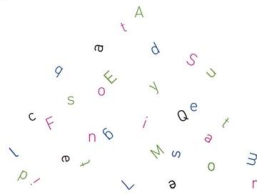
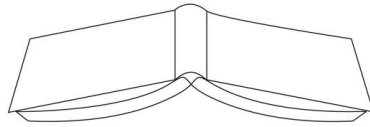


# Against Epistemology

A Metacritique

THEODOR W. ADORNO



# Against Epistemology

A Metacritique

THEODOR W. ADORNO

THEODOR W. ADORNO

Against Epistemology:  
A Metacritique

Studies in Husserl and the  
Phenomenological Antinomies

Translated by Willis Domingo

Originally published as *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* © Suhrkamp Verlag,  
Frankfurt am Main 1970

English translation © Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited 1982  
First published in English 1982  
This edition first published in 2013 by Polity Press

Polity Press  
65 Bridge Street  
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press  
350 Main Street  
Malden, MA 02148, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-6966-3

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-6537-5  
ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-6538-2(pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Group Limited, Bodmin, Cornwall

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: [www.politybooks.com](http://www.politybooks.com)

# Contents

Preface

Introduction

Procedure and Object    Immanent Critique  
Mediating the First    Mathematicization  
Concept of Method    Promoting the Subject  
Persistence as Truth    The Elementary  
The Regressive

Philosophy of Origins and Epistemology  
System and Debit    Opposing Forces in Epistemology  
The Drive for System    Doctrine of Antinomies  
Nominalism    Motivation and Tendency of Ontology  
Illusory Concretization and Formalism  
New and Old

1 Critique of Logical Absolutism

Philosophy, Metaphysics and Science  
Contradiction in Scientificization  
Concept of Intuition    Husserl's Scientism  
Dialectic in Spite of Itself    A Head-Start for Science  
'Realism' in Logic    The Logical In-Itself  
Presupposition of Logical Absolutism  
Essence and Development (*Entfaltung*)  
Calculators, Logic and Mechanics  
Reification of Logic    The Logical 'Object'  
Autosemantic and Synsemantic Expressions  
Logical Laws and Laws of Thought  
Aporia of Logical Absolutism  
Relating Genesis and Validity    Genesis and Psychology  
Thinking and Psychologism

The Law of Non-Contradiction    The Law of Identity  
Contingency    Abandoning the Empirical  
Phenomenological and Eidetic Motifs

## 2 Species and Intention

Propositions in Themselves and Essences  
Lived Experience (*Erlebnis*) and 'Sense'  
Critique of Singular 'Senses'  
Origin of Essential Insight (*Wesensschau*)  
'Ideational Abstraction'    Abstraction and *τόδε τι*  
The Primacy of Meaning Analysis (*Bedeutungsanalyse*)  
The Function of the Noema    Noema and *εἶδος*  
Relation Between the Two Reductions    Noema as Hybrid  
Essence and 'Factual States of Consciousness'  
Antinomy of Subjectivism and Eidetics  
'Eidetic Variations'    Essence as Fiction

## 3 Epistemological Concepts in Dialectic

Phenomenology as Epistemology  
Positivism and Platonism    Husserl's Concept of  
Givenness    'Foundation' (*Fundierung*)  
Ontologization of the Factual  
Thing as Model of the Given  
Givenness Mediated in Itself    The Subject of Givenness  
Paradoxia of Pure Intuition

Matter as Fulfilment    Sensation and Perception  
Antinomy of the Doctrine of Perception  
Sensation and Materialism  
Epistemology as Elementary Analysis    'Gestalt'

Intentionality and Constitution    Enter Noesis and Noema  
The Forgotten Synthesis    Critique of Correlation Theory  
Pure Identity and Noematic Core  
The Primacy of Objectifying Acts

Thing as Clue (*Leitfaden*)     Antinomy of the Noema  
Critique Dismissed

Antagonism to System  
Husserl's Transition to Transcendental Idealism  
Fragility of the System

#### 4 Essence and Pure Ego

Husserl and his Successors     Phenomenology  
Attempts to Break Out     Self-Revocation  
Character of Immanence and the Fetishism of the Concept  
'Attitude' (*Einstellung*)     Fantasy and Body

Categorical Intuition     The Paradoxical Apex  
The Provenance of Logical Absolutism  
Fulfilment of Unsensed Moments  
'Becoming Aware' (*Gewahrwerdung*)  
Motivation of Objectivism  
Withering Away of Argument  
Phenomenology as Philosophy of Reflection  
The System in Ruins

