marx shares with Hegel and which differentiate him from Feuerbach are, first, the *historical consciousness of history*, and second, the *dialectical method of mediation*.

2. Historical Consciousness and Dialectical Mediation in Historical Materialism

First: The unifying whole of Marx's theory, the framework which holds it all together, is a definite idea of *history* and the belief in this idea. Marx's thinking is no more oriented within the world of nature than Hegel's; its horizon is rather that of world-history and of human nature transforming itself historically. The communist of the classless society is the new man of a new historical world in relation to which all previous history is mere "pre-history."

² Marx's dialectic is no longer dialectical in the Hegelian sense; its moving principle is merely the negation of the negation without that aspect whereby what is negated in abolition [*Aufheben*] is also preserved. The aim of Marx's dialectic is the total "annihilation" of estrangement, religious as well as political-economic. Hegel's ambiguous philosophy of religion is replaced by a resolute atheism in the form of secular humanism: the annihilation of God as the annihilation of human self-estrangement. Cf. *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, hereafter cited as MEGA (Berlin and Moscow, 1927–1935), Sec. I, Vol. III, 164, 166, 168. Cf. also K. Bockmühl, *Leiblichkeit und Gesellschaft* (1961), 212ff.

³ Cf. my *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart, 1960), 247ff., and M. Riedel, *Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart, 1965), where it is established for the first time that, for Hegel, theory and practice share an equal primacy, since spirit as will is a will to freedom and freedom is the origin of all historical practice.

⁴ Since human intercourse becomes a means for the traffic of commodities, the commodity is humanized and man, the producer, is thingified. In this *quid pro quo* the formal structure of the interrelation of consciousness and object is mirrored in a concrete economic fashion. Just as consciousness and object reciprocally alter one another, man as a producer of commodities corresponds to the social fetishism of commodities.

In the first part of the *German Ideology*, Marx has sketched out his basic conception of history in a few pages. The first sentence reads: “We know only one science, the science of history.” It is the only science because it is the all-embracing revelation of human nature; it is also “the true natural history of man” because nature as such does not determine man as a societal, generic being. “The nature which comes to be in human history is the real nature of man.”⁵ Marx not only rejects the belief in a revelation of God through history, in history as a process of salvation, he also expressly outrules the history of nature. Nature is for him merely the “other self” and is represented in geographical and climatic conditions as a subordinate precondition of the historical activity of man. A precedence of nature over human history exists only “on some Australian coral islands of recent origin,” as Marx sarcastically formulates it. What Marx finds interesting in an apple is not the fact that there are fruit-bearing trees in nature, but that at a certain time and because of certain economic relations this product of nature was imported into Europe, where it was treated as a commodity in exchange for money. From this radically historical point of view, it is unimportant that man, who in cultivating nature is historically productive, is also a creature of nature and not a self-made *homunculus*. The overshadowing truth is rather that the self-production of the historical world by human labor actually changes the world of nature.

One can distinguish men from animals in terms of consciousness, religion, or whatever. Men begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their material life itself. . . . The first act is therefore the creation of means for the satisfaction of these needs, the production of life itself, and this is indeed a historical act, the daily and hourly fulfillment of an elementary historical condition, which is just as necessary today as it was millennia ago, simply to keep men alive.⁶

This mode of production is not merely a reproduction of physical existence; it is a definite kind of activity, a historically determined way of life. Individuals are what they express about their lives in the active production of something. “What they are coincides with what and how they produce.” With the spread of various modes of production and transportation, history becomes world-history, which corresponds to a world market.

Two years after writing the *German Ideology*, Marx published the *Communist Manifesto*. Like the earlier work, it is based entirely upon a philosophical concept of history. Its central thesis is that the course of human history consists in a process of perpetual antagonism, in which the struggle between rulers and ruled is so sharpened and intensified, that it must finally be resolved through the clash of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the propertyless proletariat. At the end of this struggle there is, for Marx, the eschatological expectation that communism will prepare an end for the rule of man over man by eliminating private property. Communism is nothing less than the “riddle of history solved.” Marx is no longer astonished by those things which are by nature what they are and cannot be otherwise. Instead, he is indignant because things are not different in the historical world. He therefore wants to change the world, a demand which can be met if, and to whatever degree, the “world” as such is a

⁵ MEGA, Sec. I, Vol. III, 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*

world of man, “a nature coming to be man.” Marx particularly liked to quote Hegel’s remark that the most criminal thought is more magnificent and sublime than all the marvels of the firmament because the criminal, as spirit, is conscious of his thought, whereas nature knows nothing of itself and is exteriority itself. In a similar vein, Hegel says in his lectures on Aesthetics that, from a formal point of view, even a bad idea in the mind of man is more lofty than any product of nature, for spirituality and freedom are always present in such an idea.

Hegel and Marx are also at one concerning the history of *philosophy*, even though historical materialism, contrary to Hegel, does not regard it as “the innermost core of world-history.” Yet Marx is not alone in standing under the spell of Hegel’s philosophical conception that world-history and the history of philosophy reveal a necessary progression toward a predetermined goal. Equally Hegelian is Heidegger’s conception of the history of Being, for which the innermost core is the thought of Being, thus paralleling Hegel’s conception of the movements of thought. The only difference is that Heidegger conceives of progress as something negative, as a history of progressive decay, looking back to an unexhausted beginning and forward to “another beginning” whose way is to be prepared by the question of Being.

