Postmetaphysical Thinking

JÜRGEN HABERMAS

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Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays

Jürgen Habermas

translated by William Mark Hohengarten

Polity Press

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Translator's Introduction

William Mark Hohengarten

The essays collected in this volume take up and expand upon a line of argument begun by the author in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.* Like most contemporary thinkers, Habermas is critical of the Western metaphysical tradition and its exaggerated conception of reason. At the same time, however, he cautions against relinquishing that conception altogether. Against the radical critics of Western philosophy he argues that the wholesale rejection of the metaphysical tradition inevitably undercuts the possibility of rational critique itself. He thus defends the view that genuinely postmetaphysical thinking can remain critical only if it preserves the idea of reason derived from the tradition while stripping it of its metaphysical trappings. In order to steer between the twin dangers of a nostalgic return to or a radical critique of metaphysics, we must transform our inherited conceptions of reason and the rational subject. In these essays Habermas contributes to this task by further developing his intersubjectivistic approaches to meaning and validity and, especially, to subjectivity and individuality. In this introduction I shall make a few brief remarks clarifying each of these undertakings.

The linguistic turn in philosophy paved the way for postmetaphysical thinking; yet, in many of its manifestations, the philosophy of language is still wedded to the very metaphysical figures of thought it sought to overcome. For instance, intentionalistic theories of meaning uncritically adopt a conception of action drawn from the subject-object model of consciousness, while truth-semantic accounts of meaning uncritically accept the logocentric perspective dominant in the tradition. Even the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce remains ensnared by the legacy of metaphysics; for although Peirce insisted that *interpretability* (or the "interpretant relation") must be a part of the structure of any sign, he also believed that this requirement could be met without taking into account the communicative relationship between a speaker and an interpreting hearer. Ultimately this led Peirce back to metaphysical realism concerning universals. Against this, Habermas argues that the "interpretant relation" cannot be understood independently of the conditions of *intersubjective communication* oriented toward mutual understanding. In the fourth essay of this volume, "Toward a Critique of the Theory of Meaning," he examines three competing accounts of meaning—intentionalism, the use-theory, and truth-semantics—with the aim of showing that each of them captures only one of the three functions performed by language when a *speaker* comes to an understanding with *another person* about *something* in the world. Habermas's own universal pragmatics, with its theory of three distinct validity claims and three corresponding world-relations, is meant to avoid the one-sidedness of these competing theories. The essays in this volume provide many compelling arguments in support of Habermas's meaning-theoretic position. At the same time, they also tend to presuppose some prior familiarity with it. It may therefore be helpful to summarize its most significant features.

Habermas argues that linguistic meaning is constituted communicatively. The smallest unit of communication is the utterance put forth by a speaker *together with* the "yes" or "no" position taken toward that utterance by a hearer. Every utterance contains a (stated or implied) propositional component *p* that predicates something of an object. However, even in the case of an assertion, the meaning of the utterance is not determined by *p* alone. The full meaning of an utterance depends equally upon *how* this propositional content is being put forth—whether it is being asserted, commanded, confessed, promised, etc. This *force* of the utterance is given by its *illocutionary com-*

ponent, which may be made explicit by a performative clause: "I assert . . .," "I command . . .," "I confess . . .," "I promise . . .," and so on. But every utterance in fact makes three distinct *validity claims,* only one of which is thematized by the illocutionary component. That is, with her utterance a speaker makes a *truth* claim relating to the objective world of states of affairs, a *rightness* claim relating to the social world of normatively regulated interpersonal relations, and a *truthfulness* or *sincerity* claim relating to the subjective world of experiences to which the speaker has privileged access. Each of these validity claims is universal, in two senses. First, each of them is raised, either implicitly or explicitly, in every speech act; they are *universal formal features* of linguistic communication. But, secondly, each also lays claim to *universal validity* for what it claims to be true, right, or truthful. That is, the validity that is claimed cannot be restricted to "validity for the speaker," or "validity for this specific group." Validity means validity for every subject capable of speech and action. With any utterance, then, a speaker lays claim to three dimensions of validity that *transcend* the particular context or the linguistic community in which the utterance is made.

