HANS URS
VON BALTHASAR

THEO-LOGIC

I: TRUTH OF THE WORLD

IGNATIUS

THEO-LOGIC
Volume I

THEO-LOGIC
Volumes of the Complete Work:

I: Truth of the World
II: Truth of God
III: The Spirit of Truth

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

THEO-LOGIC

THEOLOGICAL
LOGICAL THEORY

VOLUME I
TRUTH OF THE WORLD

Translated by Adrian J. Walker

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The third part of our trilogy focuses on theological "logic". It asks, then, just one question: What role does "truth" play in the event of God's self-revelation through the Incarnation of the Logos and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? To be sure, a "logic" so understood must eventually grapple with the laws of thought and discourse governing propositions in our *Aesthetics* and in our *Drama*, inasmuch as the former concerns perception and experience, while the latter pertains to the dramatic confrontation between divine and human freedom lived out on the stage of history. Nevertheless, we cannot fruitfully pose these questions until we have first tackled the underlying problem of the *logos*, in other words, of the truth of being itself.

From first to last, the trilogy is keyed to the transcendental qualities of being, in particular to the analogy between their status and form in creaturely being, on the one hand, and in Divine Being, on the other. Thus, there is a correspondence between worldly "beauty" and divine "glory" in the *Aesthetics* and between worldly, finite freedom and divine, infinite freedom in the *Drama*. By the same token, our task in the present theological *Logic* will be to reflect upon the relationship between the structure of creaturely truth and the structure of divine truth. This reflection will set the stage for an inquiry into whether God's truth can exhibit and express itself (in various forms) within the structures of creaturely truth. By its very nature, theological insight into God's glory, goodness, and truth presupposes an *ontological*, and not merely formal or gnoseological, infrastructure of worldly being. Without philosophy, there can be no theology.

Now, the discussion of truth that we are about to undertake affords us another opportunity to reflect more explicitly upon the transcendentals that we have already treated in the previous parts of the trilogy. In doing so, we will be led by the very nature of the object itself—in this case, the fact that all the transcendentals equally determine the whole of being—not only to underscore their inseparability (cf. Plato, *Philebus* 64e), reciprocal interpenetration, and mutual implication, but also, and for the same reason, to highlight the fundamental transcendental quality of unity. Just as the first volume reflects on the creaturely structure of unity (cf. pp. 153f., 167ff., 180-81, 248 herein), the second volume will enter into its divine structure (by answering the question "how can absolute unity be trinitarian?"). In this context, it will become clear that we can talk about unity as a transcendental only after having dealt thematically with the other transcendentals first.

Reflection on the analogous truth of being, far from getting lost in abstractions, is no less concrete than the *Aesthetics* or the *Drama*, for, like them, it forces us to face squarely the most vital questions of Christian faith and life. How, ontologically speaking, can God become man, or, to phrase the question differently: Does creaturely *logos* have the carrying capacity to harbor the divine Logos in itself? Presupposing that we have been able to disclose something of this fundamental mystery, we must still ask how things that do not themselves enact the incarnation of the Word can conceivably "follow Christ" within the world and its logic. Moving on to the indispensable framework of this *sequela Christi*, how can anything like a "Church" (understood as "body" and "bride" of Christ) make sense ontologically? The circumincession of the transcendentals suggests the necessity of, and therefore excuses, a new discussion of issues that, at least in part, we have treated in the previous panels of our triptych. After all, there is simply no way to do theology except by repeatedly circling around what is, in fact, always the same totality

looked at from different angles. To parcel up theology into isolated tracts is by definition to destroy it.

In order to be a serious theologian, one must also, indeed, first, be a philosopher; one must—precisely also in the light of revelation—have immersed oneself in the mysterious structures of creaturely being (and the "simple" can do this just as well as, and presumably better than, the "wise and understanding" [Mt 11:25]). Insofar as he is a philosopher, the authentic theologian by definition is struck by boundless amazement at the structural complexity of the transcendentals in contingent being, whose bottomless mystery defies all claims to have definitively mastered any problem. Not only does the "real distinction" between essence and *esse*-existence (where this latter pair itself eludes univocity) pervade every last fiber of all finite being, but, as we will show, each pole can be accounted for only and strictly in terms of the other. The same holds true of the polarity between the individual and the universal within unity; between "form" [*Gestalt*] and "light" within beauty ("I have to laugh at the aestheticians," says Goethe, "who go through painful contortions to make their poor stock of abstract words capture the ineffable—which they are pleased to call 'beauty'—in a concept", *Gespräche mit Eckermann* April 18, 1827); between obedience and freedom within ethics; between finite and infinite freedom, where the former attains its realization precisely by surrendering itself to the latter. The existence of such polarities gives finite being the consistency, vitality, and dignity that elevate it beyond mere facticity and make it the object of an unquenchable interest, indeed, of a reverent, astonished wonderment. For the more deeply the knower delves into these structures, the more they unveil themselves to him and, at the same time, withdraw behind the veil of their mystery. In what follows, we will have to deal centrally and *in extenso* with the paradox that unveiling is perfectly compatible with veiling and mystery, in other words, that the mysteriousness of being has absolutely nothing to do with irrationality. Clearly, such a project calls for some explicit treatment of the polarity between faith and knowledge, but this is an issue that—especially when considered in relation to the person and love—no one should find out of place in a work like this.

And since we will be talking about love, we will also have to ask whether this love might not be the hidden ground underlying the transcendentals and their circumincessive relation. If this should turn out to be the case, then the apparent duality connoted by the word *philo-sophia*, when looked at profoundly enough, could ultimately be resolved in a living unity—and would thus, in its own distinctive way, display the analogy of worldly being to infinite being, which is said to be identically "wisdom" and "love".

Having said this, we already touch upon the deepest problem to be faced in a "theo-logic". We can express this problem in the form of a paradoxical question: the polarity uncovered in the analysis of worldly truth (and of the other transcendentals) seems to underscore precisely the creature's dissimilarity to the Creator's being. Yet if the inner structure of worldly truth is characterized by the vitality alluded to above, might not this truth include at the same time an aspect of positive similarity to, or comparability with, God? This in turn implies a further question about just what it is that makes finite being an "image and likeness" of absolute being in the first place (we pose this question here without entering into the distinction between "image" and "vestige"). But this question becomes meaningful, indeed, urgent, only insofar as our horizon is theological and trinitarian.

In order to approach this intricate question fruitfully, we need to divide our inquiry into two parts. The first of these will have to deal primarily with the inner-worldly structures of the truth, not only of creaturely being in general, but also of the levels of creaturely being, because these levels also represent increasingly intense modes of truth's self-explication. Since the burden of this task has already been sufficiently accomplished in an earlier work (*Truth of the World*) we are reissuing it as the first volume of our *Theo-Logic*. When it appeared in 1947, *Truth of the World* was explicitly advertised as a "first part", to be followed by an investigation of the "truth of God". For extrinsic, biographical reasons, the promised second part has remained unwritten until now, when, after a substantial lapse of time, we present it to the public as the conclusion of our trilogy.

The present volume of the *Theo-Logic*, which is the first of three, pursues a predominanty philosophical method. It searches to uncover the structures that characterize the truth of finite being, while keeping in mind that, as we have already shown, this truth cannot be explained outside of its circumincessive relation to the other transcendentals.[1] Our exploration may lead the reader into somewhat unfamiliar territory, where he will encounter much that has been lost to view, and barely missed in its absence, since antiquity, or else since the patristic era, but whose legitimacy is thoroughly vindicated by a look back at the great tradition. However, the first volume does not aim to offer a detailed account of this tradition. Rather than risk diverting attention from the subject of our inquiry, we have limited ourselves to a few references to Thomas Aquinas, who will stand as guarantor that we have not departed from the great tradition. We have also waited (except for a few scattered allusions) until the final chapter to make explicit that the inner-worldly structures into which we are inquiring point to a transcendent divine Logos, albeit with the qualification that philosophical reason can discern God and his truth only as the "principium et finis mundi"[2] (*Vatic*. I, DS 3004).

The next volume (2) concentrates on the truth that God has made known to us by his own initiative through free revelation, which therefore also becomes the ultimate norm of the truth of the world. This revelation, far from abrogating worldly truth, elevates and perfects it beyond itself. But the understanding, and description, of this relationship presupposes the analysis of the first volume.

While this first volume works with philosophical concepts from a philosophical point of view, the second follows a theological method from a theological point of view. Yet in making this distinction we must never forget two things.

First, the world as it concretely exists is one that is always already related either positively or negatively to the God of grace and supernatural revelation. There are no neutral points or surfaces in this relationship. The world, considered as an object of knowledge, is always already embedded in this supernatural sphere, and, in the same way, man's cognitive powers operate either under the positive sign of faith or under the negative sign of unbelief. Of course, insofar as it works in a relative abstractness that prescinds from creaturely nature's embedding in the supernatural, philosophy can indeed highlight certain fundamental natural structures of the world and knowledge, because this embedding does not do away with, or even alter the essential core of, such structures. Nevertheless, the closer philosophy comes to the concrete object and the more fully it makes use of the concrete knowing powers, the more theological data it also incorporates, either implicitly or explicitly. After all, the supernatural takes root in the deepest structures of

being, leavens them through and through, and permeates them like a breath or an omnipresent fragrance. It is not only impossible, it would be sheer folly to attempt at all costs to banish and uproot this fragrance of supernatural truth from philosophical inquiry; the supernatural has impregnated nature so deeply that there is simply no way to reconstruct it in its pure state (*natura pura*).[3]

Now, at this point three different possibilities present themselves. First, one can unconsciously take over the theological data inherent in all philosophy, as Plato, Aristode, and other pagan philosophers did. Second, one can consciously reject them, secularize them, and reduce them to immanent philosophical truth, a move that not only characterizes the method of modern rationalism, but also marks more recent developments in idealism, mysticism, and existentialism, not to mention a purely philosophical personalist theory of value. Third, one can acknowledge and accept the indelible presence of such theologoumena at the heart of concrete philosophical thinking. This is the Christian option.

The first way is no longer accessible to us. The second way—the secularization of theology—entails a negative prejudice against the possibility or actuality of divine revelation, which it would have to justify theologically even before venturing to construct a so-called pure philosophy that presumes to treat, and to rework, the truth of revelation as if it somehow belonged by nature to man. For the time being, then, the only viable option is the third way—to describe the truth of the world in its prevalently worldly character, without, however, ruling out the possibility that the truth we are describing in fact includes elements that are immediately of divine, supernatural provenance. A good many descriptions of elements of worldly truth in the first volume stand in just this sort of twilight. Could what we say in the first volume about love, grace, overlooking and forgetting, and the like have been discovered without the irradiation of a theological light?

But perhaps we need to go beyond the simple juxtaposition of the natural and supernatural domains and to posit a third domain of truths that genuinely belong to creaturely nature yet do not emerge into the light of consciousness until they are illumined by a ray of the supernatural. Could we not include in this sphere Vatican I's teaching that natural reason suffices "to know with certainty the one true God as our Creator and Lord through creatures" (DS 3026)? After all, to attain this knowledge would be to achieve what the pagan religions of the past could not, namely, the synthesis between a personal polytheism, on the one hand, and an impersonal mysticism of unity, on the other, (This synthesis remained beyond reach as long as the personality of the gods seemed to entail a finitude that could be overcome only by positing a nonpersonal unity lying behind their world.) Could we not also say that the same kind of theological light falls upon Thomas' teaching that man, finite though he is, yearns already by nature (hence, without a supernatural existential) for the vision of God unmediated by the created world? Obviously, the option not to rule out a priori such a "third domain" of truths is much more unbiased than a method that from the outset assumes the impossibility of supernatural revelation. Our attempt to describe worldly truth, then, will endeavor to highlight what de facto appears to be such, without claiming to decide (which in any case we cannot do) whether it is illumined by a natural or a supernatural light.

Only then will we turn to our (methodologically distinct) theological inquiry, which presupposes God's self-revelation in the divine, incarnate Logos and his expositor [*Ausleger*], the Pneuma, and focuses explicitly on this self-revelation as its object. But we will have to beware of dividing

it into a categorial revelation, on the one hand, and a transcendental revelation, on the other, as if we could interpret Christ, and the Spirit's exposition [*Auslegung*] of Christ in the Church, as a merely categorial sphere, which we would then distinguish from an overarching, pan-historical transcendental sphere. Rather, Christ's Holy Spirit, working in a mysterious way, universalizes Christ's historical, risen reality as the *universale concretum*, thereby enabling its radiance to penetrate "to the ends of the earth" (cf. *Theologie der Geschichte*, 6th ed., 1979; *A Theology of History*, 1994).

But the second point that should emerge from the following investigations is that the intrinsic fullness of philosophical truth—even apart from the theological light that may fall upon it—is itself much richer than many accounts of it would lead us to suspect. If, instead of being dismayed by what seems to be the mutual exclusion of philosophical systems—empiricism versus rationalism, idealism versus realism, objectivism versus existentialism—we endeavor simply to look at reality and thus to get underneath the opposition between them—as, for example, Thomas got underneath the alleged incompatibility between Platonism (or Augustinianism) and Aristotelianism—we will begin to see in the natural realm a breadth, abundance, and multiplicity that will prepare us to appreciate fully the work of grace, which uses this whole plenitude to exhibit itself and, in so doing, permeates it, forms it, elevates it, and gives it its ultimate efficacy. If, on the other hand, we omit this preliminary philosophical work, then, as we have already observed more than once, what suffers most is theology, which either must rely on a few dusty, abstract notions or else, neglecting any philosophical basis at all, cobbles together a wretched foundation of its own and, without sufficient reflection, takes on faith any ideologically tinged material that promises to do the job.

The result is that philosophy and theology lead increasingly separate lives. Philosophy dispenses with any sort of transcendence and, entrenched in the intra-worldly, quickly abandons all talk of undecodeable "ciphers" or of "shepherding being", and contents itself more and more with varieties of a positivism a la Comte that dead-ends in sterile forms of functionalism, logicism, and linguistic analysis lacking any trace of truth as a transcendental property of being. By the same logic, theology floats on its foundation of air, even, indeed, precisely when it claims to be "existential", and though it may try to close the gap between a Christ of faith and a Jesus of knowledge, its mere insistence on this Jesus is no real bridge to whatever echoes of truth the men of our unphilosophical, technological-positivist age might still be able to hear. Isolated and unsure of itself, theology tends either to saw off the branch it sits on with a kind of exegetical rationalism or to sally forth into the political, after the manner of some versions of "liberation theology" that confuse the scandal of worldly poverty with the scandal of the Cross and put their faith in praxis. This is not to detract from either exegesis or the believer's ethical commitment, but simply to say that the failure to integrate such partial aspects of the truth can only lead us down the path of error.

Integration: a program of this nature requires rigorous collaboration between philosophy and theology, but such collaboration is possible only if both disciplines are intrinsically open to each other. But this intrinsic openness is itself possible only on the condition that we recenter our intellectual effort on thinking through the analogy between the divine archetype and the worldly image from both sides. Nor can we restrict the scope of this enterprise to man's imaging of God—and to the question of how far this image has or has not been lost because of human rebellion against God—but must rather deal more comprehensively with the way in which

worldly being as a whole images God. To be sure, intellectual [*geistig*] beings in the world will have a privileged place in our discussion, but, at least as far as man is concerned, this place cannot be separated from the whole hierarchy of subhuman beings, just as their ontological truth cannot be detached from his.

Now, if we are going to describe this ontological truth accurately, we shall have to return to our initial observation that the transcendentals are not categories. Categories have a finite content and so can be defined over against one another. The transcendentals, by contrast, are all-pervasive and, therefore, mutually immanent qualities of being as such. We realize, of course, that, in making this assertion, we risk a drubbing from Nietzsche: "It is unworthy of a philosopher to say 'the good and the beautiful are one'; if he has the audacity to add 'so is the true', he should be soundly beaten" (Schlechta 3:832). Nietzsche's strictures are hardly surprising when one considers what the transcendentals had become already by the time of Kant, namely (see section 12 of the "Analytic of Concepts" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*), a venerable, but "empty" idea. They are true, says Kant, as quantitative categories—"that is, of unity, plurality, and totality"—which are, in turn, "logical requirements and criteria for knowing things". The problem, however, is that these categories are then "uncritically [turned into] properties of things in themselves". Nietzsche not only sets them in opposition ("truth is ugly", he says in the sentence following the fragment we have just cited) but demonstrates their self-contradictory nature and, therefore, liquidates them altogether. The difference, of course, is that Nietzsche pronounces a more passionate No to transcendence than positivism, with its affected indifference, could ever manage.

Ever since Nietzsche, this hollowing out of the transcendentals has been justified by the degradation that man's freedom has been able to inflict upon them: falsehood, malice, ugliness, and the elevation of a violent dualism [*Zwietracht*] to the level of a first principle seem to dominate man's world so thoroughly that anyone who can look all of this in the face—and he alone would be the true realist—must dismiss the idea that being is true, good, and beautiful as a hopeless illusion. Existence is governed by the will to power, which uses the transcendentals to its best advantage: truth, *pravda*, is what serves the interests of power, and so forth. Now, although man's freedom appears totally overpowering, it is nonetheless reduced to impotence by the power of its own self-contradiction, which, openly or hiddenly, sooner or later leads to self-destruction. According to the bourgeois morality of the Old Testament (against which job rebels), the collapse of this self-contradiction could be witnessed empirically. This claim may not have been entirely wrong, but it can hardly be elevated to a universal law. From a Christian point of view, the ultimate revelation of this self-contradiction always transcends man. The kingdom of the Antichrist collapses only in the eschaton. Yet those who have not been blinded by it can recognize the contradiction already within history—and may even truly witness the sudden collapse of a thousand-year *Reich*. The power of being and of its ineliminable qualities is stronger than any human nihilism that would liquidate them and, with them, the being in which they inhere.

We can put this in other terms. All of the perversions that human freedom can inflict upon being and its qualities always aim at one thing: the annihilation of the depth dimension of being, thanks to which being remains a mystery even, indeed, precisely in its unveiling. The formula "A is nothing other than. . ." typifies this perversion, whatever the transcendental it affects. It is much rather the case that A is always "something other than. . . ." Neither goodness nor beauty nor

truth is exhausted by any definition; the multi-dimensional reality of the transcendentals can never be flattened out by any kind of reduction, and there is no way to capture the mystery either of their existence or of their essence in a formula. Of course, the ultimate ground of the mysterious character inherent in the knowable is disclosed only when we recognize that every possible object of knowledge is creaturely, in other words, that its ultimate truth lies hidden in the mind of the Creator, who alone can speak the eternal name of things. Yet in order to realize fully the meaning of this creatureliness, we need to pass from the first to the second, theological volume of the *Theo-Logic*.[4] It is God, then, who secures the transcendentals against all the assaults of human freedom—however much ruin this freedom might cause.

The second part of the *Theo-Logic* will itself require two volumes. The problem of Christology will occupy center stage in the first volume: How can divine, infinite truth be translated into creaturely, finite truth? The *analogia entis*[5] forbids the erection of any overarching third that includes both God and the creature; God cannot fall under any concept. The problem, then, has to do with the relation between God and the world: Can God make himself understandable to the world *as God* without losing his divinity, without falling victim to a (Hegelian) dialectic between God and the world? Can God go beyond his "prophetic" instructions to humanity and reveal himself to man *as God*, without thereby giving man an excuse to fashion an idolatrous concept of him? Is the idea that man is the "image of God" capable of supporting the conclusion that he can also lay hold of the "archetype"? Can we, to draw out the limit concept that is beginning to emerge here, conceive of a being that is able to make the transposition from archetype to image in itself without falsifying the former? In other words, may it not be the case that, contrary to Judaism and Islam (which are in full agreement on this point), the idea of a "God-man" is in fact *not* a contradiction in terms?

The task of the second volume of the *Theo-Logic* will be to come at this most central, and thorniest, question of Christian doctrine from every angle. Now, the question becomes even more acute when we consider that the Johannine *Verbum-Caro* (where *caro* means man in his estrangement from God and subjection to "vanity") seems to assert the translatability of the most sublime and holy into the lowest and most alien—truly a *maior dissimilitude*[6] (DS 806) that apparently disallows any kind of translation of the one into the other. The set of issues laid out here is broad enough that we can develop both an ana-logical approach, which ascends from the "image" to the archetype, and a cata-logical approach, which descends from the archetype to the image, without therefore having to work out a complete Christology (previous volumes of the trilogy already contain elements of one).

Now, even supposing that the incarnate Logos has succeeded in validly translating the logic of his divinity into the logic of his humanity, it still remains an open question whether this translation can be understood by human beings. The Gospel answers the question negatively, even when it comes to Jesus' closest disciples: "But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it" (Lk 9:45). Consequently, there has to be a new exposition, and Jesus himself promises it to them: "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand" (Jn 13:7). "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). If Jesus was the "expositor" of the divine Father (Jn 1:18), it is the "Spirit of truth" who will initiate human beings into this truth of Jesus, who called himself

"the truth", meaning the right exposition of God. This introduction into the God-man's exposition initiates the human spirit into the rightness of the logic of the Logos.

The Church's profession of faith in the Trinity concludes by enumerating the central truths that, following upon the confession that "we believe in the Holy Spirit", must be explained in the light of the Spirit's definitive theo-logic: "the holy Catholic Church", which is the living continuation of the "Mystical Body" of the incarnate Logos; the prehistory of the Church in the inspired words of the "prophets"; the event of the Church's genesis in the "sacraments", which communicate the miracle of the "forgiveness of sins" (in baptism and penance), on the one hand, and "of communion in the holy things" (the Eucharist), on the other—and, in so doing, mediate a (humanly incomprehensible) community of the sanctified that extends into the mystery of mutual substitution as a *sequela cruris*, indeed, ultimately into the "resurrection of the dead" and "the life of the world to come". All of these are works that have their foundation in Jesus, but they become possible for human beings thanks to the Holy Spirit whom the Father has sent to, and breathed into, them.

This concluding volume of the *Theo-Logic* also brings our trilogy to a close with a recapitulation of the *Aesthetics*—the glory of God—and the *Drama*—the truth of God's overcoming the powers that oppose him both in the world and in man.

Before we begin, however, let us look back over the arrangement of this trilogy. Is it not illogical? Does it not contradict the obvious ordering of the transcendentals, as well as any logical sequence of theological topics? Should we not have begun with truth, which we placed at the end, despite the fact that truth necessarily underlies every aesthetic judgment or ethical and religious action (hence, the good)? And, a fortiori, how can we place the beautiful ahead of the true and the good, when its status as a transcendental is disputed and, if it belongs in the series at all, would have to take the last place?