It was said at the outset that Marx deserves the credit for having seen the implications of Hegel’s completion “if” Hegel’s philosophy actually is the consummation of the entire previous tradition. But is this really the case? The model governing Hegel’s universal-historical conception of philosophy is actually only a very specific and limited epoch, namely the road leading from Kant via Fichte and Schelling to Hegel himself.⁷ In addition, the direct, personal succession of these philosophers and the academic character of their work constitute an exceptional case in the history of philosophy. The philosophy from Kant to Hegel is a philosophy of German professors. F. Bacon and Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, Hobbes, Locke and Hume were not philosophers who taught from a public lectern and their thought resists compression into the familiar “from x to y” schema. What has been completed with Hegel is not *the* history of *the* philosophy, at whose end Marx begins afresh; what has been completed is only the history of German idealism.⁸ And thus evaporates the charm of radicalness in which the young Marx sought historical legitimation by reference to Hegel’s consummation; it vanishes as soon as one questions Hegel’s interpretation of spiritual history as a complete course of necessary development and instead proceeds soberly and historically, taking a philosopher’s appraisal of his relationship to real and presumed predecessors of two millennia for what it really is: an *ex post facto* historical projection designed to justify his own undertaking. The history of philosophy no more completes itself with Hegel than world-history reaches its preordained end in the *Communist Manifesto*. And this by no means excludes the fact that the *Manifesto* has been a most effective prophetic document and that post-Hegelian philosophy has brought forth nothing comparable to Hegel in depth and breadth, in conceptual articulation and sophistic art.

⁷ Cf. L. Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1846), II, 193ff., 207, and 215ff.

⁸ The peculiarity of German idealism is indicated by the fact that a mathematician and philosopher as significant as A.N. Whitehead could entirely disregard this great movement because it was not effectively in touch with science. Instead, Whitehead refers primarily to Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Hume. See his *Science and the Modern World* (New York, 1925), chap. IX.

Second: Together with historical consciousness, the *dialectical mediation* between historically productive man and his age and environment assumes for Marx a fundamental significance. This can be seen especially clearly, albeit indirectly, in his “Theses on Feuerbach.” Marx’s critique of Feuerbach’s a-historical materialism is based upon the teachings of Hegel. To be sure, the writings of Feuerbach are for Marx the only ones since Hegel which contain “a real theoretical revolution,” but the only thing that Marx adopts from Feuerbach is his critique of religion, that is, the reduction of metaphysical onto-theology to social anthropology. As a Hegelian, however, Marx, like Marxists and Hegelians of today, was unable to understand that Feuerbach freed himself from the magic circle of Hegel’s system of total mediation precisely because he had got behind the reflective level of his teacher. In his introduction to Feuerbach’s writings on Hegel, W. Harich declares that Feuerbach remained hopelessly behind the “progressive movement” of the 1840s.⁹ H.G. Gadamer states that none of Hegel’s critics were able to break the compelling power and truth of the philosophy of reflection without either contradicting themselves or abandoning philosophy as such.¹⁰ In return one could ask: What is the philosophical and not merely historical criterion for this progressiveness, this compelling superiority of the dialectical movement of reflection? For Harich, as a Marxist, the criterion is progress toward a community without estrangement, that is, a community which stands in total mediation with nature and society and thus fulfills what the young Marx postulated: the mediation of “humanism” and “naturalism.”¹¹ Gadamer sees Hegel’s superiority in that there is no position possible which could not be included in the reflective movement of “consciousness coming-to-itself.” To be sure, Gadamer wants to avoid the hybrid conclusions of speculative idealism and to take seriously the critique of the Young Hegelians. Even though his thought lacks the onto-theological foundation of speculative mediation, Gadamer’s idea of universal hermeneutic as a superior and uniquely true method corresponds in principle to Hegel’s idea of historical-dialectical mediation. But Hegel’s concept of truth as that which is in-and-for-itself accordingly dissolves into the ever-changing perspectives of a truth which is for us.

Although it is indeed beyond dispute that the “Archimedean point” from which Hegelian thought might be overturned is not to be found “within the realm of reflection”—were that possible, it would be no Archimedean point—, this point may nevertheless be found outside that realm. And what reason might there be for regarding a position outside of reflection as unphilosophical, unless, of course, philosophy itself were to be identified with the transcendental and speculative philosophy of reflection and its tendency toward total mediation? Gadamer maintains that Feuerbach’s reliance upon the immediate is self-refuting because the appeal to the immediate is not an immediate attitude but rather a reflective act. And in the same spirit he says, with reference to my position, that the appeal to nature and its naturalness is itself neither nature nor natural. But this proposition only expresses the tautology that every reflection is an act of conscious thought and is, as such, no immediate product of nature. This, however, in no way rules out the possibility that nature itself is the measure of all things natural and that even our conscious attitude to it is a power of human nature which produces,

⁹ L. Feuerbach, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie* (Berlin, 1955), 10. [This essay appears also in Feuerbach’s *Kleine Schriften* (Frankfurt, 1966), 78–123, K.R.D.]

¹⁰ H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960), 324ff. and 472ff.