The correlates of this transcendence are the three "worlds" to which the speaker relates with her utterance: the objective, social, and subjective worlds. Habermas traces his pragmatic concept of world back to the One of metaphysics: participation in the metaphysical One is what allowed a diverse plurality of entities to be constituted as a totality, or as one world. In the Kantian critique of reason, the place of the metaphysical One was taken by the transcendental subject, while the totality of entities lost its objective character and took on a regulative function as an Idea of Reason. Habermas stresses the crucial distinction in Kant between the *ideal* synthesis of reason, whereby this world-totality is first *constituted,* and the empirical syntheses of the understanding, which concern objects *in the world* and are therefore made possible only by the antecedent world-constituting synthesis. Ultimately, this figure of thought undergoes a pragmatic transformation in Habermas's own theory. The concept or idea of a world is no longer projected by a monological consciousness but by interacting subjects who raise validity claims in communicative acts. And the concept of the one objective world consisting of all existing objects or all true states of affairs is augmented by two analogous world-concepts corresponding to the two other validity claims: the concept of a social world consisting of all normatively sanctioned actions or of all legitimate norms themselves and the concept of a subjective world consisting of all experiences to which the subject has privileged access and to which she can give expression in truthful utterances. The metaphysical One and the Kantian Idea of Reason reappear more modestly in everyday communicative practice as these three worlds, that is, as "more or less trivial suppositions of commonality that make possible the cognitive, the regulative and the expressive uses of language."

But what does it mean to claim that one's utterance is valid? For the sake of simplicity, let us consider the truth-claim a speaker makes for a statement. Habermas argues that, in general, we evaluate truth claims not by directly comparing a statement with a state of affairs in the objective world but by examining the *reasons* that a speaker can give in support of what she says. Claiming that one's statement is true, or valid, is tantamount to claiming that good reasons can be given in support of it. In Habermas's words: "The speaker refers with his validity claim to a potential of reasons that could be brought to bear for it." These reasons are in turn evaluated in terms of their *intersubjective* acceptability as good reasons for holding something to be the case. That is why an understanding of the speaker's utterance cannot be abstracted from the "yes" or "no" position that the hearer takes toward it. Even when reasons are neither actually demanded nor given—even in settings where giving reasons is not institutionalized or is relatively undeveloped—the meaning of every speech act is tied to the potential of reasons that *could* be given in support of it. In this sense, every speech act points implicitly to the argumentative procedure of giving and evaluating reasons in support of validity claims.

The process of argumentation itself requires one final idealization, which concerns the relevant speech situation. According to Habermas, argumentation provides a suitable medium for determining which reasons are good reasons for accepting an utterance only if this determination is based solely upon the force of the better argument and not, for instance, upon power relations among speakers. Therefore, when speakers engage in argumentation, they must suppose that certain conditions hold that guarantee that the agreements they reach are based on reasons alone. These conditions define what Habermas calls the ideal speech situation, centering on the supposition that symmetry conditions hold between competent speakers whenever they engage in argumentation.[1]

It is crucial to Habermas's position that the status of the various *idealizations* named by him not be misunderstood. He uses "ideal" in a specifically Kantian sense to designate something that has a regulative function but is unattainable in actual fact. Thus, "the idealizing presuppositions of communicative action must not be hypostatized into the ideal of a future condition." The ideal of universal agreement that is projected by every validity claim, and the correlative ideals of world-totalities corresponding to all true statements, to all correct norms, and to all truthful expressions, function in communication as *critical* reference points. "Critical," because the concept of validity is not defined in terms of what a particular group accepts as valid in a given situation. Validity claims can of course only be raised within particular language games and forms of life; yet, while *immanent* in particular contexts of communication, they always claim a validity that *transcends* any and all of them.