Our method has also come in for a serious theological objection. God's revelation to man is, for the Christian believer, trinitarian: God the Father, the "font of the divinity" (DS 490, 525, 568), reveals himself to us only in two divine hypostases, the Son, who makes known to us the Father's truth, and the Holy Spirit, who infuses his love into us. And this saving revelation discloses something of the mystery of the immanent Trinity:

> But nothing further can be added to this transcendental duality (of knowledge and love), by an equi-primordial "beautiful", for example. . . . The reason for this is not only that such an addition would mortally imperil any understanding of why there can be only *two* processions within the Trinity and would make it impossible to maintain consistency the fundamental axiom that the "economic" and "immanent" Trinity axe identical. Rather, if we understand the true and full meaning of will, freedom, in short, the "*bonum"*, as love toward another person, which not only intends the person but rests in the fullness of the other's goodness and "splendor", *then* there is *no* apparent reason for adding a third faculty to this duality.[7]

This objection, which identifies the *bonum* and the *pulchrum* ("splendor"), seems to presuppose that we have coordinated each part of our work with a different Person of the Trinity. However, this is not the case. Rather, the whole divine Trinity is the focus in all three parts of the trilogy.

Our choice to begin with "glory" is comparable to what was once called apologetics or, if you will, fundamental theology. Our idea was that today's positivistic, atheistic man, who has become

blind not only to theology but even to philosophy, needed to be confronted with the phenomenon of Christ and, therein, to learn to "see" again—which is to say, to experience the un-classifiable, total otherness of Christ as the outshining of God's sublimity and glory. Of course, man's constitution affords him a certain anticipatory understanding of this experience (*The Glory of the Lord*, vols. 4 and 5).[8] However, the true presence of this glory first comes into view only in the salvation history of the Old and New Testaments (vols. 6 and 7), and it is unfolded explicitly by the great Christian theologians. This option seemed even more needful given its underdeveloped role in contemporary, postconciliar attempts to reform Catholic theology, where it tends to get resubmerged under the rationalism with which many exegetical accounts of the phenomenon of Christ simply replace the older rationalism of the Neoscholastics.

According to the perennial practice of the Church, one who has been struck by the splendor of Christ—and, in him, of the triune God—is next introduced into the lived answer that this experience requires. There is a great deal of emphasis today on Christian "*praxis"*, but by its very nature this *praxis* can happen only after *theoria*, that is, only after we have recognized the demand implied in God's loving, triune self-gift. Of course, this demand is itself a sheer gift that frees man from his self-entanglement and thus enables him to give an adequate answer to God in the form of Christ's two-in-one "great commandment". It was therefore necessary to think through—to the ultimate eschatological consequences—the *bonum* in terms of the history of the dramatic encounter between the freedom of the triune God and the freedom of sinful and redeemed man. Fundamentally, then, this "ethics" also has a trinitarian structure. The key to this structure is a twofold christological fact that stands at its center. First, what is decisive for authentic (human) personal being is participation in Christ's mission and his fulfillment of this mission through loving obedience. Second, the God-man's unique, soteriological *pro nobis*[9] is communicated in the mystery of the *communio sanctorum*, namely, that those who believe and suffer can really stand in one another's place. We could not, of course, ignore the "tragic dimension" of this ethics, which we see mirrored in Christ's destiny and which remains decisive also for the destiny of his Church. By tragic dimension, we mean the fact that ever-greater love calls forth ever-greater hatred—the last book of the Bible drives this home forcefully—so that Christ's victory over the "world" by no means obviates the need for a judgment, whose outcome no human being can "calculate", even if he may place his hope in Jesus' words: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

Why, then, do we still need a *Theo-Logic* in addition to the *Aesthetics* and the *Drama*? Our answer is that, while the first two parts of the trilogy presupposed that God can make himself comprehensible to human beings and enable them to follow him, they did not reflect on how the infinite truth of God and his Logos can express itself, not just vaguely and approximatively, but adequately, in the narrow vessel of human logic. Does not the word "theo-logy" entail the deepest possible contradiction, does not this term signify an "utterance of the unutterable and inconceivable"? Yet man is not just a perceiver and an actor; he is also a thinker, speaker, and formmator. What, then, is the value of the *quasi-scientia* that he develops under the name of "theology" and in which he obviously attempts to translate God's logic into his own? We said just now that there can be no Christian *praxis* not guided by a *theoria* as its light and norm. Similarly, our project has to conclude with a reflection on the possibility of expressing and justifying this *praxis* in human concepts and words. But this enterprise, like that of the first two parts of the trilogy, can succeed only a trinitarian foundation. Theology, to answer our question,

is possible, but it will primarily be, not a human achievement, but an achievement of the divine Father, who is able truly to exposit himself and make himself understood in his incarnate Word, albeit only to those whom he equips for understanding this exposition by the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in all of this, something curious happens: the God who truly and unreservedly exposits himself does not therefore cease to be a mystery. To show that this claim is not nonsense, but is already anticipated in the structures of intra-worldly truth, is the task of the study with which we are about to begin: the *Truth of the World*.

INTRODUCTION

To talk about truth means more than merely to ask whether or not truth exists and, perhaps, to answer in the affirmative. This particular question—whether or not truth exists—is the principal concern of critical epistemology, and it is certainly serious enough to warrant a thorough investigation of its own. Ontology, too, should have pride of place in dealing with this issue, because truth is not just a property of knowledge but a transcendental quality of being as such.

However, let us assume that the question of whether truth exists has, in one way or another, received a satisfactory answer. Let us assume, in other words, that the knowing reason has become convinced that there is such a thing as truth, that it is a property both of thinking and of being, and that it is the rule governing their mutual relation. Will reason be satisfied with this conclusion? Will it not rather think that the most fruitful part of its work still lies ahead, that it has been handed a passport that finally authorizes entry into the land of knowledge proper, and that it, reason, would be folly, and not reason at all, if it contented itself with its first success and broke off the investigation it had only just begun?

To be sure, we cannot answer the factual question of truth's existence without also implicitly raising the question of its essence and, thus, without already making some progress toward solving it. To know *whether* truth is, one must have a kind of prior knowledge of *what* it is. However, as long as reason is occupied thematically with the factual question, it will pose the question of truth's essence only indirectly, for the sake of the question of its existence. By the same token, it will not yet be immediately concerned with exploring truth—which for now it takes for granted—and will lack the passion that the question of truth's essence naturally requires.

Let us also grant that no philosophical question can be simply resolved, definitively settled, and then left behind. The same basic questions keep coming back, at a new level, as we wind higher around the spiral, or as we drill more deeply into the mysterious abyss of being. One of these constantly recurring questions is the question: Does truth in fact exist? That and What, fact and nature, existence and essence are ultimately inseparable and, as such, frustrate every superficial attempt to keep them neatly apart. Our very inquiry into the essence of truth throws us back upon our starting point, which lies in the naked, unassured question of whether truth or being exists at all.

And yet there is an elemental wonderment over the sheer fact of existence, essence, and truth that, for the genuine thinker, does not decrease but only steadily increases in the course of his research. But this astonishment, this ever more reverent, ever more amazed marveling at the stupendousness of the object of his knowledge, indeed, of his knowledge itself, looks less and less like the schoolboy's abstract and fruitless doubt of the existence of being and truth. His intellectual life may have begun with such doubt, when, as a freshman, he made his first tentative efforts at thinking with the help of an epistemology textbook, but this starting point now seems touchingly naive measured against the sheer weight of so many years lived in company with the truth.

As he would see it now, the mature thinker would probably compare that initial question—"Is there really such a thing as truth?"—to a young man's first hesitant conversation with a girl, from

which he came away convinced, “she loves me!” Now, it would be a strange lover indeed who would be content with the mere ascertainment that this is in fact the case. No, this fact, like a door springing open, becomes the starting point of a newly beginning life of love. In this life, the eternal question of lovers—“Does he or she love me?”—the question of whether they love one another, is revived every day; love can never be questioned enough, because love never has enough of hearing the reassuring affirmative reply. Behind every answer there is a new question, and behind every reassuring certainty there is an expansive new horizon. However, this ever renewed question is very different from the first question about the bare fact of love. The new questioning takes place within the world of love itself, wherein it forms a part of love’s vitality and essence. It presupposes the existence of love even as it questions it, and this presupposition shows a much deeper wisdom than the earlier question that first approaches love from the outside. That is why, when the novice hesitates before the problem of truth, not knowing where to begin, he should take the advice of those philosophers who urge him to start by diving into the current, to find out what water is and how to make headway in it through direct, physical contact with the flowing stream. They will tell him, and rightly so, that the man who does not dare to jump into the water will never learn what it means to swim and that the man who does not dare to jump into the truth will never attain the certainty that truth in fact exists. For, as they insist, this first act of faith, of self-abandoning confidence, far from being irrational, is simply the prior condition of any certainty about the existence of the rational in the first place.

To explain what we mean, let us return to our first example. The man who has been married for many years, whose wife has borne him children and shared joy and sorrow with him, does not need to wonder apprehensively from day to day and hour to hour whether she really loves him. Such obsessive doubt would eventually make the relationship unbearable, indeed, would kill love itself. On the other hand, this does not mean that our man has moved away from the source and beginning of his other, loving question or that he can now drop the matter and treat love as an established fact that no longer concerns him. Just as the swimmer, even when he has acquired increasing mastery of his art, must *always* swim in order to avoid drowning, the lover must live every day anew at the very origin of love and therein continue to probe and question it. In the same way, the knower must daily ask anew what truth is, although, to repeat, this question is not the same as fruitless and destructive doubt. As in swimming and loving, there is real progress in knowing the truth, but this progress never gets beyond, or puts behind itself, the vital beginning. The starting point of metaphysics is so charged with life that it can never be left behind, but, like a fruitful seed, it contains, and has the power to unfold out of itself, the whole of metaphysics. Any extension of the initial problem is always at the same time an intensification of the original question that, rather than developing *away* from the origin, develops *into* it and thus becomes ever more original.

There is no contradiction between the primordial question about truth and the development of life in and with the truth. In fact, the question urgently demands this development. In the course of their married life, a couple’s love slowly unfolds a whole richness, breadth, and depth that could scarcely have been guessed in the beginning. Similarly, truth begins to unfurl its inexhaustible plenitude—which only goes on becoming more and more inexhaustible—in the course of long familiarity with it. Because truth is a transcendental property of being, a fundamental quality and constituent structure of every being [*Seiendes*], which therefore shares most intimately in all the breadth and depth of being [*Sein*] and in all degrees and forms of existent entities [*Wesen*], it would indeed be strange if truth could be defined, classified, skimmed over, and finished off in a

few dry propositions. Rather, it is obvious from the outset that truth, as a property of being, is at bottom no more susceptible of, or accessible to, an exhaustive definition than is being itself. Definition, as the word itself implies, always entails the delimitation of one content over against others, which are ipso facto excluded from it. To put it another way: Definition is the determination of a generic concept by the addition of a specific difference. However, being itself is not a genus, because all the differences of being are themselves being. Being's only opposite is nothing, but nothing has no capacity to define the positive content of being's essence. Being, then, can be determined only by being itself, just as it can be understood only through itself. And what is true of being is also true of all the properties inherent in it insofar as it is being. The universality of truth is all-encompassing. For this reason, truth cannot itself be encompassed within the limits of any definition, while, conversely, the very act of defining occurs within, and presupposes, the encompassing sphere of truth. The land of truth has no fixed frontiers of the kind to be found on maps, because its essence and its domain are as boundless as the essence and domain of being itself. When we speak of truth, we must beware of assuming any preconceived and exclusive concept or definition of it that would restrict its application a priori or would fix it on one side or the other. Rather, we must allow truth the full range that it naturally requires as an unbounded quality of being. Only in this way can truth convey to us something of its infinity and, in so doing, prove to us that its nature is always greater, always more sublime, than whatever we have grasped of it so far.

Every great thinker has been convinced of this vastness and inexhaustible richness of truth. This is the case even of a philosopher who is conventionally presented as the epitome of a tidy manualism: Thomas Aquinas. In reality, his *De veritate* ranges over a whole cosmos of topics whose immediate pertinence to the problem of truth is evident to the discerning eye, even though myopic readers have found reason to complain of digressions and pointless excurses. The problem is rather that, even in this immensely rich work, Thomas—and he himself would be the first person to admit this—manages to pose and answer only a tiny fraction of the questions that can and, in part, *must* be considered under the heading of truth. Being only a man, he could only do what a mere man can, which is to say, gather a small, more or less random sampling of the flowers that bloom in the immense fields of truth. The bouquet may convey some idea of the flora of the region, but it can never reproduce the richness, the abundance, the atmosphere, the fruitfulness, and the glory of the countryside as a whole. Now, what we are saying about Thomas could just as easily be said about Aristotle and Augustine, who, no less than Plato, were imbued with a sense of the fragmentariness of knowledge, or about Hegel, who gives us a glimpse of what truth is only at the end of a system that, as it stretches to include all beings, opens up panoramic vistas in all directions.

The very modest essay that follows does not claim to be anything more than another voyage of discovery, undertaken with no resources but our own, into the kingdom of truth, where the sun never sets. We will not spend much time attempting to secure the existence of the truth, since there is already no scarcity of such attempts. Acknowledging the existence of truth as a primordial fact, we will concentrate instead on the questions pertinent to its essence. This should serve to bring to light a whole series of absolutely primary and elementary things that are as essential to truth as housekeeping or child-rearing is to marriage but about which conventional treatments of truth have very little to tell us. These things are so many and so various that, like a tour guide on a train, we can only point out the sights to right and left as they rush past, even though the celerity of the journey rules out any adequate presentation of most of what would

otherwise merit attention. This almost oppressive feeling of an overwhelming fullness is due not so much to the a posteriori multitude of existing things and facts that claim a share in the discussion of truth as it is to the simple a priori quality of truth itself insofar as it inheres in being as such, where it confronts the thinker as an ever new marvel. Our aim in what follows is to dwell for a while in the company of this marvel.

We proceed in the conviction that, rather than diverging from the great tradition of Western and, in particular, of Christian thinking about truth, we are recovering a certain stream of the tradition that, in modern times, especially in Christian thought, has become slack and formed peculiarly stagnant pools. Just compare the understanding that Fathers like Clement and Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine could bring to the essence of truth, or the penetrating originality with which an Anselm could reflect upon it, or the breadth and sovereign command with which an Aquinas could describe it, with the meager propositions that are the sum and substance of what contemporary manuals of Christian philosophy are able to serve up! Perhaps the fault lies with a certain practical apologetic that increasingly withdraws to a few basic positions needing to be defended at all costs. Ensconcing itself in a kind of intellectual redoubt whose well-fortified impregnability is paid for with the surrender of the advanced positions it now leaves undefended, such an apologetics limits itself to proving the existence of truth in general and considers this demonstration to be the sole burden of its intellectual task. But perhaps this defensive approach is itself unwittingly influenced by the very modern rationalism and skepticism against which it reacts. After all, its own ideal of truth is certitude of truth's existence, or, at the very least, a kind of scientific clarity and unassailable certainty that can only be purchased by selling off huge acreages of truth.

This reduction of knowledge of the truth to a purely theoretical evidence drained of all vital personal and ethical decisions so palpably narrows the scope of truth that it ipso facto loses its universality and, therefore, its very essence. If both truth and goodness are indeed transcendental properties of being, then they must interpenetrate; if we treat them as mutually exclusive, we inevitably mischaracterize their true essence. The same is true of the last transcendental property of being, beauty. Beauty, too, has a rightful claim to universality, and for this reason it can also never be separated from its two sisters. An ethic and aesthetic of truth is thus a basic requirement demanded by the insight that only the three transcendental properties of being can reveal the reality of its inner richness, that is to say, its truth, and that only a permanent, living unity of the theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic attitudes can convey a true knowledge of being. To be sure, these three attitudes and points of view are formally distinct, and they must remain so in any serious metaphysics, but from the very first, and not just as an afterthought, it is necessary to keep in mind their common root and constant interplay. This interplay is so intimate that one cannot speak concretely about one of the three without drawing the other two into the discussion.

By grasping and describing this unity from its very root, we can obviate a whole host of perplexities caused by simplistic assumptions that would otherwise dog us in the later course of our inquiry. We thus fully agree with Newman, for example, that there can be no satisfactory resolution of the *theological* problem of faith and reason unless we recognize and describe the unity of theory and ethics, of evidence and decision, that is at the *philosophical* origin of the problem. Similarly, any aesthetics that ignores the deep-rooted connections between the unveiling of being and the movement of expression, in other words, between truth and beauty, will have to answer the charge of irrationalism. Modern rationalism, attempting to narrow the range of truth to

a supposedly isolable core of pure theory, has exiled the good and the beautiful from the domain of the rationally verifiable, relegating them to arbitrary subjectivity or to a world of private belief and personal taste. As a result, the picture of being, the unified view of the world, is torn to shreds, so that any real conversation about truth becomes impossible. Discourse remains at the level of the generically accessible, hence ultimately trivial, while the deepest questions of truth, which need decision and taste even to be seen, are buried under the silence of a false modesty. If truth lacks decision, then decision, the personal decision that determines one's view of the world, lacks truth.

We will show later that this censoring of the discussion of truth is tantamount to an annihilation of truth itself. Christian philosophy must therefore be wary of giving even unconscious and unintentional aid and comfort to this kind of rationalism. Yet in order to provide the necessary counterweight, it must return to the sources where, both historically and essentially, the vital interlocking of truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as of their respective sciences, made possible a universal world view. We must overcome rationalism and irrationalism either together or not at all, and this means that we must mount our attack from a fundamental position of unity.

Our investigation will be divided into two parts. The first considers truth as we first encounter it in the world, as the truth of things and of man, a truth that ultimately points back to God, the Creator. In this perspective, the truth of God appears as the origin and end (*principium et finis*, Vatican I, *Denz.*, 1785) of the truth of this world. The second part considers the truth that God has made known to us about himself through revelation and which, once positively revealed, becomes the ultimate norm of all truth in the world. The first part, then, deals with truth as an object of philosophy and uses philosophical concepts, whereas the second part deals with truth as an object of theology, using theological methods. That having been said, there remain two things that we must take to heart and keep in mind throughout what follows.

First, the world as it concretely exists is one that is always already related either positively or negatively to the God of grace and supernatural revelation. There are no neutral points or surfaces in this relationship. The world, considered as an object of knowledge, is always already embedded in this supernatural sphere, and in the same way man's cognitive powers operate either under the positive sign of faith or under the negative sign of unbelief. Of course, insofar as it works in a relative abstractness, prescinding from creaturely nature's embedding in the supernatural, philosophy can indeed highlight certain fundamental natural structures of the world and knowledge, because this embedding does not do away with, or even alter the essential core of, such structures. Nevertheless, the closer philosophy comes to the concrete object and the more fully it makes use of the concrete knowing powers, the more theological data it also incorporates, either implicitly or explicitly. After all, the supernatural takes root in the deepest structures of being, leavens them through and through, and permeates them like a breath or an omnipresent fragrance. It is not only impossible, it would be sheer folly to attempt at all costs to banish and uproot this fragrance of supernatural truth from philosophical inquiry; the supernatural has impregnated nature so deeply that there is simply no way to reconstruct it in its pure state (*natura pura*).

Now, at this point three different possibilities present themselves. First, one can take over unconsciously the theological data inherent in all philosophy, as Plato, Aristotle, and other pagan philosophers did. Second, one can consciously reject them, secularize them, and reduce them to

immanent philosophical truth, a move that characterizes the method not only of modern rationalism but also of a certain more recent idealism, mysticism, and existentialism, as well as of a purely philosophical personalist theory of value. Third, one can acknowledge and accept the indelible presence of such theologoumena at the heart of concrete philosophical thinking. This is the Christian option.

The first way is no longer accessible to us. The second way—the secularization of theology—entails a negative prejudice against the possibility or actuality of divine revelation, which it would have to justify theologically even before venturing to construct a so-called pure philosophy that presumes to treat, and to rework, the truth of revelation as if it somehow belonged by nature to man. For the time being, then, the only viable option is the third way—to describe the truth of the world in its prevalently worldly character, without, however, ruling out the possibility that the truth we are describing in fact includes elements that are immediately of divine, supernatural provenance. Obviously, a method of this kind is much more free of prejudice than one that from the outset assumes the impossibility of authentic divine revelation. Our first investigation of worldly truth, then, will contain a sort of phenomenology of truth as we familiarly encounter it, and it will therefore chiefly describe what can be considered natural truth. Only then, in a methodologically distinct phase, will we turn to our theological investigation, which, taking God's self-revelation as its point of departure, attempts to describe how divine truth communicates itself as it is in God and, in so doing, involves the truth of the world and orders it to the divine.

Second, however, it needs to be said that the intrinsic fullness of philosophical truth—quite apart from the theological light that always falls upon it—is much richer than most accounts of it would lead us to suppose. The venerable principle that grace builds on nature requires—precisely for the sake of the supernatural understanding of grace—a much more comprehensive inquiry into, and description of, the world of nature than is conventionally practiced. Only after having duly displayed the whole breadth, depth, and manifold variety of nature in its proper domain can we even come close to a worthy description of grace as a power that penetrates, uses, shapes, elevates, and perfects this whole fullness.

If we omit this preliminary philosophical work, then what suffers most is theology, which, forced to rely on a few dusty, abstract notions, risks being unable to unfold its distinctive content with the requisite universality because of a lack of properly prepared material. When theology does recognize this deficiency, its usual response is to hole up in a specially devised theological vocabulary constructed alongside the all too abstract conceptual edifice of "Scholastic philosophy" (see, for example, so-called "kerygmatic theology"). But this only makes the gulf between theology and philosophy permanently unbridgeable. This option is, in fact, ultimately disastrous for both, for it is nothing but the expression of theology's despairing resignation vis-à-vis the inadequacy of the philosophical material that has been placed at its disposal. We can seek a remedy for this problem from a renewed phenomenology that gazes upon the truth of the world in an original act of beholding. This phenomenology will serve theology best precisely by putting aside any anxious concern to select and present topics in function of subsequent theological exigencies.

The formal object of this inquiry is truth. We therefore offer no epistemology, no ontology, no theodicy. We cannot, of course, avoid grazing these issues, because truth can only be described as

a property of being and of knowing. Nevertheless, the choice of the questions and the form of their presentation have been guided exclusively by one formal object: truth. Treatises like this are no longer in use, so it must be forgiven its tentativeness and uncertainty. Much will be left open and fragmentary; other matters will become clear only after repeated circumambulations. Questions about the relationship between the world's truth and the truth of God will be dealt with only summarily at the end of this first volume because we will discuss them more thoroughly from a theological perspective in the second.

I. TRUTH AS NATURE

A. Preliminary Concept of Truth

Every human being who has awakened to consciousness not only knows and understands the concept of truth, he also knows that this truth really exists. Truth is as evident as existence and essence, as unity, goodness, and beauty. It is possible to cast doubt, at least apparently, on each of the realities and to find a thousand nit-picking arguments against them, many of which will inevitably make an impression on timid, intellectually inexperienced, or sickly and vulnerable minds. Yet it is one thing to be struck, even paralyzed, by some clever objection to which one cannot find a reply and quite another to lose sight of the simple, concrete evidence of the truth. Thus, there may be people who, for some reason or other, have become used to doubting the existence of intrinsic goodness. On their view, what is called good or appears to be so in everyday life can be explained away in terms of mores, changing customs, unconfessed laziness and selfishness, a natural will to power concealed under various disguises. If, however, such people come face to face with the evidence of a selfless act that another, say a friend, performs for its own sake, and they realize by their own inward experience that the naked overcoming of self is a really attainable possibility, they forget for the moment their entire theory and bow before the simple fact of goodness. Their theory now has a breach in it; they may stop it up later, but for now they have stepped through it, naked and undisguised, into the presence of the Good. And if they are intellectually honest, if they know how to face facts, their theory, even while trying to explain the good in terms of some other, seemingly more fundamental phenomenon, will never quite manage to argue away that elementary encounter with real selflessness.