¹¹ MEGA, Sec. I, Vol. III, 144.

discovers, and thinks in us.¹² Reflective consciousness is neither independent nor fundamental and reflection is not initiated by a decision to reflect; it begins rather through a return from the world of things to ourselves.¹³

The priority of nature in its immediacy—insusceptible to dialectic because it does not speak to us—rests upon the fact that it, in contrast to all products and creatures of man, is not constituted by our productive relation with it. The world of nature is not *our* world, that is, a mere setting and environment mediated by man. This world is and always will be self-grounded, *causa sui*, the ground of everything and the purpose of nothing, as it is for Spinoza, whom Feuerbach calls the “Moses of modern materialism.” With respect to us, as men, nature is suprahuman, and not simply a-human or external or humanity. It is, to speak with Goethe’s great sense of nature, “ever true, always right and error is invariably human.”¹⁴

By his anti-Hegelian, and thus indirectly anti-Marxian, revalidation of nature in its immediacy, Feuerbach attempted a return to what metaphysics originally was and remained until Lucretius, namely the science of *physis*, of *natura genatrix*. “Philosophy is the science of actuality in its truth and totality; but the essence of actuality is nature (nature in the most universal sense of the word).” “*Philosophy must reunite itself with the natural sciences, and the natural sciences with philosophy*. This union, based upon reciprocal need and inner necessity, will be more lasting . . . and more fruitful than the *previous misalliance* between philosophy and theology.”¹⁵ There would be little sense in dwelling upon the banal and vulgar aspects of Feuerbach’s naturalism (“Man is what he eats”), for these are obvious. Nor is his constant emphasis upon “sensuousness” of any importance in itself. Its importance lies rather in stressing our access to the world of nature by means of our living, world-open senses. The significance of the human senses is not merely “anthropological” but “ontological” as well.¹⁶

As the *all-creative* force, the *common* nature of all things, which the Greeks recognized as self-moving and self-productive, does not require, as do all human products, some external producer as its mediator. *For Hegel and Marx, on the other hand, that which produces itself is not nature but active spirit or*

¹² The step from organic nature to consciously reflective man constitutes no *absolute* differentiation from the prehuman forms of life. For how could man, as a creature of natural production, invent and produce something if nature herself were not already productive and inventive, making a thousand experiments before producing something new. As Teilhard de Chardin has said, a vertebrate that spreads and feathers its limbs to glide in flight, and man who builds airplanes with craft and reflection both testify to the fact that *Physis* has a *Logos*—with or without consciousness.

¹³ “We awake through *Reflection*, i.e., through a necessitated return to ourselves. But a return without resistance or a reflection without an object are simply unthinkable.” (F. Schelling, *Werke* [Munich, 1927–1956], I, 325.) This return from the world, however, was forced upon us primarily by Christianity. And without Christian self-consciousness, the history of self-reflection, which extends from Descartes through transcendental idealism to Husserl’s Cartesian Meditations and Heidegger’s analytic of *Dasein*, is unthinkable. “Idealism belongs entirely to the new world and does not need to conceal its indebtedness to Christianity for opening the hitherto blocked entryway.” (Schelling, *Werke*, Vol. V, 64.)

¹⁴ J.W. Goethe, *Gespräche*, ed. Biedermann (Leipzig, 1909), IV, 69. See also Vol. II, 40, and the following passage from *Maximen und Reflexionen aus Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren*: “For men have imposed law upon themselves without knowing what it was to which they were giving laws; nature, however, has been ordered by the gods. What men have posited is never quite appropriate, be it right or wrong; but what the gods posit—right or wrong—is always in its proper place.”

¹⁵ L. Feuerbach, *Werke*, II, 231 and 267.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 324. With reference to Spinoza’s *Deus sive Natura*, see *Werke*, Vol. VIII, 116ff.

working man in opposition to nature—whose spiritless or unhuman externality is first spiritualized and humanized by man. The only fundamental insight which Marx derived from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that man produces his own world and hence his own self by the all-transforming activity of work. Whence, however, does man—either as subjectively active spirit or as actually productive man—derive this creative force which enables him to possess the world by cultivating nature through his labor and imaginatively re-creating it according to his own purposes? This is a question which neither Marx nor Hegel was able to answer. They ascribe to active spirit, to man as a producer, a force which originally belongs only to nature, as *natura naturans*.¹⁷

3. Marx's Critique of Feuerbach

The first sentence of the First Thesis reads: "It is the main defect of all previous materialism (Feuerbach's included) that the object, actuality (sensuousness), is only grasped in objective form, or intuitively, and not subjectively, as sensuous human activity, as practice." Feuerbach's materialism views objective reality as standing vis-à-vis sensuous intuition, as having the character of an object. The basis for his interpretation lies in the fact that he does not understand sensuous intuition as a productive "sensuous-human activity," as practice, or, to express it in Hegel's terms, he does not dialectically comprehend that which stands over and against sense-certainty as "the other of itself." According to Marx, this active aspect of man which produces the object was neglected by the materialist tradition and only developed by the idealism of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, even though these latter assumed that the active agent was the categorial understanding, the active I, or spirit, alienating itself to create a world. Feuerbach's materialism is a retrogression from the practice which idealism had already worked out in theory; he does not manage to transform the idealist notion of practical activity into an actual, material activity, because he does not understand that human activity is both "critical" in that it alters the object as well as "objective," that is, productive of its own object. And it is this "practical-critical" and "revolutionary" activity of historical production which chiefly matters in the materialistic idealism of Marx. Marx therefore calls it "historical," or "practical," materialism and at times equates it with "communism." Feuerbach's materialism, on the other hand, is not concerned with anything historical or mediating and is therefore a naturalism unmediated by human society. "Insofar as Feuerbach is a materialist, he takes no account of history, and whenever he does concern