Advanced and Restorative Elements  
Natural History Museum Abstract     Ideal of Security  
Infinitization of the Temporal     Origin of the *εἶδος* Ego  
Consciousness, Pure Essence, Time  
Transcendental Ego and Facticity     Equivocation of 'I'  
Solipsism     The Aporia of Transcendental Experience  
The End of Idealism

Translator's Note  
Bibliographical Note  
German–English Lexicon

Index

For Max



## Preface

Portions of an extensive manuscript produced in Oxford during my first years of emigration, 1934–37, have been selected and reworked. For I felt their scope and significance kept them above simple academic dispute. Without sacrificing contact with the subject matter and thus the obligation to argue effectively against a method designed to forego the need for argument, the question I shall broach – by means of a concrete model – is the possibility and truth of epistemology in principle. Husserl's philosophy is the occasion and not the point of this book. Thus it is not to be presented as a completed whole and then subject to some sort of comparison. As is appropriate for a thought which does not submit to the idea of a system, I seek to organize what is thought around its focal points. The result was a discontinuous and yet most closely connected, mutually supporting set of individual studies. Overlapping was unavoidable.

This book inclines toward substantive philosophy. The critique of Husserl aims across his work at the tendency, which was of such emphatic concern to him and which he felt German philosophizing appropriated much more fundamentally than is currently admitted. The book is, nevertheless, not systematic in the sense of the traditional contrast to history. If it challenges the very concept of system, it also seeks to grasp an historical core inside the substantive question. For the historical/systematic distinction also falls under the critique of this book.

Nowhere do I pretend it is philological or hermeneutic. Secondary literature is ignored. A number of Husserl's own texts, especially in the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, are a densely complex thicket and certainly even ambiguous. Should my interpretation occasionally be in error, I would be the last to defend it. On the other hand, I could not respect programmatic declarations, and had to abide by what the texts themselves appeared to me to say. Thus I did not allow

myself to be intimidated by Husserl's assurance that pure phenomenology is not epistemology, and that the region of pure consciousness has nothing to do with the concept of the structure of the given in the immanence of consciousness (*Bewußtseinsimmanenz*) as it was known to pre-Husserlian criticism. How exactly Husserl distinguishes himself from this criticism is just as much a matter of discussion as whether that distinction is binding or not.

My analysis is confined to what Husserl himself published, with preference for the authentic phenomenological writing – on which the restoration of ontology was based – over the later works, in which Husserl's phenomenology betrayed itself and reverted into a subtly modified neo-Kantianism. Yet, since the revision of pure phenomenology came not from the convictions of its creator, but was rather imposed by its object, I thus felt free to turn to the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and the *Cartesian Meditations*, whenever the drift of the discussion demanded it. All the pre-phenomenological writings have been ignored, in particular the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, as well as the posthumous publications. Comprehensiveness was never my aim. The analyses Husserl actually carried through and to which he himself devoted his energy provoked my attention more than the total edifice.

Yet my intention was certainly not the mere critique of details. Instead of disputing individual epistemological issues, micrological procedure should stringently demonstrate how such questions surpass themselves and indeed their entire sphere. The themes which compose such a movement are summarized in the Introduction. The four studies alone, however, are responsible for the cogency of what I have developed.

Three of the chapters have appeared in *Archiv für Philosophie*. Chapter 4 was published separately as early as 1938 under the title 'Zur Philosophie Husserls' (Band 3, Heft 4). Chapters 1 and 2 came out in 1953 (Band 5, Heft 2 and Band 6, Heft 1/2). The final chapter in particular has been thoroughly revised since its first appearance.

Frankfurt  
Easter 1956

# Introduction

*Θνατὰ χρὴ τὸν Θνατόν, οὐκ α'θάνατα τὸν Θνατὸν φρονεῖν.*

A mortal must think mortal and not immortal thoughts.

Epicharmus, Fragment 20\*

## *Procedure and Object*

The attempt to discuss Husserl's pure phenomenology in the spirit of the dialectic risks the initial suspicion of caprice. Husserl's programme deals with a 'sphere of being of absolute origins',<sup>1</sup> safe from that 'regulated, methodically cultivated spirit of contradiction', which Hegel once called his procedure in conversations with Goethe.<sup>2</sup> The dialectic, as Hegel conceived it and which was later turned against him, is, however congenial, qualitatively different from the positive philosophies, among which in the name of the system his is included. Though Hegel's logic, like Kant's, may be 'fastened' to the transcendental subject, and be completed (*vollkommener*) Idealism, yet it refers beyond itself – as does everything complete according to Goethe's dialectical dictum. The power of the uncontradictable, which Hegel wields like no other – and whose force later bourgeois philosophy, including Husserl's, only gropingly and in fragments rediscovered for itself – is the power of contradiction. This power turns against itself and against the idea of absolute knowledge. Thought, by actively beholding, rediscovers itself in every entity, without tolerating any restrictions. It breaches, as just such a restriction, the requirement to establish a fixed ultimate to all its determinations. It thus also undermines the primacy of the system and its own content.