The same applies to man's dealings with truth. He may entertain doubts, in many individual cases with good reason, that some pretended truth really is true. He may use the possibility of doubt, or the reality of disappointment, in numerous individual cases in order to construct a theory that denies the existence, or at least the knowability, of truth. He may craft his theory with the most careful, scholarly polish. Paradoxically, however, the whole enterprise must, and in fact will, go hand in hand with a knowledge of what truth really is, for this truth is something that man encounters within himself and all around him. We need only recall St. Augustine's terse rejoinder to the man who doubts everything: At least the doubter is certain of his doubt, and, in being certain of his doubt, he is implicitly certain that he is thinking, and in being certain that he is thinking, he is certain that he exists. This network of facts is disclosed to him so irrefutably that he can call it into question only formally, in any empty, incomplete act of thought lacking the force of an evidence. In the doubter's mind, doubt that truth exists lies immediately alongside a primary awareness of the truth, which as such must necessarily be presupposed in the very act of doubting it. Of course, the doubter might want to radicalize his doubt to the point where he no longer claims to assert it but supplies his utterances with the disclaimer that none of them, including the proposition expressing his doubt, should be regarded as truth, but rather as mere opinion. Yet this would achieve very little. First, because life compels him constantly to express opinions and to make affirmations, and he has to stand by these utterances, at least insofar as he has uttered them, and so the problem is merely transferred. Second, he cannot help admitting that he can really express his opinion and so is able to recognize the validity and truth of the relationship between what he knows and what he expresses.

At this point, the skeptic might seize on this remark and assert that everything we call truth rests solely on such arbitrary and purely formal correspondences between appearances (received, for example, through the senses) and the conventional signs and expressions by which human beings try to communicate with one another. Now, if truth were in fact no more than the formal correctness entailed in this sort of correspondence, then admittedly truth in the strict sense would be invalidated. To do justice to the concept of truth that everyone has in a naive and unreflective way, we have to be able to talk, not just about appearances, but about being, however being becomes manifest. But precisely this being is already familiar [*bekannt*], has already been disclosed to every thinker, even the doubting thinker, in his consciousness. And this familiarity of being is the innermost essence of truth.

In the act of thinking, a consciousness [*Bewußtsein*] is unveiled, hence, present to itself with such immediacy that the two components of the [German] word [*Bewußt* and *Sein*] admit of no separation whatsoever. Consciousness implies not only the abstract property of being *conscious* but also, with equal immediacy, the reality of *being* conscious, the being of consciousness. It is this being, then, that is immediately unveiled and present to consciousness. The thinking subject is always one that exists and recognizes that it does. In this way, it knows what being is. At this stage, we can ignore the question of whether the being of the object thought is present to the thinking subject with similar immediacy. This question will have to be answered later; it need not yet concern us as long as we are considering first contact with truth as such. It is enough for us to know, that, at one point at least, the sphere of mere, insubstantial appearance has been breached, that being itself has come into appearance and has become present, as being, to consciousness. Here is the proof, then, that being, precisely *as* being, can be unveiled and apprehended. In saying this, we are also implicitly stating that *all* being is capable of being unveiled.

We thus have an initial description of truth as the unveiledness, uncoveredness, disclosedness, and unconcealment (ἀ-λήθεια) of being. This unconcealment implies two things: First, that *being* appears; second, that being *appears*. Now, unveiling consists in the fact that this duality is nonetheless a singularity—and truth consists in unveiling. On the one hand, being is not concealed in itself like some unknown "thing-in-itself" that remains incommunicado behind an uncommunicative appearance. On the other hand, the appearance is also not a kind of unstable *fata morgana*, a mirage floating over nothing or over an abyss of enigma. No, being can appear as being, however mysterious and enigmatic the relationship between being and appearance, however great or small, however easy or difficult to verify the distance between them may be.

Unveiledness is, first of all, an absolute property inherent in being as such. But it immediately provokes the question "*To whom* is being revealed", and so this absolute property implies a second, relative property. This relative aspect may seem to be a secondary, synthetic addition to the first, in the sense that we can imagine a being that is knowable in the absolute yet is not therefore necessarily known in actuality. Although this may be true of an individual being with respect to this or that knowing subject, it cannot be true of being as such with respect to knowledge as such. Rather, if being had the property of unveiledness only in itself, and not also immediately for a conscious mind, it would not really be unveiled at all, but locked and concealed in itself. The fact that being is unveiled entails analytically that it is also unveiled to someone who recognizes it in its unveiling. This "someone" is the subject, and here it makes no difference whether or not the subject is identical to the unveiled being, that is, whether it is

unveiled to itself or to another. It is not essential to the concept of truth that all being should be self-conscious, but it *is* essential that all being should have a relation to some self-consciousness.

If being is really disclosed in its appearance, and if, in being disclosed, it can bear witness to itself, then all suspicion of mere seeming, illusion, or deception vanishes to make room for a certainty that reflects in consciousness the firmness, validity, and reliability of being. The knowledge is genuine because the thing known is itself genuine. We are no longer walking on quicksand but have the secure ground of being under our feet. And the real assurance consists in the fact that, immediately beneath being, there is only nothing. When he knows being, the knower knows that he has before him the ultimate subject of all possible predicates, that he has made a complete circuit of the knowable, that, in principle, nothing eludes his knowledge—at least insofar as it is being. The knower has the certitude that he has reached the very frontier of nothingness, and so he need not fear that there is some yet unknown background behind being from which the knowledge he has gained could be called into question or abrogated.

This certitude bestows on truth a second fundamental attribute: Truth is not merely ἀλήθεια, unconcealment, but also *emeth*: fidelity, constancy, reliability. Where there is *emeth*, there is something we can rely on, something to which we can hand ourselves over. Truth as *emeth* does two things. On the one hand, it is conclusive, in the sense that it puts an end to uncertainty and endless seeking, to conjecture and suspicion, so that this condition of ever-shifting vacillation can give way to the clearly formed, solid evidence of things that are unveiled as they actually are. On the other hand, this closure of uncertainty and its bad infinity is the un-closing and unsealing of a true infinity of fruitful possibilities and situations. Once truth has become present, a thousand consequences, a thousand insights, spring from it as from a seed. Once being has become evident, this evidence immediately harbors the promise of further truth; it is a door, an entrance, a key to the life of the spirit. This property that makes *emeth* a begmning and an entryway is the predominant one—so much so that it activates the first aspect (truth as conclusion) only in service of the second (truth as beginning). Truth never imprisons or constricts the knower. No, truth is always an opening, not just to itself and in itself, but to further truth. It discovers being and thus the rich coherence of being. It opens up the prospect of hitherto unknown territory. It contains within itself a movement toward further truth.

The two constitutive features of truth—its unconcealment and its trustworthiness—have this in common: each is an opening, an opening beyond itself. In its unconcealment, a being opens and proffers itself to knowledge. It does not, however, open itself simply as this or that individual thing but also as being in general. It follows that every opening of a particular being includes the promise that all being can be made manifest. The trustworthiness and credibility of truth becomes an express invitation to entrust oneself to this promised manifestness, to follow the certitude that truth imparts, and to give oneself over to this movement, which is already underway. We can therefore understand why truth implies total transparency and apprehensibility, on the one hand, yet eludes any attempt to nail it down in a definition, on the other. Truth is apprehensible and, in a more limited sense, rational, insofar as a being discloses itself and, in so doing, really gives itself as it is. The key to this rationality, then, is that the singular being becomes the place where we apprehend and penetrate the meaning and essence of a sample of "world". But this specimen of the world is only a tiny excerpt of being as a whole, which, while unveiled in principle in this bit of being, nonetheless remains transcendent and veiled in its totality. In the same way, the bit of truth that offers itself to us is, in the end, only an infinitesimal fraction of truth as a whole. To

be sure, truth as a whole is in principle unveiled (because all truth is truth), yet it remains infinitely transcendent and veiled in its totality. For this very reason, it awakens in the knower a yearning for *more*.

True knowledge thus manages to conjoin two seemingly contrary experiences: the experience of possessing, and surveying from above, the object of knowledge in the clarity of the intellect [*Geist*] and the experience of being flooded by something that overflows knowledge in the heart of knowledge itself, or, to put it another way, the awareness of participating in something that is infinitely greater in itself than what comes to light in its disclosure. In the first experience, the subject wraps itself around the object, in the sense that when something is grasped, it finds itself inside the person who grasps it (comprehensively). In the second experience, however, the subject is introduced, initiated even, into the mysteries of the object; it explicitly lays hold only of a fraction of the object's depth and richness, albeit with the promise of further initiation to come. The (in a narrower sense) rationality of the first aspect immediately unfolds into this expansive vista looking out upon what has not yet been, but is able to be, known. Indeed, it is rational only insofar as an individual cognition is set off against the backdrop of what can be known in principle, but it is not yet known in fact.

This suggests that the two aspects cannot be opposed as if one were rational and the other irrational. On the contrary, in their unity they form the indivisible structure of human reason. Rationality, taken in the narrower sense of the (in one way or another) conclusive disclosure of a being in knowledge, requires, as its condition of possibility, the disclosure of being as a whole, which is anything but conclusive. The foreground, namely, the individual being susceptible of definition, becomes visible only against the background of being as such, which, though present to awareness [*bekannt*], is infinite and, therefore, cannot be defined. Rationality, taken in its comprehensive sense, thus entails two things at once: certainty of truly possessing some being as it in fact is—within a totality of being that, while disclosed in principle, *in concreto* always remains transcendent.

Now, this two-sided relation in which, on the one hand, the object is captured and enclosed within the subject, while, on the other hand, the subject is initiated into the all-embracing world of the objective disclosure of being, suggests a fundamental point that will be decisive for all of our further reflections, namely, that truth as such is double-sided. In other words, the disclosure of being implies an absolute and a relative aspect. Insofar as the disclosure of being is a property objectively inherent in being itself, the knowing subject is obliged to conform itself to this disclosedness. That is, knowing the truth happens when knowledge, by virtue of an "adequation" to the thing as it really is (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*), lets itself be determined and measured by the thing. A proportion has to be achieved between subject and object, and the decisive measure of the proportion lies with the object. On the other hand, the purpose and mission of the subject is not simply to be a kind of machine for recording objective states of affairs. Subjectivity in the full sense includes freedom, self-determination, and creativity *ad extra*. Objects exist for the sake of subjects; they are offered as *possible* objects of knowledge so that they can be *actually* known; they are relative to subjects. It is the subjects that not only possess knowledge and bring it to its conclusion but that also pass judgment on truth as such. Truth in the full sense is actualized only in the act of judging the truth—as the manifestness of being now possessed as such in a consciousness. The emphasis in truth thus shifts. Although the object remains the measure by

which truth is measured, the agent of the measuring is now the subject, and this activity of measuring is a spontaneous, creative achievement.

But we can go even farther. The disclosure of being is meaningful only if it is directed to a knowing subject. We must therefore say that the object's meaning is first fulfilled in the subject, which therefore contains the measure of the object. The subject's freedom and spontaneity include the ability, not only to apprehend truth, but also positively to bring it into being [*setzen*]. The work of art produced by a sculptor or a composer contains a truth whose measure lies in its creator's conception. The same thing occurs in every instance where the subject, drawing on its sovereign power freely and spontaneously to give form, decides what has to be and what has to be true. The human subject enjoys here a special participation in the power of the divine intelligence positively to bring truth into being, for the archetypes present in the divine mind contain the measure of the things that God has brought into existence, the measure, then, of their truth. The subjectivity of the worldly subject means freedom and, with freedom, the right freely to shape the world around it. Because of this subjectivity, no act that expresses the subject's spontaneity in any way can be a matter simply of objectively recording the world to the exclusion of creatively determining it. A worldly cognition in which the subject was exclusively measured by the object but did not at the same time also measure the object would rupture the analogy between divine and worldly knowledge.

Worldly knowledge, then, can be distinguished from God's purely creative knowledge only if the measure of its truth is distributed between subject and object. Worldly knowing is always two things at once: receptive and spontaneous, measured and measuring. The two factors can, of course, be distinguished and accented differendy. On the one hand, the spontaneity of knowledge can be completely at the disposal of its receptivity, can seem to turn into sheer passivity, in order to welcome what is offered with as little prejudice as possible. On the other hand, the same spontaneity can, by a free and creative decision, pronounce on what is true in a given situation, indeed, on what *has* to be true in it. But wherever the accent may fall, one thing remains constant: knowledge always both gives and receives the measure, and truth arises [*entsteht*] and consists [*besteht*] in this duality of measuring and being measured. The knowing intellect both produces truth (as *intellects agens*)[1] and registers it (as *intellects passibilis*)[2] It is in this shifting middle, in a kind of *balancing act* between reason's two functions—receptive, consenting self-abandonment [*Hingabe*], on the one hand, and judgment, on the other—that truth itself moves.

Having said this, we arrive at a preliminary concept of truth. This concept has taken shape in three stages. First of all, truth appeared as the unconcealment and, therein, as the credibility of the being in its appearance. This property immediately entailed the second point: The particular being's appearance conveys an implicit awareness of being as a whole. We do not, of course, actually know this totality in the same way that we know the particular object, but rather potentially, as background capable of being unveiled more and more. It followed—and this was the third stage—that there is an indissoluble polarity between subject and object. Subject and object comprehend each other reciprocally, in the sense that the subject is introduced into the ever vaster world of the object, while the object's appearance opens it to be surveyed and judged from the subject's more comprehensive vantage point. This polarity reaches a maximum in the tension between the subject's contemplative, observant posture vis-à-vis the object (truth as θεωρία), and its spontaneous, creative, normatively measuring posture vis-à-vis the same object (truth as ποίησις).

B. The Subject

Truth is being insofar as it has been unveiled and, in its unveiling, grasped. Or, to put it more briefly, truth is the measure of being. This measure cannot be something foreign to being, applied to it from the outside, for the simple reason that outside of being there is—nothing. Rather, being must contain its measure in itself, indeed, must be able to use itself as the standard by which it measures. This measuring, moreover, is nothing other than the unveiling of itself In the precise measure that it unveils itself, it becomes measurable and, at the same time, capable of measuring with the measuring stick of truth.

Now, a being that can measure itself because it is unveiled to itself is called a "subject". Insofar as it is unveiled to, and no longer concealed from, itself, it is a being that is inwardly full of light, has emerged into clarity for itself, and is transparent. Its being has the specific form of self-consciousness. In the radiance of this light, the subject is able to measure itself, to take its own measure. But in recognizing itself as being, it simultaneously grasps what being as such and as a whole is, so that in reflection it is given the measure not only of its own being but, in principle, of all being. The measure by which it will henceforth measure every being is its own light, which itself is nothing other than the coincidence of being and consciousness, the complete measurement of what is unveiled for itself This coincidence is being's identity with itself in consciousness, in which the subject constitutes itself as such. Consequently, it gives the subject access both to the inner dimension of itself and, in principle, to the outer dimension of being. The two disclosures are exactly simultaneous and totally identical. If the disclosure of the subject's inner dimension were primary, while the disclosure of the outer dimension of objects were merely posterior, the original measure with which the subject measured and judged things would be exclusively subjective. Because it would always be applying *itself* to things, it would never attain objective knowledge. If, conversely, the dimension of the world were disclosed before the subject's own inner dimension, the subject would have no measuring stick to apply to objects, because this measuring stick has to be the full measurement of being. But the full measure of being entails self-consciousness. The coincidence of the two disclosures—that of the self and that of the world—guarantees the true objectivity both of the knowledge of the self and of the knowledge of the world.

In virtue of self-consciousness, or reflection, then, a being is open, both to itself and to the other. Now, this other has its own essential law and thus its own truth, which cannot be deduced from any general knowledge of being as a whole but which must instead disclose itself in order to enter into the field of awareness. Consequently, the other stands over against the subject as an object, whereas the subject receives, in addition to its indeterminate openness, a new determination: the capacity to be approached, affected, and prompted to activate knowledge by this object. The subject becomes, in a most general sense, receptive.

Receptivity, taken in this general sense, signifies an unqualified perfection of being that, in fact, is merely the correlative to, and complement of, self-awareness. Receptivity means accessibility to another's being, openness to something other than the inner dimension of one's own subjectivity, the possession of windows looking out on all being and truth. Receptivity signifies the power to welcome and, so to say, host another's being in one's own home.

It follows that the more perfectly an entity possesses itself, the freer it is, the less closed in on itself it is, and, therefore, the more receptive it is to everything around it. Entities without consciousness, such as stones, have no receptivity. Their essence is closed to itself, and so they are unreceptive to everything around them; because they are not subjects, there are no objects for them. Entities with less perfect interiority, such as plants, are capable of assimilating some little part of their environment, but they do so without becoming inwardly aware of the other as such. The same is true, albeit on a higher level, even of animals. To be sure, their sensorium unlocks them to the outside world and grants them a certain perception of otherness. Nevertheless, because they lack self-consciousness, they are likewise incapable of setting the other over against themselves *as other*. The world is unlocked in its objectivity only to man, because his self-consciousness gives him the measure of being.

Receptivity, however, not only implies this unlocking of the self to other beings but also expressly denotes the capacity to let itself be enriched with the gift of their distinctive truth. This capacity to receive truth is among the supreme values of existence. Nothing can surpass the joy of exchange and reciprocal sharing. Accordingly, it would not be a sign of perfection if a subject were already so well-equipped, so stuffed with truths, that it no longer needed another to share anything with it and would not know what to do with such a communication anyway. Nor would it be a sign of perfection if the truth were so innate to it that it would at most go outside of itself only in order to verify, so to speak, what it already possessed within itself. An all-knowingness that precluded any communication or sharing would be the height of boredom, and the idea of having to deal with someone or thing that displayed this kind of knowing would be the least attractive prospect imaginable. Nor would this person or thing make the relationship bearable simply by pretending that it does not know what, in truth, it already did know. This might work with children, but such an "as if" cannot be the basis of any serious exchange of truth. In order to experience and to taste the full richness of being, you need a kind of poverty, a receptivity to what is other than yourself and to the big wide world that lies beyond you. You need a capacity to pick up, by attentive listening, the self-manifestation of another; you need to be convinced that you must, and can, keep on learning and never stop. A spontaneity that refused to be receptive would be a power without love, a bestowal without self-giving, and would merit the curse with which Zarathustra curses himself in the *Song of Night*:

> I am light: If only I were night! But I am
>
> a solitary, encased in my armor of light. . . .
>
> I am poor, for my hand never rests from
>
> giving; I am envious, for I see waiting eyes
>
> and the bright-lit nights of yearning.
>
> O how unhappy are the givers! O how dark is my
>
> sun!
>
> O how I long to long!

O how hungry to eat my fill!

In reply, “Zarathustra’s truth” counsels him “you must become poorer, wise fool!” The point, in other words, is that a poverty capable of receiving again would put the life back in truth, which cannot exist without exchange. The subject that already contained the whole reservoir of its truth in itself would be struck with the curse of Midas: wherever it turned, it could find only itself and its own truth. Just as Midas could not eat anything without turning it to gold, the subject could not receive any truth that it did not already recognize as its own. Consequently, true spontaneity requires an equally true receptivity, however this receptivity might be more precisely defined.

We can take a further step here. We need to understand that self-knowledge and the disclosure of the world are not just simultaneous but intrinsically inseparable. It is not as if the worldly subject began with a kind of solitary self-preoccupation, took the measure of its being by its own light, and only then, at least under the right circumstances, realized that it also had the ability to apprehend other truth outside of its ego. Rather, one knows oneself simultaneously with actually being addressed by another’s truth. The subject receives the measure of being in the form of self-consciousness only insofar as another summons it to apply this measure to a truth not its own. There is no moment when subjectivity monadically and self-sufficiently rests in itself. Rather, subjectivity is a matter of finding oneself always already engaged with the world. The unity of the ego as a subject is always also the “unity of apperception”, which comes about in the act of synthetic judgment in the cognition of the object.

Having said this, we have already, of course, described the specific form of human receptivity, which is commonly assumed to be an expression of man’s imperfect spirituality. This assessment focuses primarily on the fact that human knowledge is tied to a physical and organic sensorium. Now, there is no doubt that this tie does in fact hinder and obscure the pure spirituality of human knowing. The point, however, is that this bond does not do so simply on account of its receptivity but primarily on account of the particular form that receptivity takes in it. It follows that the attempt to construct a purely spiritual cognition without receptivity is founded on a fallacious assumption, inasmuch as it deprives the pure spirit [*Geist*] of an essential part of its innate perfection. The imperfection of specifcally human receptivity consists mainly in the fact that it remains bound to the subhuman, unspiritual forms of cognition that we see, for example, in the vegetative, sensitive, physical life of the human soul. It is in this respect, and this respect alone, that the unclosing of the subject to the other’s truth is no longer a spontaneous act but the unchosen necessity of being broken open to receive, through the subspiritual gateway of the senses, the life and truth of the other that comes, uninvited, pouring into the domain of its intellect.

It is not the *fact* that the human subject communicates with the truth of the world primarily through receptivity but rather *how* it receives that characterizes the imperfection of this receiving. Yet even here we ought to be very cautious about calling any aspect of human knowledge imperfect. For the senses, which are conventionally supposed to be receptive in knowledge, are, in their own way, active and spontaneous, just as, conversely, the intellect, which is supposed to play the active role, is, in its own way, receptive, namely, as a perceptive capacity (*intellectus passibilis*). Indeed, at first blush the spontaneity of the senses appears to be even greater than that of the intellect. After all, the sensorium brings forth the specific activities of the senses to unfold the object into its rich, fivefold spectrum, while the spontaneity of the intellect appears to be

limited to reproducing the object as it is in itself. Although on closer inspection this initial impression may prove to be deceptive—profound observers will notice how creative the mind is in its apprehensive reception and judgment—one thing nonetheless remains certain: the sensory dimension is far from being merely passive.

Increased spontaneity thus brings increasingly perfect receptivity. To put it in other terms: Increased self-determination implies a correlative increase in the opportunity and the capacity to let oneself be determined by another. The passivity presupposed here is of a piece with the inmost freedom of the spirit, which resolves in the freedom of love to let itself be freely determined in love. We have to proceed with extreme care in applying the concepts of act and potency to this reality. The reality of love, precisely when love is perfect, runs counter to any high-handed anticipation of the truth of one's Thou. Rather, it is part of love's very constitution to wish, genuinely and unfeignedly, to receive every gift of this Thou as a new, truly enriching wonder. Love would gladly give up a great deal of what it knows if it could thereby receive it anew from the beloved; indeed, it would happily perform the miracle of unknowing things that it knows in order to be able to receive them anew as a gift of the beloved. Thus, we can express the knowing subject's readiness to welcome possible objects of knowledge in itself only by simultaneously employing the categories of act and potency. This readiness is not pure act, because it does not anticipate the actual reception of truth, yet neither is it pure potency, because the medium of cognition is equipped with all the active capacities that are needed for the cognition that is about to occur. From the side of potency, the cognitive capacity gets its perfect readiness for, and indifference toward, every occasion for knowledge, whose specification is reserved exclusively to the object. Every anticipation of truth's self-presentation in the form of innate ideas, schemata, or categories would hinder this pure readiness. It would amount to a precipitous classification of something that, in reality, is manifesting itself in a new and original way to the subject, which would therefore be guilty of a know-it-all attitude that runs directly counter to any attentive listening. At bottom, one would be finished with what the other was going to say before he even had a chance to open his mouth. One would cut him off after his first word, because his self-manifestation would already be classified in one's ready-made framework, schemata, and categories. Innate ideas would prevent any true dialogue, wound courtesy, and make love impossible.