¹⁷ See Jan van der Meulen, *Hegel: Die gebrochene Mitte* (Hamburg, 1958), 258ff. It is here convincingly shown that Hegel underestimated the significance of nature and why, in taking his departure from self-positing spirit, he had to do so, even though the conceptual superiority of his over Kant's theory of nature enabled him to discover categories of "spirit" already present in organic forms of life: self-production, self-subsistence, self-differentiation. Despite these insights, nature remained for Hegel the "other" in relation to spirit. This may be seen already in the *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, ed. Lasson (Hamburg, 1923), 189. "Nature determined as the other, has its life in something other than life itself. . . ." Cf. *Logik*, ed. Lasson (Leipzig, 1934), I, 105: "Physical nature is an other which is such according to its own determination; it is the other of spirit. At first, this determination of nature is thus a mere relativity; it expresses no quality of nature itself but only a relation external to it. But since spirit is the true Something, nature in itself is accordingly no more than what it is vis-à-vis spirit; insofar as nature is taken to be for itself, its quality is therefore that of being the other in its self, being-outside-itself (in the determinations of space, time, and matter)." As an ontology of consciousness, Hegel's system presupposes that a self-systematizing development can only take place where spirit and consciousness exist. This development is consequently not to be found in the world of nature but only in world-history. Compare Gabler, *Kritik des Bewusstseins* (Leiden, 1901), 195ff., and especially M. Riedel, *Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart, 1965). See also Feuerbach, *Werke*, VIII, 26f. and 111.

himself with history, he is not a materialist. For him, materialism and history are poles apart.”¹⁸ And since history is political-social history, Marx criticizes Feuerbach for paying too much attention to nature and too little to the politics with which contemporary philosophy must align itself if it is to become true.

Since Feuerbach regards nature as a permanently existing object of sensuous intuition, objects take on the appearance of being immediately present in our theoretical vision, whereas they are really products of human industry and not of an already given, independent nature. The praxis of Marx’s materialistic idealism is ultimately designed to realize an element of reason absent in existing society and to transform Hegel’s proposition concerning the rationality of the actual into a fact. *The sphere of dialectical mediation within which Marx, following Hegel, finds his orientation is therefore not the world of nature but the world of history, and, accordingly, of man.* For the practical idealism of Marx, the primary and original world of nature is as external and accidental as it is for the speculative idealism of Hegel, and for the modern man of the industrial age it is as indifferent as those “coral islands of recent origin” which Marx probably read about in Darwin’s travel book.¹⁹

For Hegel and Marx, the world of nature possesses no rationality because it lacks self-consciousness. Its actuality is minimal because it is only mediated and actualized by man. The “actuality” of which Marx speaks is one which is dependent upon man.

But it is not only the *world* around us which is a result of practical activity. This is also the case for the truth of theoretical knowledge. The Second Thesis reads: “The question whether human thought attains objective truth is not a theoretical but a practical question. Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality, of his thought in practice. The quarrel over the reality or unreality of thought isolated from practice is purely scholastic.” Thus even the truth of theoretical knowledge is only elicited and verified in practice, that is, man recognizes reality only insofar as he makes and produces it—a thesis whose distant origin is found in the theological notion that knowledge and creation are at one in God. Marx himself returns once again to his second thesis in a footnote to *Capital*²⁰ where he cites Vico’s proposition concerning the convertibility of the true and the self-made. Accordingly, truth is no longer understood as *adequatio rei et intellectus*; man’s knowledge of his object is adequate because he has actually created it through practical creativity. Marx, unlike Vico, never asked how man could know a nature which he had not himself produced; this question fell outside the exclusively anthropological-social area of his interest. Only Engels attempted to extend dialectic to nature.

4. Feuerbach’s Critique of Hegel’s Dialectic of Sense-Certainty

We shall limit ourselves to the problem which is central to Hegel and Marx and which also embraces the question of history, namely the problem of mediation. When Feuerbach lays stress upon the “immediacy” of nature and sensuous experience, his very terminology is misleading and unduly open to attack. As is so often the case, language here fails to express what is meant, namely something positive and original. If the immediate were merely the *unmediated* or the *not yet* mediated, dialectic

¹⁸ MEGA, Sec. I, Vol. V, 34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33ff.

²⁰ Marx, *Das Kapital* (Hamburg, 1867), I, pt. 4, chap. 13.

would triumph with ease. For, in the Hegelian sense, even the immediate can only exist for mediating thought. And the same inadequacy of language obtains for the words “infinite,” “unconditioned,” and “unconscious.”²¹ The meaning intended in talk about the “immediate” would be better expressed by calling it “that which shows itself,” “that which directly gives itself” or, with reference to Husserl, “originary self-presentification.”