The Hegelian system must indeed presuppose subject–object identity, and thus the very primacy of spirit which it seeks to prove. But as it unfolds concretely, it confutes the identity which it attributes to the

whole. What is antithetically developed, however, is not, as one would no doubt currently have it, the structure of being in itself, but rather antagonistic society. For it is no coincidence that all the stages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – which appears as self-movement on the part of the concept – refer to the stages of antagonistic society. What is compelling about both the dialectic and the system and is inseparable from their character of immanence or 'logicality', is made to approximate real compulsion by their own principle of identity. Thought submits to the real compulsion of societal debt relations and, deluded, claims this compulsion as its own. Its closed circle brings about the unbroken illusion of the natural and, in the end, the metaphysical illusion of being. Dialectic, however, constantly brings this appearance back to nothing.

In the face of this, Husserl appealed to the end, in the name of his serried complete presentation of phenomenology, to that Cartesian illusion which applies to the absolute foundations of philosophy. He would like to revive *prima philosophia* by means of reflection on a spirit divested of every trace of the entity pure and simple. The metaphysical conception which characterized the beginning of the era appeared in the end as most exceedingly sublimated and disabused. As a result, however, it just appeared all the more unavoidable and consistent, naked and bare: The development of a doctrine of being under the conditions of nominalism and the reduction of concepts to the thinking subject. But this phenomenological conception just rejects dialectical analysis and Hegel's negativity as the enemy. The doctrine that everything is mediated, even supporting immediacy, is irreconcilable with the urge to 'reduction'<sup>3</sup> and is stigmatized as logical nonsense. Hegel's scepticism about the choice of an absolutely first (*absolut Ersten*), as the doubt-free and certain point of departure for philosophy, is supposed to amount to casting philosophy into the abyss. In the schools deriving from Husserl this theme quickly enough turned against all labour and effort of the concept, and thus bore the brunt of inhibiting thought in the middle of thinking.

Whoever does not let himself be intimidated by this, seems from the outset to miss his measure. He seems to pander to the fruitless transcendent critique which repays the empty claim to an overarching

'standpoint' with being non-binding and with the fact that it never did enter into the controversy, but prejudged it 'from above', as Husserl would have said.

### *Immanent Critique*

Yet Husserl's methodological objection remains far too formal in regard to the dialectic, which utterly refuses to be committed to the distinction between matter and method. Dialectic's very procedure is immanent critique. It does not so much oppose phenomenology with a position or 'model' external and alien to phenomenology, as it pushes the phenomenological model, with the latter's own force, to where the latter cannot afford to go. Dialectic exacts the truth from it through the confession of its own untruth.

Genuine refutation must penetrate the power of the opponent and meet him on the ground of his strength; the case is not won by attacking him somewhere else and defeating him where he is not.<sup>4</sup>

The contradiction in the idea of an ontology gained from an historically irrevocable nominalism is evident to a consciousness armed against academic consensus. This contradiction is that there should be found, openly or disguised, a doctrine of being disposed before all subjectivity and lifted above its critique, but with reference back to that very subjectivity which had denied the doctrine of being as dogmatic. The thought of dialectic, however, does not leave this contradiction abstract, but uses it as the motor of conceptual movement to the binding decision concerning what has been phenomenologically asserted. No stratum can be uncovered as the authentic first with the hammer of original being from under the constituents of pure phenomenology. And the phenomenological claim cannot thereby be somewhere surpassed. Rather, ostensible originary concepts – in particular those of epistemology, as they are presented in Husserl – are totally and necessarily mediated in themselves, or – to use the accepted scientific term – 'laden with presuppositions'.

The concept of the absolutely first must itself come under critique. Were it to turn out that the givenness with which epistemology deals, postulates the mechanism of reification, while in philosophy of

immanence, to which that term belongs, reified existence refers back to the structure of the given, it does not reciprocally follow that the reified has primacy over the given. Indeed the hierarchical schema of supporting first and what is derived from it rather loses validity. Any attempt to pass justification on to a privileged category gets entangled in antinomy. This is expressed in immanent method by the analysis of the reified running into the given and vice versa. That, however, is no objection to a procedure which does not appropriate the norm of reducibility, just against the method which obeys the canon of such reducibility. If critique of the first does not seek to set off in quest of the absolutely first (*Allerersten*), then it must not plead against phenomenology what the latter and many of its successors have in mind, namely providing an immanent philosophical foundation for transcendent being. The issue is the very concept and legitimacy of such a foundation and not the content thesis, however constantly it may change, of what the final ground may be. The character of philosophical compulsion must be broken by taking it strictly and calling it by name. No other newer and yet older constraint (*Bann*) should be devised in its place.