The truth of another has to be received in the readiness of total indifference, which as such is pure potency. On the other hand, because this potency entails a capability for every cognition, it is a thoroughly active potency. It has nothing to do with the slack malleability of matter, which, having no will of its own, is open to taking on whatever form another's will may choose to impose upon it. No, the indifference of this active potency is a readiness to spring into action wherever the object's self-display might send or employ it. Like a servant, it awaits the master's command, and it neither knows in advance where the master will send it nor calculates beforehand how it is going to execute the command. It is like a lighted room that, being completely empty, hides the presence of the light. It is not until an object emerges into the light that the presence of an active energy becomes evident in it. And yet the active potency of the subject is not the expression and emanation of a pure actuality without potentiality (*actus purus*), because active readiness for everything (*quodammodo omnia*) implies, with equal immediacy, a real capacity to be determined by everything, so that the subject can be described as a kind of spiritual matter (ὕλη νοητή).

This openness to any truth that might show itself is an inalienable perfection of every knowing subject, and, as knowledge increases, it cannot contract but only expand. Now, this openness itself rests upon the openness of truth that was described in the previous chapter. It expresses a consequence of the fact that the totality of being is disclosed in principle but not yet in fact. In other words, being is disclosed neither as an individual object nor as the sum of all objects but is infinite and unbounded because it transcends all limitation. This feature of being is reflected in truth's characteristic way of opening, of making new beginnings, of promising more truth to come. If truth failed to behave in this way, it would be intrinsically finite, hence, exhaustible, and the subject would inevitably reach the point when truth ceased to open and began to wind down to a conclusion. Truth would round itself out and become spent. The knower would have, so to say, demarcated its outermost boundary or circumnavigated it like Columbus. If there were anything left to do, it would be a matter of ever more detailed analysis within this limited field. The only augmentation of knowledge could come from increasing exactness. Already conquered territory could be better cultivated and exploited, but there would be no new territory to discover.

If truth could be like this, then it would have already ceased being truth. It would have become finite, and this would suggest the possibility of attaining a standpoint that comprehended truth from above, a standpoint, then, that was beyond truth. But if it were beyond truth, then it would also obviously be outside of being, which is to say, in the middle of nothing. For this reason, the only view of being and of truth to be had from such a standpoint would be nihilistic, self-destructive, and self-contradictory. In particular, truth, which always presents itself as just a sample or a taste test of a still-transcendent truth, toward which it spurs and opens, would have deceived the knower with an appearance of infinity and, in so doing, proved itself to be untruth.

But the subject that opens itself to the truth experiences just the opposite of this kind of progressive comprehension and exhaustion. Rather, it makes the paradoxical discovery that knowledge does indeed make authentic progress, which means that there is such a thing as certitude but that every new step displays the field of truth in ever greater, ever more infinite enlargements. The more of the truth the subject manages to master, the more the truth overmasters it. At the beginning of knowledge is an expectant readiness that is also the fundamental disposition of the subject. Yet insofar as each new truth opens and promises further truth, this readiness does not gradually grow numb or surfeited but, on the contrary, becomes increasingly intense. The more particular truth the subject comes to know, the higher and vaster the firmament of truth as a whole arches above him.

In the act of cognition, wherein the subject's indifferent readiness is activated by an individual object that comes into appearance, the subject experiences a double limitation. It encounters the object as a particular thing. It knows and recognizes that it is just one possibility and actuality of being, because it is familiar with being as a whole, but cannot survey it in its totality. Thus the object, in its limitation, stands out against the unlimited background of a being that is ever-greater than itself. But the subject knows the form of being as such thanks to its self-consciousness, in which it attains the measure of being and can apply it to the object. Yet it is precisely when it catches sight of itself and thus of the measure of being that it runs up against the second limitation. Being is disclosed to it in self-consciousness but not without qualification. We have spoken of the opening and illumination [*Lichtung*] wherein the subject lays hold of itself and, in so doing, learns from the inside what being is. Yet this illumination sheds just enough light on being for the subject to realize that, while it does not grasp being in its totality, all being must

nonetheless be lit up *in itself*. In the point-like identity of being and consciousness—where consciousness means the light in which the subject is able to measure itself and the object—it becomes clear that absolute being is necessarily self-measuring, self-present, and, therefore, self-conscious. The subject realizes, in fact, that the truth in whose light it measures the object, and which is nothing other than the illumination of being, is not confined to its own point-like self-consciousness. It understands that in applying its own measure to the knowledge of the object, it is not using a subjective measure but is privileged to participate in an objective, ultimately infinite and absolute, measure. And so the subject realizes that in the act of measuring it is being measured by the encompassing truth of being *tout court*, which comprehends the subject itself. The subject's light is a limited participation in an infinite light. Its thinking is embedded in an infinite thinking of being and so can serve as a measuring stick only because it itself is measured by an unmeasured, yet all-measuring, infinite measure.

This infinite, unmeasurable measure is the identity of thinking and being in God. All finite subjectivity and cognition necessarily presupposes the presence of this identity. The finite subject, of course, can never wield this full measure itself, because the plenitude of being does not appear, or even come close to appearing, either in itself or in some appearing object. Nevertheless, the subject can measure only in the light of the measure by which it itself is measured. It therefore knows God implicitly in every act of consciousness and in every object ("omnia cognoscentia cognoscunt implicite Deumin quolibet cognito".[3] *De vex.*, q. 22, a. 2 ad 1), and, in the same way, it can know itself and things only through God. Yet it knows equally well that neither its cognition nor the being of the object is itself the Divine Being. After all, God's being stands to self-consciousness as the measure stands to the measured, and not as a kind of more intense form of the same. Nor is it an extension of the object, but rather its transcendental presupposition. It follows, then, that truth is indeed disclosed to the subject, and because it is truth, it always touches upon the sphere of the absolute, the infinite, and, therefore, the divine. Nevertheless, truth's disclosure does not mean that the measure of truth entrusted to the subject is the same as God's infinite truth. To the extent that this measure is one that is itself measured by infinite truth, it participates in the divine truth, but to the extent that it is not itself the infinitely measuring measure, the sphere of God's truth remains transcendent.

For this reason, any immediate knowledge of God or immediate intuition of divine truth is out of the question. Only the finite subject's insight into its own contingency is immediate. Yet because this contingency brings home to the subject with all desirable clarity that it is not God, its insight into contingency can disclose, by means of an (implicit) causal inference, the existence of a sphere of absolute identity on which all reality and truth in the world are necessarily based. All knowledge of God is mediated through the contingency of the world, yet there is no knowledge of God that leads more immediately to him than this. If we did not have this implicit recognition of God's transcendence, we would never be able to draw any inference from this world to God.

We feel the pressure of this transcendence nowhere more compellingly than in the necessity of waiting upon an object in order to perform the act of cognition. In order to attain the godlikeness of self-consciousness, the subject is fundamentally thrust away from itself into the domain of the other. It takes cognizance of this godlikeness in the precise measure that it confesses its dependence on what is other than itself, hence, its creatureliness. The subject's pure, potential, indifferent readiness vis-à-vis cognition can be actuated only in an act of service to an object—whose finitude and subjection to measure prove that it, too, is a creature.

The subject's act, then, necessarily displays an analogy to the divine subject, although this analogy can never become an identity. The more the knowing subject understands of the world and the truth it contains, the more it also understands that it is not God. Its knowledge of the truth can never transgress the limits of its starting point, namely, the subject's active-indifferent potency to any and every truth. The subject can approach the ideal of the divine identity only through growing distinction from it. By the same token, we finally understand from the inside, as it were, truth's character as an opening and a promise, which now appears as an expression of the never-to-be-superseded analogy between God and the creature. For the more the subject grows by its knowledge in the certainty of the truth, the greater the distance between its own measured measure and God's measuring measure must appear to it. The truth proper to the creature is not so much the possession of the absolute truth as the readiness to receive it again and again. Again and again, it receives its self-consciousness by proceeding from its indifferent attentiveness to possible truth to the active service of the truth of the world. It becomes aware of its closeness to God's truth only in its distance from that truth. The absolutely infinite openness of truth, whose very essence is to open up at every moment to even greater truth, becomes clear to the creature out of the deepest core of the truth of its created being, out of its obedient disponibility (*potentia oboedientialis*)[4] toward God's truth. Yet even, indeed, precisely this openness is not the creature's autonomous possession. Even the aspect in which the creature appears most starkly contrary to the form of truth and being in God makes sense only in terms of analogy. Even this openness is a gift of God's all-opening truth. By the same token, the finite subject, in its intercourse with the truth, is increasingly forced open to the divine truth, for in every finite encounter with the objects of the world, it recognizes the ever greater breadth of the divine truth.

The primary distinction within the identity of self-consciousness between the truth of the ego and the truth of the divine subject that infinitely encompasses it (*cogitor ergo sum*[5] is the fundamental form of the *cogito ergo sum*) also ultimately grounds the very objectifiability of objects, hence, the intentionality of knowledge. Without this primary distance between the ego and God, there would be no reason why the objects that display themselves within the subject should not be apprehended and interpreted as forms, external aspects, or modes of appearance of the ego, in other words, why people should not be convinced idealists also in their daily lives. In fact, they are not. Rather, they adjudge external existence and value to the things that they know inside of themselves, and no argument in the world can convince them that this affirmation is a merely practical one that could be superseded from a higher speculative standpoint. In a word, they affirm the intentionality of intellectual cognition, whose primary direction is out of the subject, and they do so ultimately because, in the primordial act in which they lay hold of themselves as subjects, they know that another, holding them in his grasp, places them in existence, over against, and at a distance from, himself. Precisely in the reverent distance that thus opens up between God and the creature, one's fellow creatures have room to appear in their own self-standing being. Because it must decide to confess its finitude before the infinite God, the finite subject must also decide to acknowledge that its fellow creatures, too, are self-standing existents. Before God, it recognizes that, while being as a whole is not simply unknown, it is not yet disclosed in its totality. This recognition makes it capable of another confession, which certainly calls for humility, namely, that while a finite object cannot simply be unknown, its intimate space does not therefore have to be disclosed. The pantheistic idealist, who assumes, in one way or another, some kind of identity between the finite subject and the infinite subject (because God is long-suffering enough not to contradict him), is always going to be frustrated by the—for him—

inexplicable phenomenon of "intersubjectivity", by the irreducibility of the multitude of actually existing subjects. Only the acknowledgment of the analogy between God and the creature can make the intra-worldly analogy between diverse centers of self-consciousness seem sustainable. Truth now appears in the world as distributed among countless subjects, which in their original posture of readiness are open to one another and which await from one another the communication of the part of the truth that God has granted them as a share in his own infinite truth. In their mutual openness, in their reciprocal disponibility, finite subjects thus mirror forth the highest measure of what the finite world can capture of the infinite openness of God's truth.

C. The Object

It might seem that there is not much to say about the object of knowledge. As far as the subject is concerned, it would appear that, in order for something to become an object of knowledge, it need only occur, either directly or indirectly, within the sphere of being. After all, since the subject knows things insofar as they are being (its only a priori form of cognition), it looks as though the object's being already sufficiently accounts for its knowability. It must be said, however, that this simple explanation calls for more attentive examination. Such an inquiry has to grapple with the conditions of the object's knowability, which are by no means necessarily identical with the conditions of the act of knowing itself. It has often happened in the history of epistemology that the conditions of knowability are either deduced from those of knowing or are simply equated with them, as if ontology were nothing more than a projection of the structure of knowing upon being. But this sort of transference is inadmissible. Being's laws, which are not necessarily identical with those of knowledge, require an original analysis of their own.

In our anticipatory description of truth, we called it the unveiledness of being, adding that this unveiledness ought not to be conceived only as an absolute property inherent in being itself but that it implies a relation to the subject to which it is in fact unveiled. It is only when the unveiling is not just a possibility, but has in fact occurred, that being is inwardly illumined and thus measured. Now, measure and light are the two properties of truth, and they are inseparable. The supposition that an existent has measure and thus knowabihty makes no sense unless it also stands in a light in which it is actually being measured.

This requirement is easily fulfilled if a being can take its own measure and so become luminous to itself—in other words, if the object is also immediately a subject. Not every object, however, is also a subject. The fact of the matter is that many a being is luminous only for others and not for itself. We have already shown, moreover, that the subject becomes luminous to, and conscious of, itself only when it is engaged with an object, which for its part *can* be a subject but, *insofar as it is objectified*, is not. Indeed, one self-consciousness can be the object of another, but what becomes objective for the second is not necessarily what is objective for the first. All of which suggests that the question of the object's being measured is independent of the question of the measuring subject.

For an object to be knowable, it must not only be measurable in principle but also already measured in fact. Now, since the object is not measured by itself insofar as it *is* an object, and since the finite subject already presupposes that the object is in fact measured, it follows that the object's measure must lie in the hands of the infinite subject, God. A being that was not known by God could not be known by a finite subject, for the simple reason that it would not exist in the

first place. But it would not exist because, being unknown by God, it would have no measure for its being and thus no truth. All things, therefore, stand completely unveiled before the divine knowledge, and by that same knowledge they are measured. Their truth lies with God, and whoever wants to know them must know them in their adequation to the mind of God. This does not mean that the finite subject has no immediate relation to the object, as if, in order to know the object, it had to make a detour via God. It does mean, however, that the knowabihty of the object stems from its being actually known by God and that he alone knows its full truth.

The point is that God's knowledge is not modeled on something else but is itself the model and exemplar that establishes the being and determines all of its relations. God does not take the measure from an already existing object; rather, the object gets its measure from the idea that God has of it. Insofar as the object accords with this idea, its being participates in truth. The divine idea is in part given to the object and implanted in it along with its very existence. In this respect, the idea is immanent in the object as its inner plan, essence, and raison d'être [*Sinn*]. The core of this idea lies in the living center from which the acting, living, and sensing being develops, displays its rich multiplicity, and unfolds historically. So, for example, the life principle of a plant manifests a purposeful totality that is organized according to an intellectual plan (although the plant itself is not intellectual and cannot plan) and that directly embodies as much of the idea of the divine intellect as can be structured into the living creature in the form of an indwelling "entelechy". Subspiritual though it is, the plant by nature behaves as purposefully as if it were endowed with a mind. Its truth, so to speak, transcends its factual existence at any given moment.

Now, this is already true of the plant even considered as a living *morphe*. But the transcendence of truth over being only increases when the individual is considered in the context of its relations with all the things that surround it. It now appears inserted into a network of relations and laws that cannot be deduced in their totality from the entelechies of the individuals making up the network. Creatures fulfill purposes that are not immediately entailed in their essences alone. It thus seems reasonable to suppose some power ordering entities to one another that, like a chess player handling the pieces on the board (which have their own rules of play even though the course of a particular game can never be deduced from them taken singly), equips them with a higher meaning [*Sinn*] beyond themselves. Now, it may be that this higher meaning, which is at least as important to the total truth and knowledge of beings as the meaning directly immanent in, and decipherable from, each entelechy, is entrusted, at least in part, to the stewardship of certain finite, known, or unknown intelligences. But even supposing this to be the case, these intelligences themselves would be fitted into the great game of the world in a way that is ultimately beyond their fathoming, and so they, too, would have a part of their truth, not in themselves, but in God. Finally, this thoroughgoing transcendence of the objective truth of things becomes especially palpable in the case of creatures that can freely determine themselves. For even this self determination is subject to certain norms, not only the general and abstract norms of morality, but also the totally concrete norms of an individual, personal law, which is nothing other than the will of the Creator traced out for every moment of the creature's existence. This will of God, which at any given time is sufficiently revealed to the creature, contains the appropriate measure of its being and thus of its truth. When the creature conforms to this will, it also conforms to its own essence, whose ultimate measure lies in God's hands.

And so we see before us a progressive, seamless transcendence of the truth of the object. On the first level, truth dwells within the object and holds the measure of its existence. Truth on this level expresses only what the object in fact is at any given moment. But, as a living entelechy, truth rises above the factual level to achieve the unity of a plan. Finally, this entelechy is itself transcended in an overarching plan knowable only to the providence that orders creatures in relation to one another. The mysterious center and summit of this providence is the total idea that God in his sovereign freedom has of an entity, by which he measures it and which he reveals to no other thing in its totality.

Now this transcendence of truth makes it clear that the being of creatures is not self-enclosed but opens, beyond itself, to God. It is impossible to call the mere existence of things, by contrast with their essence, their being. But it is equally impossible to close off a supposedly complete essence from God's idea of it. After all, at any moment of the historical unfolding of its existence, God can modify it as he wills. Of course, that God can refit and rearrange an entity does not efface the identity of its individual or specific being, for the Creator himself has given these tilings an immanent guarantee of permanence. Nevertheless, the alteration does affect the ultimate meaning of the object's existence, the decisive orientation of its life, its final salvation or perdition, election or reprobation, its reception of abundant graces or imprisonment in spiritual desolation and aridity. It would be very naive, therefore, to believe that the truth about a thing is a kind of fixed sum that can be read off its being, much less its appearance. What can be apprehended in this way is at most a part of the thing's truth, certainly not the ultimately decisive measure with which it is measured in the face of eternity.

No thing is ever a mere fact. By its very existence, it participates in an essence whose individual unity transcends the fleeting moment and which, in itself as in others, transcends this very individuality because it embodies a common species. But at what point does the immanence of this essence (as *morphe*) in existence give way to a growing transcendence (as *eidos*) that, rising to the divine idea, finally coincides with it? Who can say? Things are always more than themselves, and their constantly self-surpassing transcendence opens ultimately onto an idea that is, not the things themselves, but God and their measure in God. Things are turned to this idea, from which they receive, every moment anew, their ultimate truth. The unveiledness of being, truth, thus takes on a new aspect. It becomes a participation in the sphere of divine truth itself through God's ever-new meting out of truth. Things are expectantly open to this act, and this openness to God's all-fulfilling truth is itself the form in which they participate in divine truth.

And so, on the side of the object, we get the complement of what, on the side of the subject, was a nearness to, within a predominant distance from, God. Even the object's ontological truth has the form of receptivity, not only because its temporal existence flows ever anew from God, but above all because, from moment to moment, God is originating, adjudging, and presenting the creature's idea to it. For its part, the creature never possesses its own norm without constantly and increasingly having to receive it as a gift from God. The object is characterized, therefore, as a being that in its innermost depths is in a state of becoming. Becoming here does not mean that the object's existence has a temporal form, while its essence, unperturbed by coming to be and passing away in time, supposedly represents its supratemporal truth. For its essence is precisely *what* exists, but what exists cannot be unaffected by alteration. Although individual and specific being remain identical throughout this change and so enable permanent and valid, general and necessary knowledge, the being's framework of meaning is subject to change. It may change by

occupying a new position in the context of the world or because God himself directly intervenes—for, whenever it pleases him, God can impose on any being new tasks and goals, new purposes and new resources for fulfilling them.

It follows that the subject has a curious indeterminacy in relation to the subject. To some degree, the object has its measure in itself, because it is a unique, individual exemplar of a certain species. The subject's special cognitive structure enables it to take possession of this measure and, by letting itself be measured by it, measure the object in knowledge. But what it knows in this manner is not the whole truth of the object. To penetrate the whole truth, the subject must try, to the extent permitted it, to perceive the relation between the immanent truth of the *morphe* and the transcendent truth adjudged to it from the outside both by the world in which it is embedded and by a general and particular providence. This latter truth is as objective and as independent of the subject's mind as the essential structure immanent in the object. But the subject can come to know this truth only by participating, as far as it is allowed to do so, in the truth of things as given and disposed by God. In order to see things objectively as they are in truth, the subject must strive to learn to see them as they are before God, for God, and in God. The subject thus receives a limited share in the creative vision by which God the Creator contemplates things and which contains their measure in itself. This does not mean that the subject becomes a co-creator with God in any immediate sense. It simply means that, in this vision, it allows its own knowledge to be measured by the transcendent measure of truth subsisting in God's idea. Just as, on the side of the object, the boundary between the immanent measure of the *morphe* and the transcendent measure of the idea can never be drawn too sharply, so, too, on the side of the subject, there can be no definitive separation between the two modes of vision. The same light in which the subject knows, and which is the only a priori in knowledge, is inseparably two things at once: the innate power to measure tilings as they are in their immanent essence and, on the other hand, the so-called *intellectus principiorum*, the capacity—which is an irradiation of the divine sphere and a participation in its light—to see things in the perspective of the Absolute. In this perspective, we find, not only the ultimate meaning of reality as such, but also, beyond that, the *ideality* that provides the meaning, or determines "what *ought* to be", which is the ultimate measure of the truth of reality ("inquantum intuemur inviolabilem veritatem, ex qua perfecte, in quantum possumus, definimus, non qualis sit. . . [res], sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat":[6] De ver., q. 10, a. 8 c). Now, through this knowledge of the ideal, in which the subject lets itself be measured by God's idea of the object, it, the subject, receives analogically a participation in the act of judgment by which God metes out truth. This astonishing spontaneity of the finite subject vis-à-vis the object is objective and legitimate to the precise extent that it presupposes a perfect receptivity to divine truth. Only a man who has learned to renounce his own self-concocted judgments and norms and, in the most intimate association with God, to look at the world, as it were, through God's eyes may (assuming God commissions and empowers him for the task) grant objects their truth and tell them what they both are and should be in the sight of the Absolute.

D. Subject and Object

We have until now been considering the two poles of knowledge separately, looking at their equipment and readiness for the act of cognition. Such an inquiry resembles an investigation of the masculine and feminine that attends mainly to the functions and inclinations that predispose them for their union. The union itself is a new, third thing in which the purpose of these

inclinations is truly unveiled for the first time. The subject is ready to receive the object in itself, but what will issue from this reception cannot be calculated in advance. In the same way, the object is ready to reveal itself in the space that the subject has placed at its disposal, but it is impossible to guess or gauge from the object alone how it will unfold in this space. It does not belong to the essence of matter that, being apprehended by one of the senses, it should take on the form of color or sound. Similarly, it does not belong to the general readiness of the intellectual powers that they should be determined in this or that particular way. As the mutual immanence and completion of subject and object, intellectual knowledge is an unexpected event that surprises both and cannot be deduced from them in any way. Just as a man who sets off on a long journey does not know what will happen to him or how he will be changed when he returns after years of absence, so, too, the subject does not know what the adventure of knowledge will bring it. By the same token, the object no more knows what to expect in the space opened within the subject than a guest knows how he will be received and hosted in another's home. Both subject and object will be fulfilled by coming together, but the fulfillment will be a wonder and a gift for both. Their encounter will reveal them to each other, even as the revelation of the other will contain, for each, the revelation of itself, which can come about only in the other.