The foregoing summary emphasizes the *universalistic* dimension of Habermas's pragmatics. In the eyes of some critics, this universalism indicates an insensitivity to the claims of the *individual* over and against the universal—and thus an insensitivity to the related themes of otherness and difference. It is true, of course, that Habermas's defense of a postmetaphysical universalism has often been explicitly and emphatically directed against relativistic and ethnocentric brands of *particularism*. Yet, despite his criticism of these types of particularism—or, perhaps more precisely, because of it—Habermas does not champion the universal *against* the individual, otherness, and difference. On the contrary, he attempts to rescue the individual from complete absorption into the particular contexts in which it is always embedded. It may be true that the universalistic dimensions of Habermas's pragmatic theory lie closer to the surface of his writings; but this should not obscure the fact that this theory accords a role to the individual that is at least as significant as the role it attributes to universal validity claims. Fortunately, the essays in this volume include discussions of the individual, otherness, and difference that will make it more difficult to overlook this dimension of Habermas's thought. Of central importance on this score is the article "Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity." This essay brings together various lines of thought developed elsewhere in the collection and in many ways serves as its focal point, as is suggested by the frequent references to it throughout the volume. For this reason, and because of its complexity, I shall sketch its argument here.

Habermas readily concedes that the universal is opposed to the individual and tends to suppress it—*if the basic concepts of metaphysics are presupposed.* Operating with the concepts of genus and species, the metaphysical tradition could explicate individuation only in two equally unsatisfactory ways. *Numerically,* things are individuated through the material instantiation of universal formal substances. But since being is attributed only to these universal substances, while matter is conceived as that which is not, numerical individuation can only be conceived as privation. Things stand no better with *qualitative* individuation. The genera and species that characterize any thing are themselves universals and cannot distinguish that thing as a unique individual entity. On the other hand, if the chain of genera and species is extended to include an ultimate individuating specification (such as Duns Scotus' *haecceitas*), then the triumph of the universal is all the more complete; for this specification is itself a universal that extends to *every* individual as such and thus distinguishes none of them as something unique and irreplaceable. This metaphysical dilemma still continues to make itself felt in Hegel, where the individual totality is made dependent on an absolute totality that ultimately robs the former of its individuality. Habermas concludes:

> Hegel's philosophy of history and his philosophy of right merely illustrate in a drastic way something that is generally valid: as long as the problematic of metaphysical unitary thinking remains in force, and as long as idealist modes of thought remain in use, the universal will triumph over the individual, which is banished to ineffability. Along the course of metaphysical thinking, the endangered individual reveals itself at best *ironically* as the nonidentical—as the marginal that is pressed to the side and drops out of the running at every attempt to identify an individual as itself and distinguish it from *all* other individuals.[2]

Unfortunately, just these metaphysical concepts are unreflectively presupposed by the classics of sociology when they interpret a central phenomenon of modernity, namely, social individualization. The paradigm is provided by Durkheim. On the one hand, he treats individuality as a privative concept, defined in terms of *deviation* from the universal features of one's social environment. On the other hand, he interprets societal differentiation (or the "division of labor") and the concomitant multiplication of socially sanctioned roles as a source of increased individualization; the greater the number of possible roles, the more nearly unique or "individualized" will be the combination of roles fulfilled by any one person. In either case, however, universal characterizations retain the upper hand. In particular, a multiplication of roles does not result in any increase in *autonomy* for the individual in relation to these socially binding roles. In fact, societal differentiation appears to make this sort of "individualization" into just one more socially binding norm—the paradoxically "institutionalized individual." What is needed instead is a concept of individuation that captures the missing dimensions of autonomy and the capacity to be oneself. Such a concept should, moreover, allow us to distinguish between two phenomena: societal differentiation and progressive individuation.

The route to such a concept proceeds via the modern philosophy of the subject. Since Descartes, the emphatic sense of individuality has been associated with the spontaneous ego, or the I. The affiliated subject-object model of consciousness, however, proved inadequate for developing this insight. In German Idealism, this paradigm took shape as the mirror-model of self-consciousness: consciousness gets hold of itself by being reflected back on itself out of the world of objects of which it is conscious. However, what is "gotten hold of" proves not to be the spontaneous ego as the subject of consciousness (i.e., Kant's transcendental ego), since that would require that the subject be an object of consciousness. The spontaneous subject recedes from consciousness of itself. At best, then, consciousness can come to know the empirical ego; but this appears as merely one more object. So there remains no place for the individual between consciousness in the first-person, as the receding subject, and consciousness in the third-person, as a causally determined object.