### *Mediating the First*

An emphatic use of the concept of the first itself is implied in the fact that the content of what is asserted as first is less essential than the question of the first as such, and that perchance the conflict over dialectical or ontological beginnings – whether to begin with a first principle at all, that of being or spirit – remains irrelevant before the critique of representation. That use lies in the identity hypothesis. Everything should just arise out of the principle which is taken as the philosophically first, regardless of whether this principle is called being or thought, subject or object, essence or facticity. The first of the philosophers makes a total claim: It is unmediated and immediate. In order to satisfy their own concept, mediations would always just be accounted for as practically addenda to thought and peeled off the first which is irreducible in itself.

But every principle which philosophy can reflect upon as its first must be universal, unless philosophy wants to be exposed to its contingency. And every universal principle of a first, even that of

facticity in radical empiricism, contains abstraction within it. Even empiricism could not claim an individual entity here and now or fact as first, but rather only the principle of the factual in general. The first and immediate is always, as a concept, mediated and thus not the first. Nothing immediate or factual, in which the philosophical thought seeks to escape mediation through itself, is allotted to thinking reflection in any other way than through thoughts.

This was both noted and explained by the pre-Socratic metaphysics of being in Parmenides' verse that thought and being are the same. And thus certainly the genuinely Eleatic doctrine of being as absolute was already denied. With the principle of  $\nu\omicron\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$ , that reflection was thrust into the process which had to destroy the pure identity of  $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha$  though remaining confined to it as the most abstract concept, the ineradicable opposite of the most abstract thought.

The criteria which have been bestowed on the 'true being' of things are the criteria of non-being, of nothingness; the 'true world' has been constructed out of contradiction into the actual world: indeed an apparent world, insofar as it is merely a moral-optical illusion.<sup>5</sup>

All ontology ever since was idealistic.<sup>6</sup> It was idealistic at first unknowingly, then for itself as well, and finally against the despairing will of theoretical reflection, which wants as an in-itself to break out of the self-established realm of spirit into the in-itself. In contrast, the distinctions, which sustain the official history of philosophy, including that of the psychological and the transcendental, pale into irrelevance.

Husserl's sincerity conceded that in the *Cartesian Meditations*. Yet he constantly reiterates that even pure descriptive psychology is in no sense transcendental phenomenology, despite the strict parallelism between the two disciplines.

To be sure, pure psychology of consciousness is a precise parallel to transcendental phenomenology of consciousness. Nevertheless the two must at first be kept strictly separate, since failure to distinguish them, which is characteristic of transcendental psychologism, makes a genuine philosophy impossible.<sup>7</sup>

But what is at issue are the nuances. This admission weighs all the heavier in that Husserl himself must furnish the criterion that allowed the contrast between the pure ego which in the end he promoted, the

homeland of the transcendental, and the immanence of consciousness in traditional scientific style. In the latter the data of consciousness could be a part of the world – existence (*Dasein*)– but not in the former. But to the question as to what else they may be, he imparts the information 'actuality phenomena'.<sup>8</sup> Non-existent (*ohne Dasein*) phenomena can, however, hardly be in question.

### *Mathematicization*

Since the philosophical first must always already contain everything, spirit confiscates what is unlike itself and makes it the same, its property. Spirit inventories it. Nothing may slip through the net. The principle must guarantee completeness.

The accountability of the stock becomes axiomatic. Availability establishes the bond between philosophy and mathematics that has lasted ever since Plato amalgamated both the Eleatic and the Heraclitean tradition with that of the Pythagoreans. His later doctrine that Ideas are numbers is no simple orgy of exotic speculation. One may almost always read off what is central from the eccentricities in thought. The metaphysics of numbers exemplarily effects the hypostasis of order with which spirit so thoroughly weaves a cover over dominated things, until it seems as though the fabric were itself what is concealed. Socrates in Plato's middle period already feels it 'necessary to take refuge in concepts, and use them in trying to investigate the true essence of things'.<sup>9</sup>