The revelation of the object can occur only in the space provided by the subject. This space alone, in fact, has ready the creative light to draw from the object possibilities that it can no more unfold by itself than a seed can develop without sunlight. On the other hand, the revelation of the subject can occur only in an encounter with the object. Without the resistance of the object, it could never transform its possible light into actuality, just as the sunlight becomes a brightness only when it enters into the medium of air. The subject's self-knowledge can reach its actuality only by taking a detour by way of the knowledge of another; only in going out of itself, in creatively serving the world, does the subject become aware of its purpose and, therefore, of its essence.

1. The Object in the Subject

When inquiring into truth, one could hardly make a more fateful assumption than to suppose that objects form a self-contained world that has no essential, and at best only an accidental, need of the world of subjects. As a matter of fact, it is quite common to picture the object of knowledge as an already finished, separately established, and stably self-contained thing that remains unaffected by being known, much in the way that a landscape remains identical regardless of whether a painter or photographer happens to capture it in an image or not. If there is a movement or an active performance in knowledge, it is supposed to he wholly on the side of the subject, which, for its part, is thought to assimilate itself to the object, internally register its image, and then work the image over until it attains objective knowledge. In such a conception, the world of subjects would be movable and needy, hence, creaturely, whereas the world of objects, un-moving and self-sufficient, would have quasi-divine attributes.

In reality, the objects of this world need the subject's space in order to be themselves. They do not merely emit distant signals of themselves into this space or send messengers to proclaim the autonomous majesty of their existence, but rather they come in person to claim it for their most intimate purposes. A tree without its green, its autumnal variety, the pink and white display of its spring blossoms, its fragrance, its hardness and tenacity, its size, its relation to the surrounding landscape, in short, without the thousand qualities that make it what we know it to be, is simply not a tree. It needs the sensorium as a space in which to unfurl itself. It unveils its color within an

eye that sees color; it whispers only in an ear that hears sound; it presents its unique flavor only in the mouth of another capable of tasting. It makes use of the space furnished for this purpose just as surely as it makes use of the soil and the ambient air in order to develop. Without the subject's sensory space, it would not be what it is; it would be incapable of fulfilling the raison d'etre, the idea that it is supposed to embody. The object finds its—essential—completion only outside of itself in the world of subjects that allow it its full growth.

Far from being some secondary or additional ornament that the object could also do without, this consummation is as necessary to it as the elements of physical nature. Indeed, from the point of view of the ultimate ordination inscribed in the object's essence, it is even more indispensable, because it offers the object the chance to complete itself in a superior world, which obviously constitutes its raison d'être. The space of being that is opened and illuminated in the subject makes available to the object an opportunity to be itself in a way that the inferior space of inanimate elements does not. The plant assimilates earth, air, and light into its living totality, thus giving them an organic form of existence superior to their own, inorganic mode of being. When the plant is elevated in its turn into the space offered by sensory perception, it becomes able to perfect itself in a superior medium and, in being so elevated, to speak out its entire essence. Who would venture to assert that the tree, stripped of all its sense qualities and reduced to an unknown "vital principle" (which is supposedly what remains outside of knowledge), is still the beautiful, meaningful, useful thing that the Creator obviously intended it to be? All that it can be apart from the subject's space is only a material, a substrate, which, while surely indispensable to the complete idea of the tree, is nonetheless incapable of conveying any concept of the thing itself. The concept that expresses the full essence of the tree needs something more than that substrate; it needs someone to conceive it, someone whose heterogeneous, though analogous, space holds ready the complementary factors required alongside its already existing vital principle for the full, organic, unitary concept of the plant's essence.

This concept alone utters what the tree truly is, in other words, the truth of the tree. This truth is the unveiledness of its being, but the unveiling in which the truth is constituted calls for the joint operation of subject and object. It is not a property inhering in the object alone that merely needs to be discovered; rather, this discovery, which is something that the subject does, is an essential component of the unveiling of the object. The latter's *objective* truth lies partly in itself and partly in the space of the subject whose activity helps it become what it is meant to be.

This is not, of course, to make the truth of things purely subjective, let alone arbitrary. In fact, the subject's sensory space, precisely where it is spontaneous, is *nature*. In like manner, the higher spontaneity of conceptualization, which effects the synthesis of the two spheres, obeys a natural, albeit intellectual, law. The fact that the knowing subject is involved in the truth is no argument against truth's objectivity, as long as the subject's attitude remains that of a servant ready to offer his help. The task of knowledge is to discover and bring to light the truth of tilings. But the truth cannot be established in conformity with the Creator's idea of things unless the inventiveness of the knowing subject comes to its assistance. God's idea is indivisible, even though it needs both the knowable object and the knowing subject in order to reveal itself in its unity. The subject's spontaneous invention of truth remains subordinate, then, to the attempt to discover the truth, which is the purpose of true knowledge.

Of course, in a naively realistic world view, which unreflectively regards sensory qualities as inhering in the object even apart from the space opened by the sensorium, the object has no need to unfold in a subjective space. It is stably grounded in itself and at most emits images of itself to enrich subjects with a view of its essence. These images are mere duplicates of the objects, not the deployment of their essence. The sensory sphere is not a space in which things express themselves and come to speech, because they already have their expression and their essential word in themselves.

Missing from this picture of the world is the mysterious way in which subject and object expand within each other, thus helping each other in a common discovery of truth. The object already contains its complete ontological truth, while the truth of knowledge consists solely in the subject's conformity to this already established fact. The result is a failure to interpret and assess positively the phenomenon of *appearance*, which in reality gives the thing in itself its integrity and plenitude, its completed, meaningful essence, its radiant glory. Once we realize that the appearance, the object's emergence in the space made ready by the subject, is something original, primary, and indispensable for the object itself, the appearance takes on its full ontological weight. For it now comes to light that this appearance within the subject is the expressive field of the object's essence as intrinsically as the body is the expressive field of the soul. A smiling face is not simply a dull reflection of inner joy but rather its embodiment, its communication, its formation, its liberation. In the same way, the appearance of the object is not a pale duplicate of its self-quiescent essence but the necessary unfolding in which its inward plenitude becomes manifest for the first time.

While naive realism underestimates the true significance of appearance, critical philosophy, which stands at the opposite end of the spectrum, risks overlooking it altogether. Naive realism still has some awareness of the fullness of worldly truth, in that it counts the sensory qualities making up the variegated richness of the world as intrinsic to the essential content of truth as it exists in itself. Critical epistemology, after having swept the field of naive realism, begins to sort out the respective roles of subject and object in constructing the object of cognition. Although this is not simply illegitimate, it does place the concept of worldly truth before a fateful decision. For the question now arises whether the subject's contribution ought to be sifted out of truth and declared inessential to the object, or, alternatively, whether we may grant the object the possibility of unfolding its own, objective truth within the space opened up in cognition.

The first option drastically impoverishes the wealth of the world's truth. Its inner logic tends to deprive things of their full range of appearance, to strip away the so-called secondary qualities (the specific energies of the several senses—color, sound, taste, odor, and the like) and to leave only the "primary" qualities of temporal and spatial extension. But we should not suppose that even these primary qualities can stand up to criticism, which in fact unmasks them as a subjective a priori of sensory intuition [*Anschauung*], so that in the end the truth of things is reduced to a few abstract, nonsensory [*unanschaulich*] concepts such as being-in-itself, substance, and so forth. A whole school of modern realism has joined in this retreat from appearance, which seems to be mandated by the critique of knowledge. Although motivated by the need to erect a safeguard against subjectivism, this new realism has compromised itself by reducing both epistemological and ontological truth to a bare minimum, with the result that the whole expressive field of the senses is lost for truth.

The better course, then, is to stop regarding the subjectivity of the sensorium as a reason for calling into question its contribution to the truth of the object. Here, as before, the object's center is in itself. From this self-existent center, the object irradiates into the knower's space in order to exhibit itself there in its completion. This opens up a new possibility to the object—that of unfolding itself in a higher space without therefore forfeiting its objectivity—but not only to the object. The subject, too, is equipped with a new task—that of being the space in which the truth of things comes to itself. A part of the object can unfold only in the subject, and the subject is structured in such a way that it has to serve as the locus of this unfolding. Its role, then, is not limited to possessing the object in itself, but consists most properly in making itself available, in an attitude of service, for the completion of the object.

2. The Subject in the Object

Less controversial than the claim just developed is its complement: The subject needs the object in order to unfold itself and to attain its own truth. Unless an object displays itself in its receptive space, the subject is incapable of transforming its cognitive potencies into actual knowledge. The stage has been set but remains empty; the drama of knowledge is not acted. It is not until the other enters into the space of the subject that, like Sleeping Beauty, it awakens from its slumber—at once to the world and to itself.

It is too little to say that this self-knowledge is simply occasioned by the appearance of the object. The subject's subjectivity is not a finished product that is already always latently present and merely awaits the arrival of the object to come into appearance. Just as the object comes to itself in the subject, the subject comes to itself only through the construction and completion of the world that go on inside it. The subject does not just know itself in the mirror of things; it does not just recognize itself in what it is not; rather, it is unformed [*ungebildet*] until it finds itself performing the work of knowledge. Without the world it remains an unformed ego. It has no form, no contours, no definite lineaments, no character. It becomes formed in the measure that it takes the world in and helps it take shape.

This does not mean, however, that, in order to come to itself, the ego freely decides to go out of itself into the big wide world. It is simply out of the question for the ego somehow to decide to set a non-ego over against itself. We should equally rule out the idea that objects present themselves to the ego as if it were merely a spectator watching a sort of film about which he is supposed to make a judgment. The world is not material presented to the subject for its judgment and classification. Rather, things enter the subject's space without prior invitation. They place the subject before a fait accompli—we exist!—and the subject awakens to itself from the midst of an already occurring engagement with them. It comes to itself as having been always already fully immersed in the task of offering space and form to a world of objects. Its doors have always already been beaten down, and it itself has always already been dragged out into the work of giving form to the world. Without having been notified or asked, it was thrown into the enterprise of knowledge. It has always already been commandeered for the formation of the world, and its apparatus is already at work before it becomes aware of its operation.

Things, then, have always already decided the subject's fate. The subject does not lead a private, withdrawn, aristocratic life in the world, nor is it at liberty to enter into contact with things at its own discretion. Rather, it must begin at the bottom of the ladder: with the harsh life of the

proletarian who has no rights and cannot defend himself against things or refuse to work on them. It has no choice but to perform this work if it wants to live as a subject. Its receptivity, where the process of knowing first engages, condemns it to compulsory labor. It must first learn to obey before it can command and have its own way in the world. Knowledge is, in the very act of its origination, *service*, because it begins when the subject, without being consulted, is conscripted into the world's labor force and attains judgment only at the end.

Reflexive knowing begins, then, with the opposite of what would seem to be the chief characteristic of intellectual cognition, namely, ordering judgment, because it starts instead with the unannounced invasion of a motley jumble of objects that get thrown into the subject's unoccupied space. Moreover, just as the objects themselves come unexpectedly, their order and sequence is not at all logical but, on the contrary, highly irrational. Thus, it is only by toiling away at sifting and analysis, division and composition, that the subject gradually regains its freedom. It begins totally expropriated by the world, and only by performing the work of the subject does it get its recompense for its labor, which is its character as a well-rounded, formed, and masterful self.

This reward is rich beyond the subject's wildest hopes. For as it works, the subject begins to realize that the chaos out of which it toils to free itself is the fullness of the world, and that this fullness has been given it to hold in its own inward space. At first it thought it was lost in the world, but as it awakens to itself in the act of sifting, it grasps that the world is just as truly in itself. It does not merely possess "copies" of the things but something of the tilings themselves, indeed, something that not even they have in themselves: their exposition, their intrinsic unfolding in the sensory appearance. Moreover, this portion of objective truth, which is especially suited to the subject, gives it access to participation in the essential truth of things lying both in themselves and in their idea. Far from having slowly to grope its way out of the prison of a self-enclosed subjectivity by a series of arduous inferences, in order to conquer a never secure, always questionable "truth in itself" beyond its boundaries, the subject finds itself always already plunged into the midst of the richest fullness of the "truth *in* itself". It need only lay hold of this truth, work it over, and, in so doing, give shape to itself in order to transform the truth into a "truth *for* itself"—that is, for the subject. At the beginning of its cognitive activity, the subject, far from being isolated in itself, finds itself in the midst of a veritable babel of objects expressing themselves and offering it their truth. By the same token, the effort of knowledge consists in understanding these voices and interpreting their diverse languages. The subject learns to understand sensible words as an expression of an intelligible content, to read them as a signification and revelation of a sense that is immanent in the sign itself, and, to the extent that it takes in at a glance both the distance and the relation between the expression and what it expresses (in a way that we will have to describe in more detail later on), it attains the measure of the object and therein its truth.

These measures are always already impressed upon its inward space (*species impressa*) by means of its receptivity, and they are transformed by means of its spontaneity (*intellectus agens*) into conscious measures that it can measure by the measure of its own self-consciousness (*species expressa*). The process by which the subject first stands under the measure of things and subsequently measures both its own measure and the measure of things is the context in which the world and the self are formed simultaneously. Informed by the measures of things, the I consciously forms and measures them in relation to itself, thereby gaining its own measure and

receiving inner structure and proportion. The subject, then, is like a statue under the external pressure of hammer strokes and, at the same time, like a formless mass that inwardly crystallizes and structures itself. On the one hand, the contents and forms of truth are offered from the outside: the subject gradually piles up a treasury of truth from experience and tradition. On the other hand, as soon as the subject awakens to self-consciousness, it is able to sift through this increasingly richer treasury of material with its own measure and, by selection and rejection, by the gradation of various significations, by multiple accentuations and assessments, to give it the countenance best suited to this personal measure. The more skill it acquires, the more capable it also becomes of seeing things as they are in themselves and, at the same time, of assessing how they measure up to their own truth. As one's formation progresses, the two aspects increasingly tend to merge. Growing in experience, the subject becomes more and more "cosmoform", because it is more and more in-formed by the truth of the world. But for precisely the same reason, the picture of the world that it has formed becomes ever more personal, because the measure of self-consciousness that it applies in the act of knowing is ever more comprehensive and clearly formed. On the one hand, the subject comes to understand itself as a part of the world, as its formation frees it from the narrow constraints of its youthful, self-preoccupied subjectivity, so that it can take its place within the total meaning of things. On the other hand, it acquires a correspondingly greater right to contribute its own judgment, its own creative shaping, to the formation of the world's truth.

The well-formed subject's contribution to the truth is never arbitrary, never merely a function of the interests and aims of a narrow subjectivity. In other words, the raison d'être of knowledge has nothing to do with a will to power. The subject's task becomes creative only if it remains an emanation of the primary attitude imposed on the knowing subject on account of its receptive nature: readiness to serve the truth. Not dominion, but service is primary in knowledge. Nor is striving for the satisfaction of the urge to know (*appetitus naturalis*) the first thing, because this urge awakens only after the disinterested exposition of the other's truth has already begun. The first lesson that existence teaches the subject is the lesson of self-abandonment [*Hingabe*], not domination in the pursuit of interest. And the second follows the first: Self-abandonment opens up more of the world and reaps a richer harvest of truth than self-interest, because the self-interested hear only what they want to hear, not what in fact is and is true.

The world's initial onrush can appear almost as brutal as a violation. The subject is forced to yield to things. Only afterward does it have the chance to ratify voluntarily what, at first, is not at all voluntary. But just as a man and a woman who hope to have a child are compelled to submit to natural laws that are not subject to their freedom, the intellectual fruit of knowledge can ripen only in a primary, natural constraint that forces them to know. It is not true, then, that, in order to attain self-knowledge, the ego, acting out of some sort of freedom, sets a non-ego over against itself, in order to regain itself from the other's point of view. If the ego had this kind of freedom, it would be divine from the very outset, but then it would have no need of a non-ego in order to come to self-consciousness. In fact, the contrary is true: the most marked index of the finite subject's creaturehood is the fact that it is already serving before it awakens to itself as subject. It awakens in the act of service, and henceforth it will awaken to itself in the measure that it serves in an attitude of self-forgetfulness. However vastly the subject's inner spaces may seem to echo, they remain empty and fruitless unless they are populated by things and take shape by working on them. The subject does not need to be concerned about its own equipment—the equipment

takes care of itself if the subject is busy about serving the world. All it has to do is affirm, and recapitulate, at the level of spirit what it already finds itself to be at the level of nature.

3. The Double Form of Truth

The subject lays hold of the object on the basis of the images generated by the object in its sensory sphere. The subject perceives these images by means of an immediate sensory intuition [*Anschauung*]. At this initial stage, the sensory image and the immediate perception of this image are one. By the same token, the receptivity and spontaneity of the imagination [*Einbildungskraft*], the action of the object in the sphere of the subject and the subject's creative reproduction of the object's action, remain in perfect balance. Sensory intuition can do no more than introduce the image into the space of the subject. This is why it is not yet knowledge. It is, in fact, utterly immediate; no one can adequately express in words how he sees red or tastes sweetness. In this respect, the sense image mediates a peculiarly intimate contact between subject and object—so intimate, in fact, that it cannot be conveyed in language. The object has announced its presence within the subject. It has, however, made this announcement through a word that is, at first, a pure expression, which does not yet disclose the essence either of the object or of the subject as it is in itself. And yet this expression of the object in the language of sense images is as much of the object as the subject can immediately grasp. Even if the subject will penetrate to the object's being and essence thanks to the sensory images, it will find these realities—which, after all, cannot be immediately perceived by the senses—only in the images, which are in fact the expression of being and essence. The subject will never find the sense of the words except in the words themselves.

The subject can find this sense—can penetrate the expression and attain what expresses itself in this medium—because its sensorium is not locked in itself but is encompassed by the space of intellectual cognition, of which space it is a part. Inasmuch as the essential core of this space is self-consciousness, that is to say, the unity of being reflexively grasped as such, the image can be read within it as the expression of the non-appearing object. Thanks to the unity of self-consciousness, the subject understands three things. First of all, it has the power to unify synthetically the in itself disjointed image. This is the *unity of perception [Einheit der Anschauung]*. Furthermore, because the subject has immediate access within its own inner space to the relationship between inward significance [*Bedeutung*] and outward sensible expression, it is able not only to unify the image on the level of perception but also to confer upon it the unity of an inward, intellectual meaning, of a coherent, intelligible essence. The result is the *unity of the concept [Einheit des Begriffs]*. Finally, the subject experiences the unity of existing being in its own self-consciousness. Now, because this experience originates in the analogy, and inherent distance, between its own being and absolute being, the subject can adjudge to the essence it beholds in the image an objective, extramental existence. It thus establishes the *unity of objective existence [Einheit des Da-Seins]*.

These three syntheses flow from a common source: the power of self-consciousness to synthesize and to unite (at root to establish being). And yet this synthetic activity is not simply, as it might appear to be, a sovereign, purely creative achievement of intellectual cognition. On the contrary, it must be ascribed in equal measure to the receptivity of the knowing power. On the one hand, the unity of self-consciousness comes about only under an impulsion of sensory imagination that itself proceeds from the object. It rests, then, upon a natural process occurring independently of

any spiritual decision. On the other hand, the being that is unveiled and apprehended in self-consciousness is not merely the spirit's own being but expressly being as a whole—not only the self's being, then, but, with equal immediacy, the being of the world existing outside the self. When we say that the subject spontaneously posits meaning and being, then, we must avoid understanding this statement one-sidedly. Our point, in other words, is not that the subject somehow bestows its personal property upon an alien object but rather that it recognizes the place that has belonged to the object all along and from the very origin precisely within its own self-knowledge.

In exercising its capacity for interpreting the unity of perception as a meaningful and, therefore, essential unity, the subject collects from the image a significance and an intellectual coherence that are not located in the sensible as such. The sensible image is flat, but because the subject's sense power has a depth, and because it is aware of this depth, it is capable of seeing the one-dimensional image in perspectival depth. By drawing essential points into the foreground while pushing inessential aspects into the background, the subject can see vivid contour in the disjointed multiplicity presented to immediate perception, understand the figure it apprehends as the active expression of a power necessarily underlying the activity, but not appearing as such, and bring out the meaning of what it has beheld by arranging it within already familiar contexts or categories. This manifold activity is characterized by a simultaneous elevation of sensory perception into the concept (*abstractio speciei a phantasmate*),[7] on the one hand, and immersion of the intellectual meaning into sensory perception (*conversio intellectus ad phantasma*),[8] on the other. Now, this has two further results, which are also simultaneous. The first is a sort of creative "divination" by which the subject, engaging the spontaneous power of the intellect, so to say *guesses* the intelligible from the sensible clue. Human knowledge is all too full of error, which is to say, the misreading of the perceptible image: proof, then, that we are really talking about a guess, not about a direct intuition of the object's essence. But—and this is the second thing that happens—the image itself prompts and categorically demands this very divination.

As we have already suggested, the same phenomenon recurs when the intellect, in its supreme and, as it were, most audacious creative act, posits existence. It has to recur because the image *as such* neither reveals nor contains any trace of this existence. And yet the image is enough to give the subject, simultaneously with self-consciousness, the certain knowledge that its own center of existence is insufficient to account for the intelligible coherence displayed in the image. Such a coherence, it knows, immediately requires it to posit extramental reality. There is, then, a kind of identity between subject and object in knowledge: the object's essential word becomes audible and understandable through the sensible word by the mediation of the subject's own word (*verbum mentis*),[9] The two words coincide, and in this coincidence the subject is able to take the measure of the object's essence and its existence. In this respect, the subject encloses the truth of the object within the unity of its own measure, which is to say, of its self-consciousness. But this identity gives way immediately, indeed, at the very moment it arises, to a definitive relative opposition [*Gegenübersein*] between knower and known, since the very meaning of self-consciousness is that the known be present in it *as* known, not as knower. Only when the subject understands that the object stands over against it as something having being-for-itself does it, the subject, inwardly possesses the full measure of the object. The object's immanence in the subject's consciousness is the prior condition for understanding its transcendence.

Because of the inextricable interweaving of receptivity and spontaneity in knowledge, the relationship between subject and object, and thus truth itself, has a curious two-sidedness. Although we have already mentioned this two-sidedness several times, we revert to it now because, in the light of what we have said, it takes on new features that permit a new, more comprehensive description of it.