Habermas believes that the limits of this approach become particularly clear in the work of Fichte, who wanted to go beyond the transcendental starting point by uniting it with both an intersubjectivistic account of individuality and an existentialist notion of self-choice—a union which, however, foundered precisely on the primacy accorded to consciousness and the subject-object relation. With the model of an ego that posits itself in an act that is practically executed *and* reflexively recapitulable, Fichte brought together the practical and the theoretical dimensions of subjectivity that were separated in Kant. At the same time, he saw that the ego is only able to posit itself *as* something individual; but individuality requires that the ego encounter *other egos* which delimit it. Precisely because the original ego is conceived as transcendental subjectivity, however, it can encounter these other egos only as *objects*. Its individuality thereby reflects objective restrictions placed upon it, rather than an increase in self-determination and self-realization. Moreover, the ego's reflexive certainty of itself distinguishes between its essential determination as ego and its further, inessential attributes; it is essentially an instance of "egohood in general," and only accidentally *this* ego. In this way, the singularity and the universality of the transcendental starting point ultimately reasserted themselves at the expense of both intersubjective plurality and individuality.

In order to escape the aporias of an ego that posits itself, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Soren Kierkegaard rejected the transcendental starting point in favor of a self that is *situated* within a concrete form of life or within an individual life-history. Kierkegaard reinterpreted self-positing as self-choice, in which I critically appropriate my life-history through the paradoxical act of choosing myself as the one who I am and who I want to be. Because the authentically chosen life-history serves thereby as the source of individuation, the distinction between my essential character as ego and my accidental character as this historical individual is cancelled. Self-choice involves a *performative* rather than a descriptive concept of individuality. In choosing myself as the one who I am and want to be, I make a claim to radical authenticity, rather than to descriptive accuracy. But this claim requires recognition from an Other. For Kierkegaard, this Other is God. Already in the eighteenth century, however, Rousseau had appealed for recognition not to God but to an unrestricted universal public. The really decisive innovation was, however, made by Humboldt. He replaced the subject-object model of consciousness with a model of linguistic communication involving speakers and hearers. In linguistic communication, speakers encounter one another in a nonobjectifying way. The one perspective of the transcendental subject gives way to a plurality of participants' perspectives. Unity within this plurality is conceived not as subsumption but as unforced agreement in dialogue. Communication unites diverse forms of life without cancelling their diversity. "Thus," Habermas argues, "although the nonidentical . . . always slipped through the net of basic metaphysical concepts, it remains accessible in a trivial way in everyday communicative practice."[3]

It is this model of intersubjective communication that Mead used to explicate the structure of the individual. In a certain sense, Mead retains the mirror-model of self-consciousness familiar from German Idealism in which the subject only comes upon itself via the mediation of its object. Now, however, this "object" is understood not from the third-person perspective of an observer but from the *second-person* perspective of a participant in linguistic communication—the other is an alter ego.

The self is then conceived as the alter ego of this alter ego. We might call this the subject in the second person. Mead employs the term "me" to give expression to this structure of the self as a second person to another second person. With the "me" he is able to bypass the dilemma posed by the philosophy of the subject, which conceives of the self either in the first person, as the singular and universal receding subject of knowledge and action, or in the third person, as one mere empirical object among others. Of course, Mead still has to explain how this subject in the second person could first arise out of structures of intersubjectivity. After all, intersubjectivity itself would seem to presuppose antecedently constituted subjects. Mead's solution to this problem is to show that an organism first takes up a relationship to itself, and is thus first constituted as a subject, in the moment when communicative relations are established between organisms. Subjectivity (in the second person) and intersubjectivity (between second persons) are therefore coeval.