Feuerbach challenges the fundamental principle of the Hegelian system: the *identity of thought and being*, which is the starting point as well as the goal of dialectical mediation. At the level of the *Phenomenology*, the road toward identity is a progressive *correspondence* of the subjective and objective aspect, beginning with the relationship between sense consciousness and object. An immediately present object corresponds precisely to the immediate consciousness and its sense-certainty. In this certainty, consciousness is an I only as a “pure this” and the object is likewise a “pure this.” The individual knows what is individual (a this-here-now) just as, at the end of the course of experience, absolute knowledge corresponds to the absolute. And absolute *knowledge* is a knowledge *of the absolute* in precisely the same sense that immediate *consciousness* is a consciousness *of the immediate*.²² By reformulating the difference between thought and being as a difference between knowing and the known, the difference itself is simply smoothed over, and not merely in the sense of reciprocal relation, but as a self-sameness brought to completion. From the very beginning, Hegel’s system is governed by a fundamental proposition: the “identity of identity and non-identity”; and this proposition corresponds to the dialectical mediation of related terms in a supervening “third,” that is, in their relationship as such. In this *quid pro quo* of immediate consciousness = consciousness of the immediate, and absolute knowledge = knowledge of the absolute, the whole problematic of dialectical mediation is spelled out in a language which in its very structure must be equally speculative-dialectical in so uniting what is disparate that it will not disintegrate. Whoever uncritically submits himself to this circle will find no escape. The prisoner of reflection can only make his way to freedom by means of a leap. And in 1839, with the publication of his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy* in the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, Feuerbach made just such a leap. This work was followed up by the *Preliminary Theses for a Reform of Philosophy* (1842) and the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (1843).

Contrary to Hegel’s principle of speculative identity, Feuerbach insists upon the insoluble difference between thought and being (as well as between being and nothingness, singular and universal), because being (*esse*) is not merely being-thought but factual existence, or, to use Schelling’s term, “*unvordenklich*.” Actual being is a definite existence, here and now; thought and word are abstractly universal. The real existence of something shows itself to me and I can point to it; a being that has merely been thought cannot by itself prove any existence, despite Hegel’s modification of the ontological argument. But if Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel’s system of total mediation is to be

²¹ If the in-finite were merely the non-*finite*, the un-conditioned merely what is not *conditioned*, and the un-conscious merely what is not *conscious*, then these categories would have no positive meaning of their own.

²² In an extraordinary fashion, this correspondence also determines the dialectical principle of the philosophy of religion: “Man has knowledge of God only insofar as God has knowledge of himself in man; this knowledge is the self-consciousness of God but it is just as much God’s knowledge of man, and this, God’s knowledge of man, is man’s knowledge of God. The spirit of man, to know God, is simply the spirit of God himself.” (Feuerbach, *Werke*, III/2, 117; Cf. III/1, 6 and 14). Cf. Wilhelm Purpus, *Zur Dialektik des Bewusstseins nach Hegel* (Berlin, 1908), 20.

understood, Hegel's dialectic of sense-certainty²³ must be presented in greater detail than in Feuerbach's critique itself. Even though our summary will be very abbreviated, simplified, and rough, it will nevertheless suffice to elucidate the dubious character of any dialectic²⁴ and the legitimacy of Feuerbach's critique.

It seems at first to sense consciousness that its object as well as its self are immediately given. Both the I sensuously conscious of a visible object and this object itself have the form of immediacy. They seem to confront one another as two things independent of any essential relation. On the one hand, there is my knowledge, on the other, an object alien to it; and although I indeed know the object, it nevertheless remains what it is even when it is not known. For sense-certainty, what is true and essential is not my knowledge but this object, since knowledge of an object is only possible when the object itself is first given to the knower.

Skeptically, Hegel now proceeds to examine whether the knowledge contained in sense-certainty is truly certain of its object and whether it is in any sense what it presumes to be. To this end, it is not at all necessary to reflect; it suffices simply to observe the objective certitude of sense-certainty in the same manner that sense-certainty itself maintains this certitude. Thus the question: "What is a 'this,' here and now?" This here, for example, is a tree. I turn around and this truth of sense-certainty has disappeared: the here is no longer a tree, but, for example, a house. "This tree" as well as "this house" are indifferent to the universal "this." To be sure, we still mean this definite individual tree and this definite individual house, but we are quite unable to say how we mean it, and language refutes our meaning when it turns out that the truth of sense-certainty is not the individual "this here" but an abstract universal "this." The same thing happens when instead of a "this-*here*" we consider a "this-*now*," for example, noon, day, night. Their indifferent "being now" is not immediate but mediated because the abstract universal "now" is negatively determined through the fact that it is neither day nor night. The "now" is a negative "this," equally indifferent to both day and night, a universal pure and simple. The immediately concrete "this," day or night, merely plays along (*spielt nur beiber*); day and night are mere "examples" (*Beispiele*). The being of this-tree-here and of this-day-now does not remain something immediate, since sense-certainty, in its very nature proves the universal to be the truth of its object; it takes, instead, the form of something in which the process of mediation and negation is essential.

If one compares the relation in which knowledge and the object first stood with the relation they have come to assume in this result, it is found to be just the reverse of what first appeared. The object, which at first seemed to be the essential reality, has become the nonessential element, since the object, which was presumed to subsist even when we are not conscious of it, is no longer the universal. The universal is now our knowledge, which formerly seemed to be the nonessential factor. The object *is* only insofar as I *know* it. The truth of sense-certainty now lies in the I, in the immediate fact of my seeing. But the I, in turn, is a universal I. No doubt I "mean" an individual I (me), but I am as little

²³ In addition to Purpus, *op. cit.*, cf. Gabler's "die Erläuterung der Dialektik des Bewusstseins" in *Kritik des Bewusstseins* (Leiden, 1901).

²⁴ Heidegger characterizes it as a "genuine philosophic embarrassment." He himself, relinquishing mediation, reduces the dialectic to "correspondences."

able to express its individuality as that of the here and the now; for when I say “I,” I say “all I’s.” “Sense-certainty therefore discovers by experience that its essential nature lies neither in the object nor in the I and that the immediacy peculiar to it is neither an immediacy of the one nor of the other. For, in the case of both what I ‘mean’ is rather something nonessential; and the object and the I are universals, wherein that now and here and I, which I ‘mean,’ neither endures nor exists.”