But the thicker the veil before spirit, the more reified spirit, as master, itself becomes – as occurs with numbers. In the concept of the first already belongs in the number series. Wherever a *πρώτον* and becomes thematic in the concept of being in Aristotelian metaphysics, number and computability are also thought. In itself the first already belongs in the number series. Wherever a *πρώτον* is discussed, a *δεύτερον* must present itself and let itself be counted. Even the Eleatic concept of the supposedly isolated One is comprehensible only in its relation to the Many that it negates. We object to the second part of Parmenides' poem on account of its incompatibility with the thesis of the One. Yet without the Idea of the Many, that of the One could never be specified. In numbers is reflected



the opposition of organizing and retentive spirit to what it faces. First spirit reduces it to indeterminacy, in order to make it the same as itself, and then determines it as the Many. Of course, spirit does not yet say it is identical with or reducible back to itself. But the two are already similar. As a set of unities the Many forfeits its particular qualities till it reveals itself as the abstract repetition of the abstract centre.

The difficulty of defining the concept of number arises from the fact that its peculiar essence is the mechanism of concept construction, which must then help in defining number. Concepts themselves involve subsumption and thus contain numerical ratio. Numbers are an arrangement for making the non-identical, dubbed 'the Many', commensurable with the subject, the model of unity. They bring the manifold of experience to its abstraction. The Many mediates between logical consciousness as unity and the chaos which the world becomes as soon as the former confronts the latter. If, however, unity is already contained in the Many in itself as the element without which the Many cannot be considered, then conversely the One demands the idea of counting and plurality. Surely the thought of plurality has not yet restored what the subject faces to unity through synthesis. The idea of the unity of the world belongs to a later stage, that of the philosophy of identity. The continuity of the number series, however, remained since Plato the model of all continuous systems and of their claim to completeness. The Cartesian rule, respected by all philosophy which presents itself as science, not to skip intermediate steps, can already be inferred from it. In dogmatic anticipation of later philosophical identity claims, it already imprints a uniformity on what is to be thought, though it is uncertain whether continuity actually belongs there. The identity of spirit with itself and the subsequent synthetic unity of apperception, is projected on things by the method alone, and thus becomes more ruthless as it tries to be more sober and stringent.

That is the original sin of *prima philosophia*. Just in order to enforce continuity and completeness, it must eliminate everything which does not fit from whatever it judges. The poverty of philosophical systematics which in the end reduces philosophical systems to a bogey, is not at first a sign of their decay, but is rather teleologically posited by the procedure

itself, which in Plato already demanded without opposition that virtue must be demonstrable through reduction to its schema, like a geometrical figure.<sup>10</sup>

### *Concept of Method*

Plato's authority, as well as the inculcation of mathematical habits of thought as the only kind which are binding, hardly permit one to become fully conscious of the monstrousness of the fact that a concrete social category, like that of virtue – which was expressly located by Gorgias in a social context, namely that of lordship<sup>11</sup> – should in such a way be reduced to its skeleton as if that were its essence. In the triumph of mathematics as in every triumph resounds, as in the oracles' decree, something of mythical mockery: Whoever heeds it has already forgotten the best. Mathematics is tautology also by the limitation of its total dominance to what it itself has already prepared and formed. In the *Meno* Socrates' desideratum that virtue be reduced to its unchangeable but also abstract features, extracted from Gorgias' context, is expressed as self-evident and thus unfounded and dogmatic – indeed without opposition. And this is perhaps not without reason, for the monstrousness can thus be obfuscated.

But this desideratum, which can still be detected behind every analysis of meaning in pure phenomenology, is already the methodological desideratum in the pregnant sense of a mode of procedure of spirit, which can always be reliably and constantly used because it divests itself of any relation to things, i.e. the object of knowledge – a relation which Plato still wanted to be held in respect.<sup>12</sup> Such a concept of method is one of self-implication and of recourse to the self-mastering subject, the as yet unconscious preliminary form of epistemology. It was hardly ever more than reflection of method. Yet it completes a pattern which belongs constitutively to the concept of a *πρώτη φιλοσοφία*. Since this cannot be represented as other than methodical, so method, the regulated 'way', is always the law-like consequence of a successor to something earlier. Methodical thinking also demands a first, so that the way does not break off and end up being arbitrary. For it was devised against that. The procedure was so planned

from the beginning that nothing outside its sequence of stages could disturb it. Hence the imperviousness of method to everything from Cartesian doubt right up to Heidegger's respectful destruction of the philosophical legacy. Only specific and never absolute doubt has ever become dangerous to the ideologists. Absolute doubt joins of itself in the parade through the goal of method, which is once again to be produced out of method itself. This corresponds in Husserl's epistemology to the distinction between the *ἐποχή* and sophistry or scepticism.<sup>13</sup> Doubt simply shifts judgement to preparing for assuming the vindication of pre-critical consciousness scientifically in secret sympathy with conventional sensibility (*Menschenverstand*).