Insofar as the spontaneity of knowledge is wholly at the service of receptivity (insofar, that is, as the *intellectus agens* is the tool of the *intellectus passibilis*, the intuitive intellect), the knowledge of the truth and the truth of knowledge are synonymous with the strictest objectivity. Truth is the measure of being and, therefore, the expression of what *is*. Any departure from the precise rendering of the actual facts is also a departure from truth. It is not the function of the knowing mind to invent for itself some—perhaps better and nicer—world and to ignore the one that already exists. It has to say what is. Its primary attitude is thus one of perfect objectivity. The mind has to offer its services to the object in such a way that the object can show itself to the mind with the utmost possible fidelity. It has to enter into the act of knowledge entirely unencumbered by prejudice, either about the object or about itself, in order to perform its fundamental act of perceiving as precisely as possible what the object actually has to say to it. From the outset, the knower ought to be indifferent as to whether the medium in which the object expresses itself is or is not subjective. Admittedly, the subjectivity of the medium in which the object appears cannot be without influence on the *mode* of this appearance. Nonetheless, if the knower were to conclude from this that what appears in the medium is itself subjective—to reduce it, for example, to subjective a priori forms of perception or to the mind's formative power, thus dissolving it into nothing—he would be imposing on the object's appearance a prejudice so massive that he would ipso facto deny the object a possibility of original self-expression or presentation. As long as the subject is willing to be objective and to make its own (sensory or intellectual) space available as a tool in service of the object's appearance, it need not worry that its subjectivity is unduly taking up room that belongs to the truth. The sensorium (when it is considered in its totality and not in an abstract separation from a subject) is a sheer mediator that cannot impair the truth. Accordingly, the knowing subject's fundamental attitude must be the posture that is required by the phenomenology itself, total, indifferent readiness to receive, which presupposes the exclusive desire to receive and reproduce the phenomenon as purely as possible. This attitude merits the name of *justice*, inasmuch as with incorruptible honesty it acknowledges, and metes out to the object, what in fact is its due. Any knowledge that lacked this attitude would no longer be true knowledge.

On the other hand, the mere fact of knowledge gives rise to a new and unique relationship between subject and object. Obviously, the justice that the subject renders the object cannot rest unqualifiedly upon some right of the object. The subject has made the interiority of its perception available as a medium in which the object can unfold and display itself—in a way that would have been impossible to the object in itself alone. Nor is this all: the subject has offered the object its inmost spiritual sphere, that is to say, its most personal center, as a tool by means of which the object not only can display itself sensibly but also make itself intelligible in doing so. Consequently, the subject's rigorous objectivity entails a willingness to oblige the object, just as the unlocking of the subject's sensory sphere involves a kind of graciousness toward it. The fact that the object has at its command a spiritual space in which to develop its own innermost possibilities cannot rest upon some "claim" that the object might have. A subject, as a personal, free, and sovereign interiority, is far from being a mere *tabula rasa* on which one can inscribe

whatever happens to come to mind. The fact is that this *tabula* is made of the most precious material in this world: spirit. Every impression left on it can have unforeseeable consequences that may affect even its personal life; it is impossible to touch the sensorium of a knowing subject without simultaneously touching its personal, spiritual core, because the existence of this sensorium is surrounded on all sides by this core.

Because the subject is spiritual and self-conscious, it can freely determine itself. Now, when a free being makes itself available for the fulfillment of another's purposes, it puts the other in its debt. The image of the object, though perhaps ephemeral and insignificant in itself, is "eternalized" in the spiritual subject's knowledge and memory. Nor is knowledge simply a matter of copying the outlines of an image. Insofar as knowledge is beholding a thing's essence, it is attained only through delving and divining; and insofar as knowledge is objectification, it is an acknowledgment and certification, a ratification and an unappealable declaration, that the object actually exists. If the object were ever tempted to doubt that it is a real entity having existence and meaning, it need only look to the subject's act of affirmation in order to win back its confidence. It was not unveiled in vain: it has been fulfilled in the relationship of truth, upon which it entered as an object and in which it has found assurance that the measure of its being has been taken and deemed right.

The object, insofar as it is an object and not itself a subject, could not have taken this measure, nor, for that matter, could it have attained the unity with itself that it rather finds only upon entering into the light of a self-conscious spirit. For this unity essentially transcends whatever unity may be actualized at any given time in the object. It is, of course, the unity of its essential form, but precisely this unity is only imperfectly expressed in any actual state of the *morphe*. The reason is twofold: the *morphe* is like an outline that is filled in only in relation to the surrounding world; and its primordial fulfillment ultimately lies in God's creative idea. It is this idea that grounds the object's true unity, for it is this idea that creatively founds the object's existence, just as the knowing subject participates in this productive work. The mental word (*verbum mentis*), in which the subject pronounces the object's meaning and being, is much more than an imitation of its naked facticity. The object can receive its definitive meaning only from the subject, for the object can attain completion only in the superior, spiritual sphere of the subject. In the creative mirror of the subject, the object sees the image of what it is and of what it can and is meant to be. This creative act of the subject is no longer a mere attitude of justice but much rather an act of *love*.

To be sure, the subject strives for the greatest possible objectivity in its knowledge, but this very effort to help the object attain its truth transcends justice and is rooted in a natural love. Obviously, this love is not yet a full, free, and spiritual love. Knowledge, once again, does not begin when the subject decides to attend to the object but when it is thrown unasked into the condition of having to exercise knowledge. But that is just the point: If the subject is originally and constitutively delivered over to this defenseless abandonment, which it exercises and, in so doing, ipso facto ratifies in every act of knowledge, then an ontological root necessarily underlies the surrender [*Hingabe*] that rises to the nobility of love when the subject recapitulates it at the level of conscious freedom. This natural love therefore colors even the attitude of justice, which, as the will to serve the truth, by definition includes and presupposes an attitude of selflessness. The rigorous objectivity that is required in truth would be impossible without this natural love

that from the beginning rises beyond justice, tempers it, and, in various degrees and modes, elevates it and integrates it into a higher sphere.

The creative side of human knowledge is therefore the creature's analogical participation in the act by which God's archetypal, productive knowledge creatively metes out truth. By a kind of grace, knowledge draws the other into the properly spiritual sphere, thus giving it the opportunity to unfold therein by the power, and in the light, of the subject—*before* it has to become, in its objectivity, the object of knowledge. Indeed, the full knowledge of the object unexpectedly completes and heightens even this objectivity (to which the subject has also contributed), raising it to the true measure and image that only love can inventively behold. Only the creative image of love is able to measure the object with the measure, and hold before it the mirror, that contains its definitive and, therefore, objective truth. This is because even the gaze with which God looks upon his creatures is not only the judging gaze of justice but also the loving gaze of mercy. More about this later.

II. TRUTH AS FREEDOM

Truth in the full sense is given only in a cognitive act of the spirit [*Geist*]. But the spirit, as spirit, is free, because it is being-for-itself. Truth, then, necessarily reaches into the sphere of freedom. The actualization of truth is no mere natural process but a spiritual event, which takes place only in the lightning-like encounter and fusion of two words—the word of the subject and the word of the object. Outside of this event, there is no truth. The truth of the object exists only as long as infinite or finite spirit turns to it in an act of knowing; the truth of the subject exists only as long as it abides in this act. Outside of this encounter itself, there are natural preconditions of truth: potencies and dispositions, in subject and object alike, that prepare, enable, and substantially shape the act of truth. Even in God, the freedom of truth is not caprice but is ordered in conformity with the divine nature. In man, however, there is the additional fact that his spirit emerges out of subspiritual nature, so that his spiritual acts have to move in the tracks laid down in advance by his nature.

So far our inquiry has dealt above all with the natural preconditions of the spiritual act of truth. It was for this reason that the previous chapter highlighted the aspect of unfreedom that remains within this spiritual act. The first index of this unfreedom is that subject and object find themselves by nature in a position of having to rely on each other in order to express their own intimate word. Although spirit comes to itself and lays hold of itself in the act of truth, it must in equal measure depend on its interlocutors in order to attain to itself. It is constrained to actualize itself in something other than itself. It is not at liberty to decide *whether* it will reveal itself or not, for it always already finds that it has been forced to do so. There was never a time when the subject was not already disclosed to the world and the world to it. Nor is it free to determine *how* it will reveal itself, for the structure of being and of knowledge, which are both given in advance by nature, likewise decide the way in which it is to manifest itself. The conditions of the possibility of the spirit's revelation are already traced out—not just in itself, but also in the other whom it encounters. The consequence is that spirit has no choice but to actualize its freedom in the way that it must actualize it. It is forced to its own freedom, in the sense that it is always already set in motion toward this freedom by nature. The demand placed upon it, the exigency inscribed in its inmost essence, is that it shape the movement in which it is already rolling into a voluntary self-movement. It is always already on its way toward transcendence, which simply means that by nature it must be spirit. The highest, freest acts of its spiritual existence are predisposed in it as nature. But this predisposition does not exempt it from the possibility and the duty of being spirit and of laying hold of its freedom in its own name. Its openness to the world is already a kind of sketch of the fundamental ways in which it will comport itself in the world: receiving and giving, service and creation, justice and love, which are all just so many definite expressions of loving self-abandonment. To say Yes to this natural transcendence and to actualize it by a free and spiritual transcendence is to fulfill the mission of human existence.

As this existence emerges out of nature to become spirit, truth likewise rises out of the regions of unfreedom into the realm of freedom.

A. The Freedom of the Object

It is no insignificant question for an entity whether or not it is the object of someone else's knowledge. If it is reproduced in, and impressed on, the mind of a stranger, then something of itself, perhaps something very essential and central, lives outside of itself. Now, this curious existence in the minds of others, which for the most part is hidden from the object itself, may not bother the object; it may even be welcome to it. In this case, it tacitly consents to this multiplication of its own essence. Let others delight in images of it and be enriched by them: more often than not, the object does not feel this as an attack on, or an impairment of, its rights. But this attitude is not just a matter of course. An object might well have its reasons for not wanting to be regarded simply as the helpless prey of a stranger's knowledge. Perhaps it has no desire simply to yield to the first comer who wishes to lay hold of it and swallow it up. Rather, things possess a self-being, and this self-being grounds a unique, incommutable value—the value of being-for-themselves, which is a gift given and entrusted first of all to them alone.

If each and every thing were nothing more than an "instance of. . ." or a kind of algebraic "x" that could be exchanged for other entities without loss, then things would possess absolutely no intrinsic value of their own as individuals. By the same token, they would have no claim whatsoever to any sphere that might be their own by right or reserved to them alone. Any knower who grasped the essence of the species of which they are exemplars would immediately comprehend at the same time every individual entity that fell under it: no individual could present him with any further mystery. Knowing the individual would accordingly be a matter of an endlessly repeatable application of knowledge of the universal, in the same way that a mathematical theorem can be applied to any number of objects or a cookie cutter can be used to make as many cookies as one wants.

The object's whole essence would then consist in being an object for a subject; there could be no more question of a free self-revelation on its part. It would already always stand fully revealed and, for the same reason, fully unprotected. It would lie supine under the knower's gaze like a cutting under a microscope. It would have no personal word to speak in the event of knowledge. It would be a thing completely stripped of any rights, which the knower could dispose of at his pleasure. In a world such as this, existence would no longer have any meaning, for being would have lost the property that alone gives the possession of being its desirability: unrepeatability and, therefore, interiority. In a world such as this, there might still be unsolved problems that knowledge had "not yet" mastered. But the essential mystery surrounding everything that exists for itself would be nonexistent. The event of knowledge would cast a cold, pitiless, shadowless light into every corner, and there would be no possibility of escaping this scorching sun. Being, stripped of mystery, would be, so to speak, prostituted.

Now, the fact that we must feel the mere idea of such an ontological order to be not only impossible but downright shameful shows clearly how thoroughly imbued we are with the sense of the nobility inherent in everything endowed with being. Only a radical cynicism, whose joy in the denial of values brands *it* as wicked and perverse, has from time to time managed to approach such a destructive view of things. This kind of radical cynicism becomes possible whenever man no longer has a flair for the central mystery of being, whenever he has unlearned reverence, wonder, and adoration, whenever, having denied God, whose essence is always characterized by the wonderful, man also overlooks the wondrousness of every single created entity. If, on the other hand, man venerates the unfathomable mystery of God's inner life, he will never overlook the reflected splendor of this property in God's creaturely images.

Along with their own being, God has given to all created things their own operation, and this includes a spontaneity in manifesting themselves outwardly, an echo, however distant, of his infinite, majestic freedom. Every entity that has being-for-itself possesses an inside and an outside, an intimate and a public sphere. The intimate dimension of beings can appear in a great variety of forms and on a great variety of levels. It increases as things move up the scale of being-for-itself; it reaches its complete form on the level of self-conscious spirit. On this level, the exteriorization of the interior is left to the discretion of the spirit and is thereby protected from being grasped mechanically by any stranger's knowledge. Yet even subspiritual entities are not completely bereft of this kind of protection. Every level of being possesses a characteristic form of this protection that differs from that of the others, a special mantle received as a gift from the Creator. This protection gives each particular unveiling and revelation of a thing the character of a solemn act, occurring only once, in which the inexhaustible newness of truth overpoweringly manifests itself.

This solid actuality is so dense with power that it is strong enough to counteract the intellect's drive toward omnipotence. It is true, of course, that all intellectual knowledge, even man's, is so constituted that no being can remain alien to it. Supposing the being proffers itself, the intellect will be able to apprehend it, since its eye has been keyed to all being. But the point is that this happens only if the being actually does proffer itself. The power of intellectual knowledge to receive the revelation of things is unlimited. Not so, however, the power to wrest this revelation from them. And let us stress that this is the case, not merely because what we actually experience of the world always remains an infinitesimal sector of the knowable, but just as much, and even more, because the spontaneity of the subject is held in check by the corresponding spontaneity of the object that stands over against it.

If this is so (which has yet to be shown), then it thoroughly vitiates any conception of man's knowing that would break it up into two completely different functions: on the one hand, a mechanical-practical function that regards being, above all material being, as a substrate subject without qualification to the mastery of the human will and devoid of any claim to intimate space and to mystery; on the other hand, a sort of refined, disinterested cultivation of a sympathetic intuition into unique, historical-temporal existence. Such a cleaving of human knowledge into two almost hostilely separate halves reflects an impotence to recall the modern intelligence from a dedivinized, mysteryless world view and to restore its original reverence for the object. To distinguish as sharply between profane and sacred reason as Bergson does is to absolutize the split and to place its healing beyond the reach of any remedy. It is to rip apart once and for all things that, for Thomas Aquinas, formed an inextricable unity: the judging intellect (*intellectus agens, dividens et componens*) and the perceiving intellect (*intellectus passibilis*). By the same token, it is to extract from "rational" thinking its mysterious character and, in the same stroke, to deprive intuitive, insightful thinking of demonstrability and logical structure, thus condemning it to isolation and to irrationality. To be sure, the two aspects of intellectual cognition can be distinguished, and, in any given instance, one can be accentuated more strongly than the other. Nevertheless, it is only together that they constitute the true power and wealth of the intelligence. There is one intellect, which both proceeds logically and judges, on the one hand, and understands, on the other, and this one intellect finds itself face to face with the one object, which is both rationally graspable and endowed with a unique intimate sphere. To see no contradiction, not even an antithesis, in these two aspects of being has always been a hallmark of sound philosophy.

1. The Degrees of Intimacy

The intimate character of being, which reaches its completed end in the conscious spirit, has its preliminary stages in unconscious nature. There is no being that does not enjoy an interiority, however liminal and rudimentary it may be.

This may be generally conceded in the case of living things, yet it is no less true of the lowest level of being, which is occupied by inanimate things. Even they are not merely a passive prey for knowledge. At work even in them are energies that display themselves externally and thus move from the inside to the outside. The phenomenal appearances [*Erscheinungen*] of these energies in the field of sense awareness are by no means identical with what produces these appearances. If they were, the natural sciences would not have to probe so laboriously into the hidden essence of matter. This essence is, of course, not simply an unknown factor hidden behind its appearances. That the natural laws discovered and formulated on the basis of the phenomena can be applied to the core of nature, in other words, to what is not directly available to sensory perception [*das Unanschauliche*], is sufficient proof that the essence is not completely inaccessible to knowledge but rather does really manifest itself through the appearing phenomena. On the other hand, the laws that science has worked out always remain provisional. They are working hypotheses that prove their worth—or lack of it—in practice. They can be superseded by other hypotheses that demonstrably penetrate to a deeper level of reality or are able to cover a broader field of it.

While we cannot deny the laws of nature their genuine objectivity, the extent of their validity is all too clearly finite. On the one hand, they can possess a definite domain of applicability, within which they seem to offer the sole possible and correct explanation of the phenomena. But as soon as the attempt is made, by a seemingly logical deduction, to extend them to neighboring fields, they often prove less suited to interpret reality. Other laws, which have optimum applicability in other fields, overlap with them, and the compatibility of the two methods of research is not immediately evident. On the other hand, hypotheses can be defeated on their own territory, insofar as unexpected new phenomena can crop up that require another hypothesis to account for the phenomenon as a whole.

In this way, even so-called exact science remains an approximation of the truth about the essence of matter. It is no more and no less than a never-ending attempt to woo the core of the material world, which is not directly available to sense perception. Of course, at first blush this might seem to imply that our “practical” intelligence, with its propensity to analyze and quantify, is just the right tool for the investigation of this lowest level of being—whereas the interiority of living things or of intellectual entities increasingly eludes its grasp and guarantees a spectacular failure to the attempt to apply “exact” methods to psychic and spiritual life. Nevertheless, seeing the perplexity about the ultimate essence of matter in which the physical sciences seem to find themselves, we have good grounds for asking whether this impression is not in fact deceptive and whether living being, to whose realm we ourselves belong, is not in the end better known to us than inanimate nature.

The point, of course, is not that the essence of inanimate nature is destined to remain completely unknown, as if it stood athwart the path of intellectual knowledge like some irrational thing that was totally unproportioned to it. Such an agnosticism is contradicted by the astonishing

possibility of applying abstract laws to the phenomena and even, within certain limits, of deduction a priori. It is contradicted, too, by the undeniable fact of a certain progress in scientific research. Yet it is just as clear that reality, not merely by reason of some accidental circumstance, but by reason of an intrinsic necessity, must always remain richer than any cognition of it and that the truth even of the lowest level of being contains a richness that so utterly eludes exhaustive investigation that it can continue to engage inquirers until the end of time yet never ends up as a heap of unmysterious, completely surveyable facts. Something of the coquetry of veiling found in living things seems to belong already to material things; whenever the knower believes that he has got them once and for all, they slip away, leaving behind them a cloak of appearance.

Where the interiority of being attains the more concentrated density of vegetative life, the tension between inside and outside immediately comes even more sharply into relief. The inside lies concealed within an almost impenetrable veil: no scientific research will ever be able to explain what the vital principle is in itself. We see the facts, and they seem like unalloyed miracles to us. We see, for instance, that the living thing is a purposive unity yet has the power to restore its unity after injury, to regenerate missing members, to adapt itself to quite different living conditions in accord with the abiding plan of its unity, to reproduce itself by union with another member of the same species, or even without it, and to be capable of such plasticity that the division of the whole being produces two members of the same species endowed with the same architectonic totality. We are accustomed to register these wonders as simple, obvious facts and have become unable to realize to what extent these everyday realities are really the manifestation of incomprehensible mysteries. Even on the lowest level of life, the living entity already irradiates such plenitude and power from the hidden core of its interiority that we should fall back, blinded, before every one of its outward forms [*Äußerungen*]. What is the mystery of this living totality (which is already enough to vitiate from the very root any mechanistic account of life), which is so much one that it can maintain itself against all outward influences and impressions, and yet so little one that it can release from its unity a duality? What mysterious property is attested by this reproductive power? An excess of power and unity that enables the plant to produce other, coessential unities without therefore suffering any impairment? Or such a lack of unity that the plant can just as easily go on living as two independent unities once it has been divided?

To raise questions like these is to acknowledge that, while we may be able to record ever more precisely the outward manifestations of living things, no science will ever succeed in unveiling their mysteries. Living things are so well hidden in themselves, their brow so clearly bears the mark of their mysterious essence, that any “scientific” inquiry claiming to explain them is simply absurd. Such inquiry merely betrays its own blindness to the ultimate, as it were, publicly evident essence of the object itself. It touches the sacred core of life with profane fingers. It covers the unknown with names and concepts but does not see that it has only glued a mere label onto a container of unknown content:

> Encheiresis Naturae is chemistry’s name,
>
> Which plays the fool, helpless to explain.

And yet we *do* have access to the living being. We know its outward manifestations. It comes to meet us in them. It emerges from its concealment and exhibits itself to us. We see the development of the seed, as it breaks through the hard sod, unfolds, spreads out leaf by leaf, and finally brings forth the unexpected miracle of the blossom—perhaps the most eloquent word of unspeaking nature. We see how this complete form finally begins to decline and, at the very point where we suppose the end has come, surprises us with the gift of fruit and its lovely ambiguity: the ability to be consumed in the earth for the sake of new growth or in the mouth of higher beings for the sake of their nourishment. Seeing all of this, then, the knower cannot say that he has grasped nothing of the mystery of life. In fact, this "intimate-public secret" [*heilig-öffentliche Geheimnis*] is not just permanently concealed but also—and to the same degree—permanently divulged. At bottom, we know more of this "secret" if we go by its appearances than if we attempt to spy out the hidden background from which these appearances move toward us. Truth is the unveiling of a being insofar as it *is*, and the living being unveils itself by living its life: it unfolds this meaning stage by stage with an almost exaggerated obviousness. It displays nothing other than itself. No one who has witnessed the unfolding of a plant's life ought to say that he has seen "only" the appearance of life, not its essence. Whatever could be communicated of this life, whatever was meant for the general public, whatever the Creator deemed worthy of being known by everyone—all of this has been declared word for word. On the other hand, no one ought to conclude that he has somehow inspected the whole essence of life or that he has penetrated to the mysterious center from which the plant's outward manifestations [*Äußerungen*] emerged. He knows, simply by looking at these manifestations, that the possibilities of life are infinitely more abundant than what is actually on display; other circumstances or influences would have made something different of this essence, and many of its capacities may have remained altogether hidden. There is an incomprehensible prodigality in the very essence of life. Of millions of sperm cells, only a very small number get to develop. Of the millions of tendencies and possibilities concealed in the overflowing abundance of life, only those that become actual will ever find expression.

That having been said, it would be just as mistaken to regret that these possibilities remain undeveloped and to regard actuality as a realm of limitation and poverty. Rather, the very purpose of this fullness in the womb of life is to illustrate life's richness and superabundance. It would betoken the poverty of being, and ultimately of the Creator, if everything possible were also actual. We know a great artist insofar as his works reveal how sovereignly he has created them and how little strain they put on his powers. In the same way, we recognize living nature by the fact that its appearance itself reveals the infinite surplus of the possible. The finite appearance *as such* is the coming to light of a certain infinity. This is not because its finitude is not perfect or because its form shades off into the twilight of the unknown. No, the perfection of its finitude is precisely as such the revelation of its intrinsic infinity. This infinity truly becomes visible in its appearance as the excess that does not become visible; it is unveiled as what remains veiled; it is made known as the ineliminable mystery of being.

Truth, insofar as it is the unveiling of a being for a knower, effects this unveiling, not in a one-to-one correspondence between a preexistent inner model and an outward replica of it, but rather in a primitive movement from an inexhaustible inside into an always determinately formed outside. Things thereby show that they live their own life and that the point of their existence is not simply limited to being an object of some knowledge. They do not, of course, close themselves off to this knowledge, but they give of their inner fullness almost *en passant*: the knower has to

catch as much of it as he is able to grasp. To be sure, he really does grasp something, which will not slip through his fingers. Nevertheless, it is perhaps the other lesson that is the more important: The truth of any being will always be infinitely richer and greater than the knower is capable of grasping.