Thus the whole truth of sense-certainty—and only the whole is the truth—is not the disrelatedness of consciousness and object but rather their reciprocal relation, in accordance with which consciousness and object *together* undergo a change. This relation exists as a third term comprehending the two relating terms and merging them into a “conclusion.” The apparent truth of sense-certainty has become stale through the dialectic of sense-certainty; for what seemed to be immediate, simple, and unequivocal, namely the “this” here and now, proves to be a “mediated simplicity or universality,” mediated through thought and language.

Language, however, is the more truthful; in it we ourselves directly refute our own “meaning”; and since the universal is the truth of sense-certainty and language merely expresses this universal [Hoffmeister reads ‘truth,’ K.D.], it is not at all possible for us even to express in words any sensuous being which we “mean.”²⁵

This is precisely the point which Feuerbach challenges. Were Hegel really to enter the experience of sensuous consciousness and to shift the emphasis of the *Phenomenology* away from the *logic* of the phenomena, he would then have to acknowledge that sense-certainty in no way refutes itself by virtue of being thought and expressed and he would have to recognize the reason why. “Language is here beside the point”²⁶—“here,” that is, in the realm of the senses.

How could ... sense consciousness find itself refuted or be refuted by the fact that individual being is inexpressible? Rather than a refutation of sense-certainty, sense consciousness takes this to be a refutation of language. Granting sense consciousness its own domain, its position is fully justified; otherwise, in the domain of life, we would have our *hunger* stilled with words instead of things. Sense consciousness therefore takes the entire first chapter of the *Phenomenology* to be nothing but ... a word game which thought already *certain of itself* as truth plays with natural consciousness.²⁷

²⁵ G.W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1948), 82.

²⁶ Cf. Feuerbach, 312. “In the beginning of the *Phenomenology* we encounter nothing but the contradiction between the *word*, which is universal, and the *fact*, which is always singular. And thought, which is exclusively based upon words, cannot overcome this contradiction. The word, however, is as little identical with the fact, as being when it is *pronounced* or *thought* is identical with actual being. If one should protest that—contrary to our standpoint—Hegel did not discuss being on the practical level but only on the theoretical one, it must be pointed out that the practical standpoint is very appropriate here. The question of being is after all a practical question, a question in which our being participates. . . . Being, grounded upon a multiplicity of such inexpressibles, is therefore itself inexpressible. The secret of being first discloses itself ... where the Word terminates. If inexpressibility is therefore irrationality, then all of existence is irrational, since it is never anything but *this* existence. But existence is not irrational. Even without expressibility existence has its own sense and reason.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 312.

Sense consciousness will never be talked into believing that its object is a universal “this” mediated by negation. “Hegel does not refute the here as an object of sense consciousness, differentiated for us from an object of pure thought; what he refutes is rather the logical here, the logical now. He refutes the *thought* of This-ness, the *Haecceitas*.”²⁸

The *Phenomenology* is nothing but phenomenological logic.—This is the only point of view from which the chapter on sense-certainty is excusable. But this chapter is what it is because Hegel has not really projected and thought himself into sense consciousness, because sense consciousness is only an object in the sense of being an object of self-consciousness, of thought, because it is only the externalization of thought within self-certainty. Thus the *Phenomenology* or the *Logic*—for they amount to the same thing—begins by immediately presupposing itself, and accordingly with an immediate contradiction, an absolute break with sense consciousness. For it begins ... not with the otherness of thought, but with the *thought of the otherness of thought*. Under these conditions thought is naturally certain of its victory from the outset—hence the humor with which thought makes a fool of sense consciousness. For the same reason, however, thought has not really refuted its opponent.²⁹

The decisive objection which Feuerbach—much like Schelling and Kierkegaard—directs against Hegel’s system of total mediation is that Hegel as a thinker begins with thought rather than with that precondition of all reflection which thought as such cannot anticipate; and that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* only seemingly and programmatically begins with the intuition of the simplest phenomenon, whereas it actually begins with the *logos* of the *Logic*: with self-thinking thought. Hegel begins with the *immediate* presupposition of philosophy as onto-logic, which, in turn, is onto-theology.³⁰ “There is, of course, an unavoidable discontinuity in the nature of science as such; it is however unnecessary that this discontinuity be unmediated. Philosophy mediates it by producing itself out of non-philosophy.”³¹ Philosophy must have the courage to call itself into question, instead of merely developing what it has posited in advance.

The philosopher must incorporate into the very text of philosophy what Hegel reduced to a footnote, namely, the non-philosophical aspect of man, that which is against philosophy and opposes abstract thought. Only then will philosophy become a universal ... irresistible power. Hence philosophy must not begin *with itself* but with its *antithesis*, with *non-philosophy*. The principle of *sensualism* is precisely this aspect of our nature which is distinct from thought, unphilosophical, and absolutely anti-scholastic.³²

When Feuerbach takes recourse to sensuous intuition in order to regain an immediate access to nature, it is not because he lacks an understanding of the mediation, whose conditional truth is conceded in the realm of the “with-worldly” relations (I and Thou) and cultural-historical productions.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 312ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ L. Feuerbach, “Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft,” No. 6 in his *Kleine Schriften* (Frankfurt, 1966), uses this expression to characterize metaphysics.