The "me" has two distinct components: the theoretical "me," or a person's consciousness of herself, and the practical "me," or the agency through which she monitors her behavior. Habermas devotes considerable effort to showing that Mead's genetic account of the theoretical "me" avoids the paradoxes that plagued Kant's and Fichte's theories of self-consciousness. From the point of view of a theory of the individual, however, it is the practical "me" that is of particular interest. This practical "me" comes into existence when the subject establishes a practical relation to herself by adopting the normative attitude of an alter ego toward her own behavior. Later, this second-person perspective is enlarged to encompass the *generalized* expectations of all members of her society, or the attitude of the "generalized other." Understood in this way, the practical "me" is a conservative moment of selfhood since it represents the pregiven normative expectations of society as a whole. A practical self or identity constituted solely by this "me" would have to be wholly conventional in character. In Habermas's view, such a conventionally constituted self is nonetheless a precondition for the emergence of a nonconventional aspect of the practical self: the practical "I," which *opposes* the "me" with both presocial drives and innovative fantasy. The intersubjectivity of the practical self is reflected in this tension between the "me" and the "I." At the conventional stage, however, the relationship is one in which the "I" is suppressed or repressed. This is why Habermas detects a critical moment lodged in Mead's use of these pronouns: the suppression of the "I" indicates that this conventional identity can at best be a substitute for a true one.

Yet, the self is intersubjectively constituted through and through; the relationship to a community is what makes the practical relation-to-self possible. If the individual is to realize her true identity, she cannot do so by withdrawing from this community. Habermas follows Mead in arguing that this apparent dilemma is solved by appealing to a wider, *universal* community consisting of all possible alter egos. The "I" *projects* a new intersubjective context; it thus makes possible a new "me" reflecting the norms of this projected community. In this *postconventional* identity, the relationship between the "I" and the "me" still remains, but the order of priority has been reversed.

Habermas distinguishes between two dimensions in which the postconventional self appeals to a universal community: the moral and the ethical. In *moral* discourse an individual seeks a consensus with the larger community about the rightness of binding norms. This in turn makes possible an autonomous self capable of self-determination. *Ethical* discourse, on the other hand, concerns identities, be it of groups or of individuals. Again, whenever I lay claim to a unique identity as an irreplaceable individual rather than as the instantiation of a social type, I must appeal to a larger community. In this case, however, what I seek is not so much the agreement of this larger community as its recognition of me as the one who I am and who I want to be. In this sense, the self is not the property of an isolated subjectivity: the claim of radical authenticity depends upon recognition by others.

Because true individuation depends on the development of a postconventional identity, it ultimately requires the individuated person to leave behind the conventional stage of socialization in order to take up a critical attitude toward the merely given norms of her particular society. For this reason, individuation cannot be equated with societal differentiation, whether this be described as the pluralization of socially sanctioned roles or as the break-up of society into functional subsystems that relegate individuals to their "environments" (and vice versa). On Habermas's view, societal differentiation *does* result in overburdening the conventional individual with conflicting demands, and the impossibility of reconciling these demands *can* lead to the disintegration of a conventional identity. Yet, this "release" from traditional determinants of personal identity is in itself an ambiguous phenomenon: both an emancipation and a loss of self. Its emancipatory potential can be realized only if the released individuals are capable of making the transition to postconventional identity structures. This transition requires not isolation but projected reintegration into a larger community.

It is not difficult to make the connection between this account of individuation and Habermas's universal pragmatics: both require the ideal supposition, or projection, of a universal community of discourse. But, one might ask, does not this construction allow the universal to triumph over the individual one final time? In Habermas's view, it does not. The relationship between the supposition of a universal community and the individual is not one of subsumption but of complementarity. This complementarity is evident in each of the two dimensions in which individuation occurs: in moral self-determination and in ethical self-realization. According to Habermas, moral autonomy is the correlate of normative validity claims, claims that transcend the status quo of a particular society precisely because they refer to the ideal of a universal normative consensus. Yet, the relative approximation to this ideal in universally acknowledged norms does not imply that differences in concrete forms of life must be leveled, or that every person must conform to a single ideal lifestyle. On the contrary, the universalization of norms leads to their becoming ever more *abstract,* and thus more compatible with increasing concrete diversity. Ultimately, this process leads to a growing *toleration* of other forms of life—as long as these do not themselves embody the intolerant oppression of some individuals in the interest of others. Habermas thus argues that