With the emergence of the animal world, the intimate character of being enters into a new phase. Although insentient life suggested an overflowingly rich interiority, this inward dimension remained veiled to itself. In the animal, by contrast, this inner space begins to grow light, to become luminous and accessible to itself. The animal represents a completely new fact that radically changes the situation of epistemology: the object is now itself a subject. The revolution that this new fact brings with it is fraught with immense consequences.

From now on, we can no longer speak of *the* subject, as if there were just one, but only of a plurality of subjects, each of which possesses and knows its truth first of all for itself and whose intersubjectivity raises a host of new and difficult questions. At first sight, it is utterly bewildering for a subject that the objects waiting to be known also have an inner sphere and are thus knowers in their own right. The object's inner space is itself filled to capacity with intellectual, subjective acts of cognition. Will it now also become an object of them? But how is this supposed to happen if the subjective as such is just that: *not* objective? Maybe one can know what another also knows. But will it ever be possible to know it *as* he knows it, that is, to know it with the same subjectivity and by the nomination of the same light? Moreover, to argue that we are talking at most about "nuances of interpretation" or "subjective colorations" of one common truth that play no significant role in the objectivity of knowledge is not altogether to the point. What is at stake, in fact, is nothing less than the basic question of whether or not the subjective *as such* is objectifiable. But, supposing that it is not, the question then becomes whether we may not have to impose what seems to be a further restriction upon the principle that all being is intelligible. For even if two subjects know an object in common, even if they succeed in transforming their subjective knowledge into an objective cognition that can then serve as the basis for mutual understanding, the very subjectivity of their knowledge remains incommunicable.

This question, which can almost be forgotten in the midst of interchange among intellectual beings, becomes impossible to ignore precisely when we enter the realm of animal and sensitive life. What does an animal see, hear, and feel? We do not know now and we will never know in the future. The world of sensory images is purely subjective and, as such, cannot be objectified. To be sure, the scientist can, on the basis of comparative studies of sense organs in animals, draw certain analogical inferences about how animals perceive. That they do in fact perceive, indeed, that their perception is analogous to that of the subject performing these studies, is indisputable. By the same token, to question this fact, to classify animals as reflex mechanisms, is unworthy of serious natural science. Nevertheless, we shall never share animals' experience of how they actually see or of what they actually feel when they show outward signs of pain or joy. One might even entertain the possibility of empathy with certain states of other sentient creatures (as, for example, a sleeping mother immediately awakens at her child's slightest movement or instinctively senses the child's illness even in the absence of visible symptoms; or as, in general, instinct can contribute in perplexing and inexplicable ways to intellectual cognition). Nevertheless, all these forms of mysterious communication can never completely pull down the barriers of subjectivity.

Subjectivity is intimacy, indeed, intimacy guaranteed by the very being of things. This intimacy cannot be forcibly invaded, nor can it even be communicated as such. Whoever has being-for-himself has, of course, die capacity to express himself outwardly, but he does not have the capacity to get rid of his essential solitude. He must content himself with having a world view and answering for it in his own name with a responsibility that he can never shove off onto another. For he does not know how the other sees the world. Even *if* the other saw it in the same way, one could never be finally certain *that* the other's world picture was in fact the same. Moreover, the knower must acknowledge these limits imposed by the other's self-being by letting go of the other's self. Genuine community in the truth can be built only on the foundation of this basic resignation. Without this renunciation there can be no reciprocal gift-giving; without this distance there can be no proximity of minds; without this reverence before the other's self-being there can be no love. The subject's solitude begins already at the level of sensation, where the ineliminability of its solitude also becomes immediately evident. But the same solitude remains even in the realm of the mind, despite its heightened possibilities of communication. The walls erected in the sensory sphere for the benefit and welfare of subjects also rise up into the sphere of intellect. Any attempt to demolish them, hence, to disregard the mystery of the other subject, violates the mystery of existence and the intimate nature of truth. At first sight it may seem a trifling matter whether or not I apprehend colors or sounds in the same way as another, but nuances in perception can be the basis of artistic taste, about which it is not always possible to argue. A man can explain to another only in a very indirect way what kind of mood he is in, but his general temperament may influence his entire *Weltanschauung*. To say nothing at all of the deep fissure that begins with the animal and runs through all conscious life: the divide between male and female. We know a good many tilings about the life and sensibility of the other sex, but we will never know what it means to see and to perceive the world from its perspective.

The animal kingdom gives rise to a variegated profusion of subjective images of the world [*Weltbilder*], all of which are closed off from one another. Each of these images is completely finite; it operates within a peculiar environment [*Umwelt*] that is snugly fitted to its particular sensory apparatus. Indeed, for a variety of reasons we cannot even imagine these environments. First of all, we entirely lack certain senses that some animals possess. Where we do have senses in common, they are often designed in a completely different way (for example, we do not have the multifaceted eye of the insect, and it is utterly beyond our power to imagine how the world looks to a bird or a fish, whose eyes do not work together to give the animal's vision perspective). Most of all, we cannot imagine what a sensorium without a mind would be. These images of the world live alongside us and partially overlap our own. Alien worlds that we will never know pass right through ours, and sentient beings are separated by distances for which there is almost no common measure.

Nevertheless, sentient creatures are rooted in a medium of life common to all. All of them have an outward form that, in its own way, is as significant as a clearly articulated word. Nature has produced an immense number of such words—as many as there are genera and species of living things. And whereas plants are only spoken words, animals speak as much as they are spoken. Animals, unlike plants, are not merely a voice that takes form from within: they have a concomitant sensibility by which they are aware of this process of formation. They do not merely express something; they express themselves. They themselves have a share in the movement from inside to outside, in the exterior communication of themselves, in their truth. They stand midway between freedom and unfreedom. They have the freedom to express themselves

outwardly in some form of audible or inaudible language. But they do not yet have the freedom to express themselves when and how they wish. The movement in which they express themselves happens necessarily and is bound to a predetermined natural language. We do not understand this language immediately. We believe we can, at least in part, interpret its meaning. We recognize, for example, that a dog is angry by its bark, that it is in pain by its whine. But the greatest part of these animal languages remains hidden from us. What we do know for certain is that even what is obscure to us is the expression of life, which speaks meaningfully in its own words insofar as its exterior communication corresponds to its interiority. Every word in the vast language of nature speaks itself, without knowing the sense of the others. Yet the immensely coherent discourse that results is proof that this language emerges from a common fund of life that finds endless ways in which to express itself. The testimony of life reaches beyond the solitude of the individual word, which bears witness to a separate interiority. Life attests that it is a totality by the coordination of so many voices and fields of expression.

The animal's truth, then, is more mysterious and, at the same time, more accessible than that of the plant. Of the plant's interior we know nothing: we see only as much of it as appears in an outward *gestalt*, in various forms and tokens of life. But this also means that we know as much of the plant's being as can enter into a conscious mind. By contrast, everything about the animal eludes us, not because it is inaccessible to awareness, but because it is the animal, and not we ourselves, who becomes aware of it. What we receive in return, however, are not just objective expressions of life but subjective ones as well. In this sense, the animal is both closer to, and farther from, us than the plant: closer, because it can express what it experiences in a language that bears a generic, if not a specific, likeness to ours; farther, because the impossibility of interpreting the animal's language drives home with greater immediacy the mysteriousness of life, indeed, of existence as such. The greater affinity makes us feel all the more the increased solitude.

In man, consciousness attains greater interiority and so becomes self-consciousness. His inner dimension is not only luminous, as it is in the case of the animal, but also light for itself. Man is the first entity that possesses itself and, because of this self-possession, is free. It is not just that his interior space, like that of the animal, has certain features of consciousness; he is himself substantially spirit. To the extent that man is spirit, he can dispose of himself. Hence, he can decide whether and how he shall make his utterances [*Äußerungen*]. Freedom enters between the spirit's self-possession and its self-expression, between the interior and the exterior word; it becomes an integral component of the truth. Man freely disposes of truth, for it has been placed in his hands and committed to him to administer self-consciously. He is the first entity that can freely tell the truth, but for the same reason he is also the first that is capable of lying.

The truth of things has hitherto consisted only in the relation between their essence and their appearance: they participated in truth insofar as their essence moved in such a way as to remain veiled in the very act of showing itself. In man, this objective truth is accompanied by subjective truth, which is the capacity to possess for oneself the measure between the thing and its expression. The object of knowledge becomes the subject of knowledge. Being coincides with consciousness in self-consciousness, thus becoming its own object. This is the true meaning of the *cogito ergo sum*. This unity in which truth is discovered has a double form. On the one hand, it is an immediate unity, a self-possession intuitively apprehended as such. On the other hand, it is also a mediated unity, insofar as the spirit is capable of formulating its self-being in a concept

and of synthesizing this concept (as predicate) with itself (as subject) in an evident [*evident*] judgment. This judgment draws its evidence [*Evidenz*] from the spirit's original, unmediated unity with itself. Ontological unveiling is one with the capacity to convey an authentic concept and expression of oneself. The spirit receives two gifts simultaneously: the gift of knowing the truth and the gift of saying it. It would be unthinkable if it obtained only the first gift without the second. It would be burned up by an inward abundance that could not be expressed outwardly. It would be like a light that had to shine in itself without being able to emit any rays. It would attempt a communication incapable of being communicated and a word incapable of being uttered. The very existence of the *intensity* characteristic of spirit immediately requires a capacity for *extension*. Being's revelation to itself also immediately enables and thus requires its revelation to others.

But from henceforth this revelation is free. Even though man is predisposed to communication in general, he is not compelled by nature to any one conscious communication in particular. He does not have to say what he knows. He has the command of his treasury of knowledge, so that he can make a free gift of every particular disclosure. No one can wring his truth from him or manipulate it without his knowledge and consent. Truth as self-unveiling is, in the case of man, a free, hence responsible, ethically consequential act. There may be a science of the soul and of the human spirit in general, but there can be no science of a concrete individual man—unless he should decide of his own accord to grant access to the object and content of this science. It is just where the intimacy of animal consciousness, which is essentially solitary and immediate, appears to have disappeared, because the mind can express its interiority in an intellectual word, that it is in fact replaced by the far higher and more valuable interiority that comes with the freedom to communicate oneself in the first place. Precisely when truth comes wholly to itself, when a being's unveiling is possessed and understood as such, truth is no longer something accessible to everyone in general but is a free, personal reality.

The result is an entirely new attitude, both in the communicator and in the receiver of the communication. The communicator has the freedom to dispose of his truth as he wishes. Consequently, his communication begins with a free decision to share with another what belongs properly to him. This decision is an ethical act, whose justification is subject to the laws of ethics. The actual communication consists in the fact that the communicator gives outward expression to the truth that he possesses in his intimate sphere. But the relation between content and expression is no longer a matter of necessity in the same way that it was in the domain of subspiritual life. The exterior sign of the interior content has nothing to do with a language of obvious natural symbols. If it *did*, the very act of self-expression would render the freedom of spirit's intimate space null and void. The spirit's freedom would consist solely in deciding whether to keep its personal property or to waive any claims to it. Having made up its mind, it would, so to say, merely open outward the hitherto locked doors of its interiority, which would become accessible to outsiders as if it were just one more fact of nature. Its entire freedom would be limited to deciding whether to make itself thing-like or not. Such a profoundly divided, tragic freedom would violate the very essence of the spirit. If the spirit is to be really free, it must be so not only before but also in and after its communication. It must, in other words, have at its disposal the opportunity to say something about itself, to reveal itself in a genuine way, without therefore having to give up its intimate space or its being-for-itself. It must have the capacity to give itself to another without the other's having the capacity to take it. It must have the curious ability to grant a glimpse into itself, without for all that laying bare its soul to the other's casual inspection.

These conditions can be fulfilled insofar as the relation between content and expression itself is left to the discretion of freedom. The word that man's free spirit pronounces is freely shaped by man and is not fixed beforehand by nature. This is by no means due solely to the imperfection of man's discursive knowledge. In other words, it is not as if man had to avail himself of deficient, arbitrary signs in order to communicate with others, in order to get "behind the mystery" of another mind [*Geist*], whereas entities having perfect knowledge could somehow dispense with this roundabout means because they could look into one another's minds by an immediate, nondiscursive intuition. The decisive factor is rather the dignity of the personal spirit, whose being-for-itself cannot be disclosed to another entity in a way contrary to its own free choice. The spirit's claim to a truth of its own that becomes available to others only with its consent might appear presumptuous if it were not backed up by the demonstrable intensification of the intimacy of truth as we ascend the scale of beings. Although spirit is something qualitatively new with respect to all natural entities, it is at the very same time the crowning of an ever more unmistakable development in nature itself.

Now, the freedom of spirit in its self-communication, which is not annulled even in its act of revealing itself, implies a new and specific attitude also in the spirit that receives this communication. One who receives a truth communicated without spiritual freedom remains the judge of the relationship between content and expression in beings. Such a relationship is always present, of course, and in this sense no communication of truth is devoid of mystery, for truth is never so unconcealed that no aspect of the thing is left outside of its revelation. In this respect there is no purely neutral, purely objective truth. But insofar as in this case disclosure is still a necessity of nature, its verification pertains to the competence of the subject. This situation changes as soon as the communication becomes free. For now the verification of the relation between content and expression no longer comes immediately under the purview of the knower's judgment. The freedom of the one revealing stands in the way. The word that he has pronounced is no longer a mere expression of the internal word but a *testimony*. The speaker establishes an equation between the content and the form of his utterance. The equation cannot be checked over from the outside; the speaker vouches for the correctness of the equation. In vouching for this as a person, he creates for the receiver a substitute for its missing ability to verify. The declaration of the truth thus becomes a kind of deposition, and as such it implies the ethical characteristic of truthfulness. By the same token, there is a corresponding *faith* on the part of the receiver. Without this faith, any exchange of truth between free entities is unthinkable. To exclude testimony and faith from the way in which spirits communicate would be to dislodge their freedom from the center of their intelligence in order to grant it, at best, a sort of marginal existence in isolated moral acts. It would be to extract their relationship with the truth and, because possession and communication of truth are inseparable, their truth itself from the center of their being-for-themselves, and it would be to degrade spirit to a subspiritual mode of existence.

Once the spirit's word is free—and the use of arbitrary signs in human language is clear evidence that it is—its freedom appears in its utterance, in that it offers its freedom as a pledge of the truth of what it has created. In this way, and in this way alone, its inmost being, its being-for-itself, appears. Freedom can reveal and express itself only by personally assuming responsibility for its revelation. By doing this, it manifests its weight and its dignity as freedom. But insofar as freedom is intrinsic to the uttered word that is the spirit's truth, the receiver can show that he has recognized this word in its truth only by simultaneously recognizing the freedom with which it is uttered. Acknowledgment of another's freedom, however, can be expressed only by giving up all

unrestricted judgment by one's own mind, hence, through a confident surrender to what has been shown in freedom. This means, not that the knowing spirit thereby waives every right to examine and investigate the truth that is offered it, but only that in this examination it can never do without a prior and concomitant faith.

So far we have described man as if he were nothing but free, pure spirit. He is not. In man, the specific features of spiritual intimacy are inextricably interwoven with all the forms of sub-spiritual interiority, above all with the intimacy of the sensorium. It is not until we recognize this that we can grasp the specific, in its complexity almost limitless, wealth of interiority in man. On the one hand, man's interiority is far from embodying a pure being-for-itself. The reason for this is not just that man's spirit can be present and unveiled to itself only when it comes to itself from the self-estrangement entailed in knowing objects. There is rather the further reason that man's very self-possession is never a perfect knowledge of his essence. The spirit is unveiled to itself only to the extent that it knows its existence and certain fundamental characteristics of its quiddity, but its gaze does not penetrate to its inmost essence. The full depth of its origin, structure, possibilities, and freedom remains concealed from it. We can leave open the question of whether the limitation of the spirit's self-unveiling, hence, of the freedom of its truth, is due solely to the fact that it is bound up with the body or whether this limitation is not rather anchored in its very creatureliness, which denies it a complete self-possession or an absolute self-sufficiency. If the latter is the case, then the spirit is veiled from itself in order that it might seek and find itself, not in itself, but in the infinite spirit that created it and that alone is perfect self-possession. The bodiless spirits, then, would, as creatures, also be removed from their own grasp in the same way.

On the other hand, man's spirit remains bound to the receptivity of a corporeal sensorium. This implies two things. First, spirit's self-possession is inseparable from the primary self-dispossession entailed in its dependence upon external objects. Receptivity is thus like a deep, unclosable breach opened up in the closed circle of being-for-itself. Only by welcoming things from the outside and remaining open to them, only by being given over to the service of what is other than itself, can man's spirit lay claim to a being of its own. And only if it has served the world can it hope for the measure of independence due it as spirit.

Second, its self-utterance is bound to the natural symbolic language of the senses. This language is both an aid and a limit. It is a limit because, while the intellect [*Geist*] does possess the contents of sensation, it cannot communicate them as such. It does not overcome the solitude of the sensory sphere. This solitude is rather sealed forever by the incommunicability of spirit and is part of its peculiar destiny. Such solitude colors spirit with the darker shades of subspiritual nature and causes it to share in both the neediness and the security of being that does not participate in the full light of spirit.

But the mastery of this symbolic expressive language also brings the intellect help and enrichment. Its spiritual language is not a free-floating invention but rather clothes itself in the language of nature and the laws of natural expression. Man's countenance, indeed, his whole figure, inseparably expresses his rootedness in nature as soul and his freedom as spirit, and this spirit can freely create in the expressive language of sensibly appearing materials. In the same way, the object of knowledge that one spirit proffers to another is clothed in the garb of the senses and their symbolism. It remains an impossible undertaking to fix the boundaries between

soul and spirit, between sensible and intelligible expression. On the one hand, the spirit's language is unmistakably inscribed in the psycho-physical field of expression; on the other hand, no physiognomy or related art can entirely capture the spirit's freedom in its laws of expression. Hence, man's intimacy remains in a mysterious, transitional state; it participates in two forms of interiority, in two systems of unveiling and veiling, which in their combination allow an immensely rich play of light and shadow.

In the hierarchy of substances, the bodiless created spirit occupies the level above man. We know of this spirit only through revelation; however, this knowledge gives rise to a number of significant philosophical questions concerning its nature and structure. But since we have no empirical data regarding the life of the angelic spirits, we are forced to rely on a priori deductions from the idea of these entities, which on the one hand, given their immateriality, cannot have the material receptivity belonging to human knowledge but, on the other hand, being creatures, cannot lay claim to a purely creative intelligence. In order to fill out the void between these two a priori deductions, we should attend to the hints that we can gather from the ascending hierarchy of creation. We have shown, however, that this ascending curve rises by leaps and, in any case, is not a quantitative scale: each level of being has a wholly new form of interiority that is essentially different from the preceding levels and cannot be derived from them as if it were merely an enhanced version of the same. Accordingly, the intimacy of the purely spiritual person will be something altogether different from a mere continuation or new arrangement of features already present in the world of men. One thing only is beyond doubt: this spirituality, which is no longer bound to any matter, represents the highest level of freedom attainable within the created world.

It is a fact that the gradual approach of these ontological levels to the spirit's form of existence is synonymous with an interior "clearing" [*Lichtung*], irradiation, and illumination of being. The spiritual substance is fight [*Licht*] in itself; it has the capacity for reflection, in which it becomes transparent to itself as its own object. Furthermore, this increasing being-for-itself entails an increasing capacity for self-expression and communication. Certain accounts of this fact suggest that the levels between matter and spirit are also levels of being's intelligibility. In light of the foregoing, however, it is clear that we cannot conclude from this increasing intelligibility either that spiritual things are essentially more knowable or more rational than material ones or even that they are in fact better known. The first inference is ruled out by the fact that knowability is a property belonging in equal measure to all things insofar as they are. It is erroneous to suppose that matter differs from spirit by being intrinsically resistant to knowledge. In saying this, we are not necessarily committed to any a priori decisions about how the various knowing powers fit the knowability of the various classes of existent things or about the degrees of intimacy that constitute the object of our investigation, for neither question affects the fact that intelligibility is a property belonging in equal measure to all beings. But even more importantly, it by no means follows from the spirit's superior intelligibility that it is more perfectly known. Such a conception would directly contradict the spirit's freedom and interiority of the spirit as explained above. A philosophical account of pure created spirits has to be particularly wary of false inferences here. Assuming that the angel can have no passive receptivity and that, in consequence, it already contains the wealth of all that it can know—in the form of innate ideas and representations of some sort—one might be tempted to conclude that it also knows a priori the inner content of other spirits belonging to the same order, and especially of man, who, after all, belongs to an inferior order. If this were true, there would be no place in the world of spirits for any personal interiority—a surprising conclusion given the fact that we should expect to find the complete

form of this interiority precisely among them. The realm of pure spirits would be devoid of mystery, of any spontaneous mutual disclosure that would really be a personal event. Every conversation, every exchange between these freest of entities would be restricted to a communication of something already known and possessed; it would therefore be superfluous.

Thomas Aquinas was on to something when he said that purely spiritual substances are distinguished entirely on a qualitative basis (in terms of "species"). He thereby forcefully underscored the uniqueness and unrepeatability of each such substance, albeit partially at the expense of man, whose purely quantitative material individuality was for all intents and purposes not intrinsically different from that of subspiritual beings. Less felicitous was Thomas' identification, or at least comparison, of these specifically differentiated spiritual beings with subsistent ideas, which risked reducing them to the level of intelligible contents (*noemata*) devoid of mystery and stripped of any interior fullness and spontaneity. In contrast, the angelic world can be imagined only as the supreme realization of creaturely freedom, even in what concerns truth. When an angel speaks, its word—far more so even than man's—is a creative event. Something elemental occurs that shakes the inmost being, not only of man, but also of the angel's congeneric brethren. The angel's word represents a beginning: it does not already preexist in the a priori knowledge of other spirits. A man cannot read his fellow's mind; still less can an angel enter into another's lofty interior if the other does not open to it in freedom. For even the often telltale language of the natural body, which lets much of the spirit show through, drops away in the case of angels. When they do speak, their word is a free deed, not only with respect to the decision to manifest themselves outwardly, but also in the form in which they give shape to this communication. An angel's word must be like the work of an earthly artist, which rises above every convention of its expressive medium and bears on its brow the sign of creative uniqueness. Just as *this* symphony can be only by Haydn or Mahler, so too an angelic word can be spoken only by *this* angel. The truth does not thereby cease to be universally intelligible, for the utterance is always the unveiling of spiritual being, which as such remains comprehensible to all who are unveiled to themselves. On the other hand, it is released once and for all from the mediocre, impersonal tepidity in which it generally lives among men, in order to rise altogether to the sphere of freedom and personhood. Corresponding to the freedom to speak there is a freedom to hear that we must bear in mind: the attitude of self-surrender on the part of the speaker presupposes a corresponding attitude of surrender in the listener. Without an element of confident faith that relies upon the truth, it is inconceivable that even a pure spirit could hear and listen.