At the same time, however, method must constantly do violence to unfamiliar things, though it exists only so that they may be known. It must model the other after itself. This is the original contradiction in the construction of freedom from contradiction in the philosophy of origins. The *τέλος* of cognition which, as methodical, is protected from aberration, autarchic and takes itself to be unconditioned, is pure logical identity. But it thereby substitutes itself for things as the absolute. Without the act of violence of method, society and spirit, substructure and superstructure would have hardly been possible. And that subsequently grants it the irresistibility which metaphysics reflects back as trans-subjective being. The philosophy of origins, which as method first matured the very idea of truth, was also, however, originally a *ψεῦδος*. Its thought paused for breath only in moments of historical hiatus such as that between the relaxation of the force of scholasticism and the beginning of the new bourgeois-scientific impulse. In Montaigne, e.g., the timid freedom of the thinking subject is bound to scepticism about the omnipotence of method, namely science.<sup>14</sup>

Socially, however, the split of method from things in its constitution appears as the split between mental (*geistiger*) and physical labour. In the work process the universality of the advance of method was the fruit of specialization. Spirit, which has been narrowed to a special function, misunderstands itself as absolute, for the sake of its peculiar privilege.

The break in Parmenides' poem is already a sign of the discrepancy between method and matter (*Sache*), although a concept of method is still

missing. The absurdity of two sorts of truth, which enter unmediated beside one another, though one of them is supposed to be mere appearance, flagrantly expresses the absurdity of the earliest manifestations of 'rationalization'. Truth, being and unity, the highest Eleatic terms, are pure determinations of thought and Parmenides recognizes them as such. They are also, however – as he and his successors still conceal – instructions as to how to think, viz. 'method'. Natorp's a-historical neo-Kantianism had a better grasp of this aspect of ancient philosophy than the far too respectful immersion in its archaic venerability. Things confront both methodical procedure and Parmenides' original utterances as just disturbing content. They are a simple fraud which method rejects. Parmenides' δόξα is the surplus of the world of sense over thought; only thought is true being. It is not so much that the pre-Socratics authentically pose original questions which have grown dumb through the guilt of later desecration. Rather, in them and even Plato the break and alienation are expressed purely and undisguisedly. That is their value, one of thoughts which have not yet veiled the unholy to which they give witness. The advancing *ratio*, however, has as an advancing mediation ever more ingeniously hidden that break without ever coming to master it. Thus it continually strengthened the untruth of the origin. Plato's doctrine of χωρισμός already thought both spheres together, as opposed to the yawning and conceptually unrestricted contradiction of the Eleatics, though in their glaring contradiction. This was a first mediation before all μέθεξις, and Plato's later work, like all of Aristotle's, strives strenuously to fill the gap. For while this is built into philosophies of origin as their proper condition, yet they cannot possibly tolerate it. It admonishes them of their impossibility in that their objectivity is derived from subjective arbitrariness. Their inclusiveness *is* the break.

Hence the fanatical intolerance of the method and its total arbitrariness, against any arbitrariness as deviation. Its subjectivity sets up the law of objectivity. The lordship of spirit believes only itself to be without bounds. As regained unity, however, it merely assures disunion. It is truly an absolute, the appearance of reconciliation, disattached from that to which it was to be reconciled, and in such absoluteness all the

more an image of the hopeless debit structure. Indeed the continuous texture, which spirit nevertheless cannot do without, inflicts disaster on philosophies of origin, and also takes the condition of their freedom from them. The process of demythologization, which spirit merging into second mythology undergoes, reveals the untruth of the very idea of the first. The first must become ever more abstract to the philosophy of origin. The more abstract it becomes, the less it comes to explain and the less fitting it is as a foundation. To be completely consistent, the first immediately approaches analytic judgements into which it would like to transform the world. It approaches tautology and says in the end nothing at all. The idea of the first consumes itself in its development, and that is its truth, which would not have been gained without the philosophy of the first.