> the transitory unity that is generated in the porous and refracted intersubjectivity of a linguistically mediated consensus not only supports but furthers and accelerates the pluralization of forms of life and the individualization of lifestyles. More discourse means more contradiction and difference. The more abstract the agreements become, the more diverse the disagreements with which we can *nonviolently* live.[4]

The same can be said of the ethical dimension of self-realization. Ethically, the individual appeals to the projected universal community not for agreement about norms but for *recognition* of her claim to authenticity and of herself as a unique and irreplaceable individual. Habermas correlates this performative concept of individuality with the performative employment of "I" in the making of universal validity claims: when making *any* validity claim, I also lay claim to recognition for my individual identity. Even when, after weighing the evidence, the other person rejects my specific validity claim, this very rejection still implies her acknowledgement of me as an accountable actor and therefore constitutes an acceptance of my *identity claim.* My understanding of myself as an irreplaceable individual is in this way anchored in the recognition I receive from others in linguistic interaction. No one else can take my place, or represent me, in this interaction. Hence, the unity engendered by communication does not eliminate the difference between individuals, but instead confirms it: "linguistically attained consensus does not eradicate from the accord the differences in speaker perspectives, but rather presupposes them as ineliminable."[5]

Except for three omissions and one addition, the essays included in this volume are the same as those in the German *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988). The omissions are "Handlungen, Sprechakte, sprachlich vermittelte Interaktionen und Lebenswelt" and "Bemerkungen zu J. Searles 'Meaning, Communication, and Representation'," which are to appear in English elsewhere; an appendix consisting of a review article by Habermas has also been omitted.[6] The addition is "Peirce and Communication," a paper first delivered at the Peirce Sesquicentennial Congress held at Harvard University in 1989.

In translating these essays I have taken the ideal of a faithful rendering as my primary guide. To the greatest extent possible, I have retained Habermas's own figures of speech, particularly the metaphors he draws from the natural world. I have also tended to retain the basic style of his sentences. This style, often consisting of several subordinate and relative clauses joined together in a well-crafted whole, is one that he deems appropriate to the scholarly treatment of complex subjects—as can be seen by comparison with, say, his political writings or *Feuilliton* contributions, which reflect stylistic ideals more appropriate to other topics and other forums.

I would like to thank the author for reading through a draft of this translation and suggesting changes he thought appropriate. While these changes have been introduced in order to capture his meaning more precisely or to make the translation more readable, they do sometimes result in minor departures from the original text. At such points, the correspondence between the German and the English versions is not exactly that of translation.

Notes

1. See "Vorlesungen zu einer sprachtheoretischen Grundlegung der Soziologie," in *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 118ff.; "Wahrheitstheorien," also in *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen,* 174ff.; *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action,* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 88; and *Theory of Communicative Action,* 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984–1987) 1: 25.

2. This volume, pp. 157–158.

3. This volume, p. 48.

4. This volume, p. 140.

5. This volume, p. 48.

6. The English version of "Handlungen, Sprechakte, sprachlich vermittelte Interaktionen und Lebenswelt" will appear in a volume edited by G. Floistad, *Philosophical Problems Today.* The English version of "Bemerkungen zu J. Searles 'Meaning, Communication, and Representation'" will appear in a Festschrift for John Searle edited by E. LePore.

I

A Return to Metaphysics?

1

The Horizon of Modernity Is Shifting

How modern is the philosophy of the twentieth century?

This question may seem naive. And yet, was the development of philosophical thinking at the beginning of this century marked by turning points similar to those found in painting on its way toward abstraction, in music with the transition from the octave to the twelve-tone system, and in literature with the shattering of traditional narrative structures? And if an enterprise like philosophy, so very indebted to antiquity and its renaissances, really has opened itself to the inconstant spirit of modernity, which is oriented toward innovation, experimentation, and acceleration, could one not pose a more far-reaching question: Has philosophy, too, succumbed to the aging of modernity, as for instance present-day architecture has? Are there similarities with a postmodern architecture that, with vaguely provocative gestures, is again turning to historical decoration and to the ornamentation that had once been condemned?