³¹ L. Feuerbach, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie*, 211, footnote.

³² *Ibid.*, 211.

His purpose is rather to break through a circle of thought caught up in reflection. He is also aware of the fact that the sensuous aspect of the senses—by which the object is, in the true sense of the word, “given” to us—is not the “immediate” in the sense which speculative philosophy attaches to the word, that is, something thoughtless and obvious. Immediate sensuous intuition is, on the contrary, subordinated to imagination and representation. Ordinarily, intuition does not intuit something as it is in itself but only as it is first imagined and represented. The true sensuous intuition first makes visible what is invisible to the uneducated eye.

At first men only see things *as they appear to them*, not as they are; they see in things not the things themselves but only what they imagine them to be, and they ascribe their own nature to things, not distinguishing between an object and a representation of it. To the uneducated, subjective man, representation lies *nearer* at hand than *intuition*, for he is drawn *outside of himself* in intuition whereas he *remains by himself* in representation. . . . Mankind has only very recently made a return to that sense of the *sensuous* which was present in Greece after the passing of the oriental dream world, i.e. an *unfalsified, objective*, intuition of the sensuous, i.e., the actual; and by this return, mankind has also come, for the first time, to itself.³³

When, on the other hand, Hegel demands that one give up seeing and hearing to make real thinking possible, one might well ask how a thought could subsist without that attentive intuition of the thing in question in terms of which it corrects itself and lets itself be determined. Feuerbach, on the other hand, also realizes that our senses—even such lowly ones as taste and smell—are human and hence “spiritual.”³⁴ “Universal consciousness” is itself already “spirituality”; man’s sensuousness is full of sense. And, within the bounds of aesthetics, Hegel too has not contested this. Indeed, he has, more than anyone else, emphasized the point: “Sense! This wonderful word, whose usage combines two opposed meanings. On the one hand, it signifies the organs of immediate apprehension, on the other, however, what we call sense: the meaning, the thought, the universality of a fact. And thus sense refers on one hand to the immediate exteriority of existence and on the other to the inner essence of this existence.”³⁵ But the sensuous nature of incarnate man, which gives him access to the world of nature, is *by nature* already mediated with that which Hegel calls “Spirit” and takes as his unmediated point of departure.

The dubious character of idealism, both speculative and materialist, is bound up with its attitude toward nature. The model for theoretical as well as for practical mediation is not the primary world of nature, which produces and reproduces itself without human mediation, but rather the secondary world of active spirit, of working man,³⁶ who appropriates the world and makes it his own, that is, makes it into an environment. Whether a metaphysic originates in the world of nature or in the historically mediated world of man distinguishes ineradicably a mode of thought. And this

³³ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia* § 449, *Zusatz*, concerning intuition and imagination.

³⁴ L. Feuerbach, *op. cit.*, 342. Cf. *Werke*, IV, 188ff. with reference to Descartes’ *cogito*.

³⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, XII, 182f.

³⁶ The expressions “active spirit” and “working man” both refer to the same state of affairs. Work is, according to Hegel, the mark of man’s spiritual nature (animals don’t work). When Hegel speaks about the “work of the concept,” this is no mere metaphor; it is a consequence of regarding comprehension itself as a process of “appropriating,” “penetrating,” bringing into the form of “universality.” (*Philosophie der Religion*, III, 126).

distinction is especially clear when the methodological point of departure is the same, namely, the reflection of the world in our consciousness. Such is the case in Hegel and Descartes. With the common aim of realizing a complete skepticism, both have doubted the truth of sense-certainty and both have epitomized their doubt in a drastic example: Hegel with the disappearance of this tree here; Descartes with the disappearance of a piece of wax.

5. The Undialectical Critique of Sense-Certainty in Descartes

No ingenious process of reflection or contortions of language are required to understand Descartes' doubt in the truth of sense-certainty. Unlike Hegel, he does not use such terms as "the here" and "the now" to refer to what is here and now, and he never speaks of "the I." In Descartes, there is a complete equilibrium between what is said and what is meant. Everything is presented with great simplicity, reserve and easy precision, without paradoxical inversions and rhetorical effects, thus giving the reader the impression that—thanks to the universal distribution of "*bon sens*"—he himself could have thought and said it in exactly the same way.

Descartes' example is not merely a byplay, for the course of his thought does not venture into the speculative heights of independent thought processes. Doubt in the truth of sense-certainty is grounded in the basic self-certainty of the "*Je pense, donc je suis*." But despite this certainty of the thinking self, it is nevertheless difficult to give up the opinion that the material things which we know by our senses are much more distinct than our invisible ego, taken exclusively as the agent of our consciousness. The human spirit is inclined to err in favor of what is external rather than keeping within the limits of the truth of self-certainty. "So be it! Let us slacken the reins of the mind once more, so that when the time is right we may draw them gently and control the mind more easily."³⁷ Let us take another look at the external objects with which we deal and are already acquainted. And not merely objects in general, but a very definite one, e.g., this piece of wax here.

It was but recently taken from the hive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained, it still retains something of the fragrance of the flowers from which it was gathered; its color, shape and size are readily apparent: it is hard, also cold, easily touched and if tapped with one's finger, it emits a sound. In short, it has everything which seems requisite for the most distinct acquaintance with any material body. But look! While I am speaking, the wax is taken near the fire; whatever taste it had is lost, its odor evaporates, its color changes, its shape is destroyed, it grows larger, it liquefies, it becomes hot, can hardly be touched and when tapped will no longer emit a sound: Does it nevertheless remain the same piece of wax?