### *Promoting the Subject*

By furnishing the principle from which all being proceeds, the subject promotes itself. Thus little has changed from Husserl back to the market cries and self-publicity of those pre-Socratics who, like unemployed medicine men, roam around and whose dishonesty echoes in Plato's rage against the Sophists. Husserl's writings are full of wonder for the 'prodigious expanses'<sup>15</sup> which open up to him. In the *Cartesian Meditations* he says, 'A science whose peculiar nature is unprecedented comes into our field of vision'<sup>16</sup> or

Once we have laid hold of the phenomenological task of describing consciousness concretely, veritable infinities of facts – never explored prior to phenomenology – become disclosed.<sup>17</sup>

Heidegger strikes the same note in his pronunciamento that being is 'the most unique of all'.<sup>18</sup> Since long ago the spokesman for *prima philosophia* has beat his breast as he who has everything in the bag and knows all. He makes a claim to sovereignty over the many (which he binds to himself through scorn) such as Plato still acknowledged as part of a demand for philosopher kings. Even at its highest level, viz. Hegel's doctrine of absolute knowledge, *prima philosophia* has not been cured of this. Hegel just let slip what otherwise poor sages mostly kept to themselves, i.e. that philosophy itself is true being. Plato, on the other

hand, was contented, outside of utopia, with reserving a favourable place for philosophers in immortality.<sup>19</sup> The open or secret pomp and the totally unobvious need for absolute spiritual security – for why, indeed, should the playful luck of spirit be diminished by the risk of error? – are the reflex to real powerlessness and insecurity. They are the self-deafening roar through positivity of those who neither contribute to the real reproduction of life nor actually participate in its real mastery. As middlemen, they only commend and sell to the master his means of lordship, spirit objectified (*versachlicht*) into method. What they do not have they want at least in the mirage of their own domain, that of spirit. Irrefutability replaces mastery for them and merges with the service which they in fact carry out, their contribution to the mastery of nature. Punishment immediately overtakes their subjectivism, deluded from the very beginning, for its restrictiveness. For the sake of mastery, subjectivism must master and negate itself. Just to avoid mistake – since that is how they promote themselves – they abase themselves and at best would like to eliminate themselves. They use their subjectivity to subtract the subject from truth and their idea of objectivity is as a residue. All *prima philosophia* up to Heidegger's claims about 'destruction'<sup>20</sup> was essentially a theory of residue. Truth is supposed to be the leftover, the dregs, the most thoroughly insipid. The content of even Husserl's phenomenological residuum is utterly meagre and empty and is convicted of that as soon as philosophy, as in the sociological excurses of the *Cartesian Meditations*,<sup>21</sup> ventures the slightest step to free itself from the prison of the residuum and return to free life.

For *philosophia perennis* behaves towards undiminished experience as do Unitarians towards religion, and culture to what it neutralized concept administers. Huxley is ironically correct when he passes thinkers in review and picks out his *philosophia perennis* from what they have in common. The resulting flimsy quintessence extracts what had already been implied, where true being was pathetically awarded for the first time to the general concept. Only in freedom is spirit capable of filling and reconciling itself with what it let go. An element of uncertainty comes over spirit whenever it does not descend to mere protestation. Freedom itself is never given and constantly menaced. The absolutely

certain as such, however, is always unfreedom. The requirement to indulge in certainty works, like all compulsion, at its own destruction. Under the banner of doubt-free certainty the scientific spirit obliterates all doubt-free certainty.

But that does not upset the leading idea of something left over. The absolutist Husserl, who wishes to methodically extract the 'phenomenological residuum',<sup>22</sup> shares that idea and even its terminology with raging nominalists and relativists like Pareto, who contrasts residues and derivatives.<sup>23</sup>

The most divergent tendencies of traditional theory<sup>24</sup> are agreed that, in accord with the practice of natural science, whatever conceals pure things, viz. 'interfering factors', should be eliminated. Such factors, however, are a constant subjective supplement in things. But the more fundamentally the operation is carried through, the more compellingly it leads to pure thoughts and thus to the very humans it strives to eliminate. The path to freedom from anthropomorphism, which first philosophy enters under the standard of demythologization, leads to the apotheosis of *ἄνθρωπος* as a second mythology. Not least because it was reminiscent of psychology, did proud philosophy since Husserl reject psychology. Dread of psychology leads philosophy in quest of the residuum to sacrifice everything for which it exists. What innocent parsons in distant provinces may still preach – namely that infinity is worth no more than a penny – is implied in all *prima philosophia*, not least of all that of Max Scheler who so thoroughly despised the petite bourgeoisie. But, since Plato hypostatized eternal ideas, the fact that the temporal has ensconced from metaphysics, and the residua of the temporal been reified, is due to metaphysics thriving in deficiency, the continual fear of forfeiting the insignificant. Metaphysics disconcertedly constructs its infinity along the lines of the temporal, viz. property relations constructed by men and which, alienated, rule over them. Husserl's programme of philosophy as a rigorous science and its idea of absolute security are no exception. His Cartesianism builds fences around whatever *prima philosophia* believes it holds the title deeds of the invariable and *a priori* for, i.e. around what (in the French of the *Cartesian Meditations*) 'm'est spécifiquement propre, à moi ego'.<sup>25</sup> Thus *prima philosophia* itself becomes property.