There are at least terminological parallels. Contemporary philosophers, too, are celebrating their farewells. Members of one group call themselves postanalytic philosophers, others call themselves poststructuralists or post-Marxists. The fact that the phenomenologists have not yet arrived at their own "post-ism" almost makes them suspect.

Four Philosophical Movements

Platonism and Aristotelianism, even rationalism and empiricism, have lasted for centuries. Today things move faster. Philosophical movements are phenomena of effective history. They mask the constant pace of academic philosophy, which with its long rhythms stands athwart the more rapid shifts in issues and schools. Nonetheless, both when it formulates its problems, and when it has an effect on the public at large, philosophy draws from the same sources—in our century, four great movements. Even with all the differences we perceive at close range, four complexes, each with its own physiognomy, emerge from the flow of thought: analytic philosophy, phenomenology, Western Marxism, and structuralism. Hegel spoke of "shapes of spirit." This expression forces itself on us. For as soon as a shape of spirit is recognized in its uniqueness and is named, it is placed at a distance and condemned to decline. To this extent, the "posties" are not only deft opportunists with their noses to the wind; as seismographers tracking the spirit of the age, they must also be taken seriously.

In their courses, compositions, and implications, these movements of thought differ from one another in nontrivial ways. Phenomenology and above all analytic philosophy have left the deepest tracks behind in the discipline. They found their historians and their standard portrayals long ago. Individual titles have achieved the rank of founding documents: G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* and Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* on the one hand, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* on the other hand. The paths between Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and his *Philosophical Investigations,* between Heidegger's *Being and Time* and his "Letter on Humanism," mark peripeties. Movements of thought branch off. Linguistic analysis splits into a theory of science and a theory of ordinary language. Phenomenology anthropologizes broadly and ontologizes deeply; along both paths it becomes permeated with existential topicality. And although phenomenology—after a final productive impetus in France (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty)—seems to be breaking up, it is only in the decades following World War II that analytic philosophy has gained the imperial position that it claims to this day with Quine and Davidson.

An unparalleled concentration of powers characterizes the course of the latter tradition, which would seem to be guided solely through disciplined self-criticism from within, and which continually re-forms itself through self-produced problematics. In the end, it empties into the historicism of a postempirical philosophy of science (with Kuhn) and into the contextualism of a postanalytic philosophy of language (with Rorty). Yet, even in the aftermath of this self-overcoming, the achievements of linguistic analysis still triumphantly determine the explanatory level of the discipline as a whole.

Structuralism and Western Marxism embody an entirely different type of thinking. While the former received its impetus completely from without (from Saussure's linguistics and Piaget's psychology), the latter (Lukács, Bloch, and Gramsci) re-Hegelianizes Marxist thinking by leading it from political economy back to philosophical reflection. Both movements, however, make their way through human- and social-scientific disciplines before the seed of speculative thought grows in the bed of social theory.

As early as the twenties, Western Marxism entered into a symbiosis with Freudian metapsychology, and this served as the inspiration for the interdisciplinary works of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research once it had emigrated to New York. There are in this respect similarities with a structuralism that has spread radially outward via Bachelard's critique of science, Levi-Strauss' anthropology, and Lacan's psychoanalysis. Yet, while Marxist social theory regrouped as pure philosophy in Adorno's negative dialectics, structuralism was only brought completely into the domain of philosophical thought by those who wished to overcome it—Foucault and Derrida. Here too, leave is taken in opposite directions. Wherever the impulses of Western Marxism have not lost their force, its production takes on stronger social scientific and professional philosophical characteristics, whereas poststructuralism presently seems to be absorbed in a critique of reason radicalized through Nietzsche. Thus, while analytic philosophy is itself overcoming itself, and phenomenology is unraveling, in these