What does remain of the piece of wax when all its properties (odor, color, shape, etc.) change and disappear? All that remains is a materially extended something which in turn admits of multiple differentiations according to the degree of heat that the piece of wax is exposed to. One must therefore admit that the enduring essence of the wax can only be grasped in thought (*solius mentis inspectio*) and not by means of the senses. Our thought, however, is led astray by words and linguistic usage. We are even caught up in words when we are not speaking, when we are silently considering what this piece

³⁷ This quotation and the following ones are taken from the concluding pages of Descartes' Second *Meditation*.

of wax here really is. We say to ourselves: I *see* a piece of wax. We don't say: In thinking about its color, odor and shape, I judge that this body is a piece of wax. We therefore tend to conclude that the wax is known through the act of seeing and not exclusively through the insight of our understanding.

But when I happen to look from a window at people passing by in the street, I find it natural to say, just as in the case of the wax, 'I see them.' And yet I see nothing but hats and coats under which machines might very well be hidden. I nevertheless judge that they are people. Thus what I presumed to see with my eyes I really know only through that ability to judge which dwells in my mind.

If one observes the naked wax, having, as it were, stripped off its clothes, it then becomes clear that its "waxness" is only grasped by means of thought, namely as *res extensa*. And now Descartes draws the slackened reins taut and returns to the thinking ego, which constructs the vanished world of sensibly visible things with mathematical ideas. The fact that I exist as one who sees was implied by my seeing the wax sensuously, and although I was mistaken about what I saw, it still remains certain that my consciousness of seeing exists, that this *cogitatio is* and that therefore I as a thinking being exist. What I notice in reference to the wax can be applied to everything that exists outside of myself. Thus, by analyzing the seeing of the wax, we discover at last the nature of our own mind.

And behold! The goal which I sought I have finally attained, without any external assistance. For now that I know that material bodies are not, properly speaking, conceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination, by being touched or seen, but solely through the understanding, by being grasped in thought, I clearly recognize that I can grasp nothing more easily and obviously than my own mind. But since one cannot readily relinquish the habit of a deeply rooted opinion, this seems an appropriate place to stop, that by prolonged meditation this newly gained knowledge may be more firmly impressed upon my memory.

Let us summarize the difference between Descartes' and Hegel's doubt concerning the truth of sense-certainty. Both make sense-certainty disappear in order to find its truth and both ask what is left after this disappearance. Hegel's answer is abstract: what remains is only the "universal" which is indifferent to everything that exists here and now; and finally, as the truth of the related terms, consciousness and object, a third term appears: the relation as such. Hegel's dialectic of sense-certainty challenges my immediate meaning and appeals to the greater truth of language, which always expresses the universal even when we mean the singular.

Since the very origin of Descartes' thought lay in mathematics and physics, he was protected from developing a confidence in language, and thus his answer to the question "what remains?" is not *abstractly*-universal. What remains essential in material things is their extension—something that cannot be seen but only thought by the *ego cogitans*, the undialectical, unequivocal, and one-sided basis for the reconstruction of the physical world out of mathematical ideas. Descartes' *Meditations* initiated a development which led to the foundation of modern physics and scientific technology; and his destruction of sensuous appearance, designed to bring about a mathematically universal science, is today of greater interest than ever, even though his definition of matter and his mechanical conception of the world have proved inadequate. And although the progress of science has left his conception of

the living automaton far behind, this progress itself was nevertheless made in the direction which he pointed out.³⁸

Hegel's dialectic of sense-certainty has had no scientific ramifications. Its goal was not to lay, according to the rules of the understanding, a new philosophical foundation for the construction of science, but rather to fulfill skepticism in the absolute knowledge of the absolute. The correctness and truth of Hegel's accomplishment cannot be proved, or refuted, or experimentally controlled. The "science" of the experiences of consciousness is speculative and has therefore nothing in common with science in the scientific sense of the word. This was already the case in Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, whose "non-I" Hegel translates into "the other." If we finally ask ourselves: "What is this whole of Hegelian truth in which the senses lose their certainty?" we do not find an easy answer. It is an ingenious systematic construction, an unsurpassable edifice of conceptual reflection; and yet, in the midst of all this disobligingly pleasurable construction and progression, there is a wealth of genuine phenomenological insight concerning the spiritual world of man. Croce has set the precedent of distinguishing what is dead from what is living in the whole of Hegel's thought—he was followed by Dilthey, N. Hartmann, and T. Litt—, and whoever refuses to do the same, arguing that the whole alone is the truth, will also have to forego those real insights which the system itself tends rather to hide than sustain.

Confronting Hegel and Descartes, we find ourselves in a twofold dilemma. We are neither inclined to distrust on principle the testimony of our senses and their world-disclosing power in favor of a mathematico-physical construct, nor are we willing "to walk for once also on our head" with Hegel, trusting the seemingly cogent but really only persuasive course of speculative reflection. Only evidence, what is immediately illuminating, is cogent without being coercive. And since the human senses stem from the same origin as that which presents itself to them, one can assume that in every living being they are attuned to the corresponding appearance.³⁹

³⁸ Cf. Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres I* (Bibl. de la Pléiade), 843ff. (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

³⁹ Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York, 1929), 219ff.: "There can only be evidence of a world of actual entities, if the immediate actual entity discloses them as essential to its own composition."