Accordingly, *prima philosophia* is unaware of the function of invariants for cognition and whether it is dealing with something essential or indifferent. Thus Husserl expects a healthy reform of psychology in the construction of an intentional, i.e. pure *a priori* psychology, without discussing whether, in the richness of its insight, empirical and certainly not unvarying psychology furnishes much more than the other which can be fearless because it risks nothing.

### *Persistence as Truth*

With the imposition of the persisting (*das Bleibende*) as the true, the onset of truth becomes the onset of deception. It is a fallacy that what persists is truer than what perishes. The order, which remodels the world into disposable property, is passed off as the world itself. The invariance of the concept, which would not be unless the temporal determinacy of what is grasped under concepts were ignored, is confused with the unchangeability of being in itself.

The grotesque manoeuvre of that phenomenological practitioner\* who deals with what is called the problem of immortality in his jargon, by unblushingly acknowledging the destruction of every soul, but then consoling himself because the pure concept of every such soul, its individual *εἶδος*, is incorruptible – this helpless trick brings to light simply through its clumsiness what is hidden in the cavernous depths of great speculation.

Heraclitus, whom Hegel and Nietzsche both praised,<sup>26</sup> had already compared essence and the past. Ever since the first authentic formulation of the theory of Ideas,<sup>27</sup> the past has always been ascribed to appearance, the kingdom of *δόξα* and illusion. Infinity was reserved for essence. Only Nietzsche protested.

The other idiosyncrasy of the philosophers is no less dangerous; it consists in confusing the last and the first. They place that which comes at the end – unfortunately! for it ought not to come at all! – namely, the 'highest concepts', which means the most general, the emptiest concepts, the last smoke of evaporating reality, in the beginning, as the beginning. This again is nothing but their way of showing reverence: the higher may not grow out of the lower, may not have grown at all. Moral: whatever is of the first rank must be *causa sui*. Origin out of something else is considered an objection, a questioning of value. All the highest concepts, the entity, the unconditional, the good, the true, the perfect – all these cannot have become and must therefore be *causa sui*. All



these, moreover, cannot be unlike each other or in contradiction to each other.... That which is last, thinnest, and emptiest is put first, as cause in itself, as *ens realissimum*.<sup>28</sup>

But what Nietzsche views as the sacrilege of 'sick web-spinners'<sup>29</sup> that, for the sake of life, never should have 'come about', was perpetrated with the wildness of life itself. The calamity which he explains out of that *πρώτον ψευδος* as a sickness of spirit, arises from real lordship. Victory was codified by the victor setting himself up as better. After a successful act of violence, the subjugated should believe that what survives has more right on its side than what perishes. The dues the survivor has to pay for this, namely that thought transfigures him into truth, is his own life. He must be dead in order to be consecrated to infinity.

You ask me which of the philosophers' traits are really idiosyncrasies? For example, their lack of historical sense, their hatred of the very idea of becoming, their Egypticism. They think that they show their respect for a subject when they de-historicize it, *sub specie aeterni* – when they turn it into a mummy. All that philosophers have handled for thousands of years have been concept-mummies: nothing real escaped their grasp alive. When these honourable idolaters of concepts worship something, they kill it and stuff it; they threaten the life of everything they worship. Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections – even refutations. Whatever is does not become; whatever becomes is not. Now they all believe, desperately even, in the entity. But since they never grasp it, they seek for reasons why it is kept from them.<sup>30</sup>

But at the same time Nietzsche undervalued what he saw through. Thus he stayed in a contradiction out of which the self-reflection of thought still has to emerge.

Formerly, alteration, change, any becoming at all, were taken as proof of mere appearance, as an indication that there must be something which led us astray. Today, conversely, precisely insofar as the prejudice of reason forces us to posit unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood, being, we see ourselves caught in error, compelled into error. So certain are we, on the basis of rigorous examination, that this is where the error lies.<sup>31</sup>

The metaphysics of the persisting draws its epistemological foundation from the constancy of the thing over its appearances. So the enlightened critique which Nietzsche revives (for it is in essence Hume's) disintegrated the hypostasis of the thing set up by that metaphysics. But even that cannot succeed without a hitch. Opposing the solid to the chaotic and mastering nature would never succeed without a moment of solidity in the subjugated. Or else it would constantly expose the subject