Only now that we have run through the successive levels of spiritual interiority can we cast a final, upward glance at the Creator and assume that he, too, is endowed with absolute freedom and interiority. God is pure being-for-himself that has no need of any other thing. His infinite light is perfectly its own; it is not naturally dispersed *ad extra*. Rather, if it is to be communicated, it is revealed only by a free act of condescension. The creative word "let there be. . .", which is the cause of everything that exists outside of God, can be spoken only in absolute freedom. Accordingly, God's revelation in creation, although occurring in created nature, is and remains a work of freedom. Every flower, every mountain, every man speaks of this freedom. Insofar as it is a creature, of course, every entity in the cosmos *necessarily* reveals the Creator, but in so doing it reveals the nonnecessity of creaturely existence and thus the Creator's *freedom*. To the extent that the creature, by its inmost essence, cannot do otherwise than speak of its Creator, its contingency is a reliable trace by which created reason can see with necessity that the Creator exists. But this necessary manifestness of the Creator in the reality of

his creatures leads the created mind only to the brink of the unfathomable mystery of the Creator's inmost essence. The natural knowledge of God from creation inexorably comes to a halt before the intimacy of God's personal life. And it requires a new revelation of grace in order to open man in faith and to communicate to him—in abiding mystery—what God is in his inner being.

2. The Mystery of Being

The evident conclusion of the foregoing is that the worthier and weightier existing things become, the more they are surrounded by a protective veil that withdraws them, like something sacred, from the grasping hands of the profane. Only a mind without feeling for nobility and its need for protection will complain of this hiddenness of the best. Such a mind may confuse hiddenness with a deficient rationality or brand with irrationality all those objects that are not accessible to the anonymous, public knowledge of the man on the street. But a royal palace is not invisible because it is on display only for a few. All truth is rational, but not every intelligence is competent to know every truth. Men share secrets [*Geheimnisse*] that, once betrayed to those who have no business knowing them, are desecrated in their inmost core and thwarted in their true purpose. In the same way, there is an essential mystery [*Geheimnis*] in every being and in every knowledge, and it requires delicate respect.

This mysteriousness of all being is a corollary of the interiority that we have just described. Because of this interiority, there are no naked facts. Naked facts would be exhaustively defined by their facticity; they would give no hint of any relation to a deeper meaning underlying them; they would have no "significance" but their superficial meaning; because of their pure, flat factuality, they would be comprehensible in a single glance as independent, detachable units. In reality, every being, every event, has significance, is laden with meaning, and is an expression and a sign pointing to something else. The nature of the relation between the obvious fact and the background into which it points and from which it emerges forbids any separation or identification of the two poles. The crucial insight that springs organically from our discovery of the intimacy of being, then, is that the signifier can be neither perfectly united with nor truly separated from the signified.

This insight gives us the means to resist any division of "value" and "being" into two different spheres. Such a division, we recognize, is not only untenable but is nothing less than a mortal blow to the mystery of being. On the one hand, the creature's existence is not necessary and thus remains external to the creature's essence. This does not mean, of course, that the distinction between essence and being is synonymous with the distinction between value and being: since existence is the existence *of* the essence, it must have the latter's features and therefore also share in its values. On the other hand, not all values are actually realized, and there are demands that seem to be eternally "suspended" above reality without ever becoming embodied in it. Yet this does not mean that values cannot exist in reality, much less that reality as such does not have the character of a value. Rather, the disjoining of being and value belongs with the same modern ideologies that we have already stigmatized for their disjunction between practical and intuitive intelligence: it is an expression of a certain despairing refusal to face the fundamental problem of being. The modern technological mentality believes that it has so thoroughly exhausted a whole domain of being, has so totally mastered it, that it no longer holds any mystery.

Now, it is true that a being that has been thoroughly known and scrutinized no longer holds any mystery for the knower, no longer stimulates further investigation, and is henceforth without "value". Thus, the more the conviction spreads that we really can know all there is to know about some sphere of existence, the farther the domain of values withdraws into the distance as the stuff of some higher, transcendent realm that cannot be mastered by straightforwardly rational means. Whereas the knowledge of "facts" is supposedly free of mystery, the sphere of values calls for a special form of knowledge: the "intuition of values". But the whole disjunction of the two spheres rests upon a downright primitive simplification. Meditation on the intimate dimension of being, which belongs to its essential structure at every level, yields the conclusion that the knowability of things is not only compatible with their mystery but is actually inseparable from it. Truth is the unveiling of being; but even when the unveiler unveils *itself*, it always remains more than its unveiling. Nothing is ever already so manifest that it cannot manifest itself again and again in new ways. An objective state of affairs may be completely perspicuous, yet a state of affairs is not a being but only one of its aspects, which forms a coherent whole only along with a hundred other aspects that have yet to be discovered. But the intimate nature of things is what constitutes their "value". It is by this intimacy that they elude sheer quantity, that they become unique, dense with mystery, and worthy of being loved. It is by this intimacy that they are *more* than naked facticity. On the other hand, their outward appearance is absolutely inseparable from this essential kernel, which cannot reveal itself at all except in such an appearance. In this sense, the appearance has an essential share in the value of the intimate sphere. The appearance is absolutely indispensable to the knower: it gives him access to the essence; indeed, it reveals the essence itself.

On the other hand, just as we cannot detach the outward appearance from the inward essence as if it were "pure facticity", we cannot treat the whole existing essence as a "fact" in contrast with a domain of values or moral obligation separate from real existence. The essence itself already has a distinctive mode of being that does not wholly coincide with existence (taken in the sense of observable facticity). "Essence" is always more than what is realized in fact. A man remains the same "in essence" from the cradle to the grave, even though, from the point of view of existence, he constantly alters "in fact". And yet even his essence participates in this change. The sphere of essence stretches without any noticeable break from reality to ideality; from the interior form of existence that changes in [*in*] space and time to the idea that is above [*über*] all real change and functions as its norm. Every attempt at tidily dividing these two spheres is doomed to failure by their indivisible interrelation. The intellectual model of metaphysical "composition" out of diverse parts and elements is inadequate to explain finite being. We can account for it, then, only by consistently invoking the phenomenon of polarity.

Polarity means that the poles, even as they are in tension, exist strictly through each other. This is probably nowhere more conspicuous than in the polarity between essence and existence in finite being. The two poles coinhere in an intimate unity that constitutes the irresolvable mystery of created being. Indeed, this unity is so intimate that it frustrates every attempt to define one pole as the seat of the mystery and to lay hold of the other as if it were devoid of it. It might seem obvious to define the interior sphere of things as their mysterious essence, which our minds can never entirely penetrate—because, say, our intellect is discursive and has no "intuition of essences"—whereas the sphere of factual existence, which is simple and indivisible, could seem to be entirely unproblematic. We all know what existence is. At bottom, existence is such a simple, elementary concept that it requires no explanation or analysis. For Husserl, philosophy

can simply bracket existence from the outset and devote itself entirely to the investigation of its rightful field, namely, essences. It may even turn out that the very positing of existence really intends the universe of essences. According to other thinkers, we can take existence for granted; it is obvious enough that philosophical inquiry can afford to ignore it altogether. Still others come to the same result by means of the opposite assumption. For them, existence is a hold-out of irrationality in dungs that mocks conceptual reason's every attempt to submit it to logical analysis.

Existentialist philosophy has rightly resisted this simplification of the facts. Existence is ultimately inseparable from the sphere of essences. To probe the intimate character of an individual substance, to pose the question of its uniqueness and personality, is to inquire into its essence and its existence at once. Although the thinker believed that he had left existence at the threshold of the question of essence, it unexpectedly resurfaces at the latter's inmost core, where thought finds itself face to face with the abyss of particular being. Even if we could grasp every aspect of a particular essence, its *reality* would still be an ungraspable, blinding majesty thrusting back every intrusive question with its flaming sword. We do not doubt, of course, that thought can be infinitely subtle; that it can erect the loftiest towers of speculation on essence and being, freedom and necessity; that it can even synthesize the members of these pairs. Yet even when it has done all these things, thought still has to reckon with the sheer fact that there is anything at all, that a thing emerges from nothingness and prefers being to nonbeing, and that it has the incomprehensible grace to be present and to offer itself to knowledge as an inexhaustible object. And this fact will always hurl it to the ground with the force of the greatest revelation. What lays the mind flat is, not a second, extrinsic mystery juxtaposed to the (familiar) mystery of the essence, but rather the burning core of the mystery of being itself, which at the same time includes the mystery of essence in its interiority. The degree to which the two poles condition and include each other has been shown by existential philosophy's (unsuccessful) attempt to plumb die sphere of existence independently of essence. In bringing the several categories of existence into relief, this philosophy could offer nothing but a descriptive account of its essence. The attempt to express even in the barest terms *that* something is cannot be made without stating *what* it is.

A curious phenomenon results from what we have said: as soon as we begin thinking we have gotten our hands on either essence or existence, it points immediately to the other pole as the seat of the mystery. When we consider the essential sphere easy to fathom, it itself reminds us that we have not grasped it unless we have also taken into account and solved the riddle of existence. Yet when we take existence for granted, it points to the interiority of being, which eternally exceeds everything we have grasped so far. Each pole can in some respect be grasped, but in being grasped it always points immediately beyond itself to the other pole as what has not yet been grasped. This mutual presupposition of essence and existence brings the mystery of being into increasingly clear relief. Being, which is one, unveils itself ever anew both as essence and as existence, in order to show in this revelation, likewise ever anew, that it remains veiled and is always more than any of its revelations. Any thought that does not shudder at this abiding mystery of being, at this essentially inexhaustible ocean of being, has not yet understood either itself or its object. Being as a whole is intrinsically always more than what we have grasped of it. Being has this property because it possesses the even more mysterious property of always being more than itself Although being is not irrational, it is nonetheless always more than what a mind can comprehend just by looking at it. As created being, it is not infinite; yet even as finite being it

can never be so exhaustively captured that there is nothing further to grasp. The infinite Creator has equipped it with the grace of participation in the inexhaustibility of its origin. It bears in itself a wealth that cannot be consumed like a finite sum of money. You are never finished with any being, be it the tiniest gnat or the most inconspicuous stone. It has a secret [*geheime*] opening, through which never-fading replenishments of sense and significance ceaselessly flow to it from eternity.

Thus, the freedom of truth also encompasses the sphere of existence. It is not just the essential sphere of things, supposedly identical to their interiority, that is protected by mystery from the intrusiveness of knowledge, whereas their existence is, as it were, defenselessly surrendered to it. Existence, too, pertains to a thing's nobility and elusiveness; and even if it had no other mystery to boast of, it could still claim its existence as a mystery that resists all analysis. Existence is being's most irrefutable revelation, yet, because existing is such a marvel, it is at the very same time being's most impenetrable veil. No knower ever exhausts the marvel that things simply exist; and even if a lover were to imagine that he truly knew his beloved's essence, he would still daily renew his thanks to the beloved for the sheer wonder of his existence.

B. The Freedom of the Subject

Ascending the scale of beings from the point of view of the object, we have found that truth, as self-unveiling, has increasingly taken on the form of freedom. At the top of the hierarchy, a being's self-revelation is left to the discretion and responsibility of the being itself. The relationship between subject and object seems almost to have inverted into the opposite of our conventional conception of it. The object is no longer the inert material of knowledge, of which the subject alone is the active, creative agent. It is all but transformed into the active partner, whereas the subject, which is primarily receptive, almost seems forced into a helpless passivity. We vigorously underscored at the beginning how subjectivity implies a space that at any given moment is already open to the outside and that objects have always already forcibly occupied for their purposes. Any spontaneous opening, or even closing, of this space would already come too late with respect to its primary structural openness. Now, knowledge not only begins in this position, which makes of the subject a sort of hospitable dwelling wherein tilings can unfold their potentialities, it also never leaves it behind. If, then, we are going to speak of the subject's freedom in knowledge, we must use the term in a relative sense that leaves in place this primary receptivity. And yet there is no context where even the mind's spontaneous intellectual activity can ever be completely separated from this receptivity. Concepts without intuitions are empty; the content of cognition always begins with the senses, even when it transcends them. In the end, the subject is not free to think as it pleases. It does not have the freedom of the object, which can reveal itself or veil itself in silence. In apprehending a thing, the subject has to conform to the law of what has been revealed. The fundamental gift bestowed upon the subject in knowledge is the privilege of apprehending things as they are. It can enlarge and enrich its own limited perfection through the perfection of the other beings that exist along with it and so become an image of the universe. For the sake of this good, the knower must in the first instance serve things.

And yet knowledge does also mean spontaneity, and spontaneity is an expression of the subject's interiority. If there were no freedom of any kind in the spirit's act of knowledge, this knowledge would not be spiritual activity. Thus, there arises on the side of the subject a question corresponding to the question posed by the disclosure of the object.

In the first place, the subject, considered as a person, has the freedom to advert cognitively to those things it intends to register. It can observe, sort out, and select as an object of investigation what suits its own urge to know. It can section off from the infinite range of the knowable that part which seems right, which can be integrated within the compass of what it would call its "world view". And since the subject has this freedom to turn to objects, it has at the same time the freedom to turn its mind from the things that do not suit it and that it perceives as interfering with, or superfluous to, the construction of its intellectual world. Although many things force their way uninvited into the field of sense awareness, the subject still has the capacity to screen and to sift this multiplicity, to leave the greatest part of it in a sort of forecourt and to attend inwardly only to what corresponds precisely to its interest. The closure to most of what presses in on us, the spirit's strict censure of the cognitive material supplied by the senses, suggests, it is true, the imperfection of our cognitive faculty, in the sense that it can hold within the narrow confines of its awareness only a minuscule selection of what is presented to it. At the same time, this closure is also proof of the freedom to order and construct with which the spirit selects from the mass of available materials only those it deems suitable for its intellectual edifice.

This freedom of choice does not consist solely in preferring some elements while rejecting others, for it includes an even more remarkable element, viz., a capacity freely to ignore what cannot be worked into the edifice it constructs. The spirit can overlook completely what the senses are compelled to look at. Indeed, there is not a single apperception that does not already include such a sifting and selection. Part of the spirit's nobility is that it need not occupy itself with everything indiscriminately. It can, while serving a higher mission for the sake of truth, decline to concern itself with a host of inessential facts. The characteristic of the true knower is that he resolves once and for all not to want to know many things and, thus, not to know them at all. He disposes of a constructive unmindfulness, which by rejecting some things, helps bring the essential cognitive elements to the fore and, in this way, fashions the world of truth into a vivid relief. It is not until we see this negative capacity to overlook and to withhold attention from things that the corresponding positive capacity to welcome them freely becomes fully visible.

Voluntary closure to an untimely truth is matched by a voluntary unlocking to every sought-after or welcome truth. This openness, this willingness to turn to meet the object, is a fundamental condition without which knowledge cannot occur, let alone achieve its full form. Such openness, therefore, is from first to last intellectual; it both conditions and subserves knowledge. It does not follow, however, that such openness cannot simultaneously be a matter of freedom that pertains to the will and, therefore, reaches into the domain of ethics. Thus, what someone selects to know and use as material for shaping his world view is itself already conditioned in part by his free, ethical attitude toward the world and the ultimate questions of existence. His *Weltanschauung* is a matter of choice, insofar as the very sifting of the objects that present themselves to his mind does not occur without his freedom. It is simply not the case that the will lays hold of the results of knowledge, assesses their value, and selects among them only after they have been secured. Rather, at every point the will is already involved in the act of knowledge itself, which as such is from start to finish an act of sifting and accentuation. There is a limitless number of ways in which a single object can be considered. Which of these possibilities I choose depends upon which of them my predilection urges me toward.

This leads us to an even more far-reaching insight: There is freedom in intellectual knowledge as a whole. Not only does the will condition the selection of individual cognitive acts, but the

subject's basic openness is itself unthinkable without a volitional element. It goes without saying that this openness cannot yet be regarded as an act of free personal choice; it is rather nature's first sketch in the will (*voluntas ut natura*)[1] of what personal freedom (*voluntas elicita*)[2] will be. If a subject did not will anything, it would also never know anything. Part of the subject's volition aims at knowledge and is spent once knowledge is attained. Another part, however, runs alongside and beyond knowledge and uses it as a means for the pursuit of its own ends. Only when the will has already been set in motion does knowledge follow after to perform its own work.

Now, at this point we see a convergence between the question about the meaning of the subject and the question about the meaning of the object. In the object, the truth consisted in an increasing self-revelation, in which the revealer was always more, and always remained richer, than its revelation. But this movement is none other than the interior illumination of being, in which the object becomes a subject. Therefore, looking at things from the point of view of the subject, we can make a complementary observation: Behind the subject's factual state of openness, there is a movement of self-opening; hence, behind the intellectual luminosity characterizing the subject as intelligence, there is an abiding will to the act of self-disclosure and to the state of being disclosed.

Now, this view does not imply any form of irrationalism, for which the field of reason would be finite and determined but the field of will infinite and determining. Volitional disclosure is not irrational as such. Rather, it is the supreme, crowning meaning of all *ratio* itself. It is the ultimate justification of all being, in its essence and in its existence. It is the presupposition to which every *position* finally traces back and without which all being and doing would remain unintelligible and senseless. A being has meaning only if it has being-for-itself, but this being-for-itself is meaningful only if it possesses the movement of communication. What is more, being-for-oneself and communication are one and the same thing; together they constitute the one, indivisible illumination of being. But this implies that the meaning of being consists in love and that, in consequence, knowledge can be explained only by and for love. The existent object's will to disclose itself and the knowing subject's will to open itself in receptive listening are but two forms of a single self-gift that manifests itself in these two modes.

Having seen this, we realize that love is inseparable from truth. It is no more possible to conceive of a truth without love than it is to have a cognition without will. Love is not something lying on the farther side of truth. Rather, it is the element in truth that guarantees it an ever-new mystery beyond every unveiling. It is that never-failing "something more" than what we already know, without which there would be neither knowing nor anything to be known. It is what keeps a being from ever becoming a sheer fact; it is what forbids knowledge to rest in itself but makes it the servant of something higher. The concept of love is an integral part of the concept of truth, just as the concept of will is an integral part of the concept of knowledge.

It is possible, of course, even for a non-lover to perceive certain states of affairs accurately. But his intelligence resembles the vision of the nearsighted man: acute, even excessively so, in seeing details, it is incapable of surveying the broad prospects of truth. It is no accident that the devil is said to be smart and stupid at the same time. Because the full truth can be attained only in love, only the lover can have the real eye for it. He alone is ready to disclose himself truly and thus to bring to completion the movement in which the truth of being comes into existence. Moreover, he

alone is able to respond selflessly when another confides in and opens up to him, perhaps seeks his help, questions him, or calls to him. In this way, the lover brings to completion the movement in which the truth, this time of knowledge, comes into existence. We therefore have good reason for saying that truth originates from love, that love is more original and more comprehensive than truth. Love is the ground that accounts for truth and enables it to be. And yet, we cannot say that love was on the scene before truth and that love can be conceived without truth. For the self-disclosure of being and knowing, whose primordial name is love, also directly and immediately bears the name of truth.

Nevertheless, we are dealing for the moment only with the freedom of the subject insofar as it is a capacity to advert personally to the object, to oblige it, so to speak, by a particular attention. This attentiveness is essential to the full success of the truth relation, even though it is quite definitely left to the free decision of the knower. What is more, this attention can take on a double form that matches the twofold character of truth described earlier in this book.

First of all, conscious and free ad-version to the object of knowledge has the character of a true, radical disponibility. The subject lays aside, as it were, its entire subjectivity, so that henceforth it may be nothing but pure openness to understand the object. This renunciation of the subject's personal viewpoint for the sake of better apprehending the reality of the other entails the dismantling of the whole business called prejudice, which stands in the way of a pure apprehension of the object. It requires no small exertion of the subject's spontaneity to bring it to the point of deciding once and for all to be nothing but receptivity. The subject gives up its own word in order to hear only the word of the thing in all its objectivity. It is determined not to interrupt things as they try to express themselves. It has made up its mind to do justice to them. This resolution to be just is already an act of love, because it prefers another's good and another's truth to one's own. This attitude of real willingness to listen can never be left behind in the relation of truth. Even when it is reconfigured within another attitude, it is still the immovable basis upon which everything else is built. It must constantly be verified, because it is the index of the rightness and soundness of love.

On the other hand, insofar as this attitude of justice is itself a manifestation of a primordial love, it immediately merges with another attitude in which this original love is even more conspicuous. Without the addition of a second ability, the capacity freely to bestow attention upon the object threatens to become a cold objectivity, a sort of intimidating silence in which the object's voice would resound like a defenseless and forlorn thing. Things would stand before this knowledge like an accused man before the court, about which he knows only one thing for certain—that it is impartial. This kind of justice would not be a real effort to oblige the object or a real movement of knowledge to meet it on its own terms.

Now, we showed earlier that things are meant to attain their completion within the sphere of subjectivity. This space is reserved for them and placed at their disposal so that they can unfold latent potentialities that they cannot display elsewhere. In our earlier account, we sketched this opening of the subject to things on the level of nature and its unchosen movement. Here, however, it rises into the sphere of freedom. Although things have to express themselves in the subject, they should, so to say, feel at home in it. Things could experience a sort of shyness about unveiling themselves, and it would be the subject's job to overcome the object's timidity through its inviting kindness. A confessor often gets penitents who do not have the courage to say what is

on their mind and who say to the priest, “ask me questions.” Similarly, in the act of knowledge it can also be the subject’s task to assist the object in attaining its truth. For a thing often expects the knower to know it in a way in which it does not know itself It approaches the knower with a lofty idea of what knowledge can do. It wants to be examined with an intellectual eye that will unveil to it its own inmost being and before which it can stand naked without injury, just as a patient bares himself before his doctor. This unveiling is not an end in itself. Rather, by looking at the naked body, the physician can recognize something that the sick man may feel but which he is not able to put his finger on. The doctor has the trained eye that notices things that really exist but that no one apart from him can bring from concealment to the fight of day. A model likewise disrobes before the artist in the expectation that the latter’s eye will look on him as no one but the artist could behold him—as even the model himself, if he chanced to catch a glimpse of himself in the mirror, could not see himself.

This special gaze, from which the object expects so much, leads into the inner sanctum of knowledge. In order to describe it correctly, we have to affirm two things at once, neither of which must give up its place to the other: This special gaze, which is possible only in the loving attention of the subject, is equally objective and idealizing. That these two qualities can be compatible is the grand hope of the object. It hopes to attain in the space of another the ideality that it can never realize in itself. It knows or guesses what it could be, what splendid possibilities are present in it. But in order to develop these possibilities, it needs someone who believes in them—no, who sees them already existing in a hidden state, where, however, they are visible only to one who firmly holds that they can be realized, to one, in other words, who believes and loves. Many wait only for someone to love them in order to become who they always could have been from the beginning. It may also be that the lover, with his mysterious, creative gaze, is the first to discover in the beloved possibilities completely unknown to their possessor, to whom they would have appeared incredible. The beloved is like an espalier that cannot bear fruit until it is able to climb up on the sticks and wires that support it.

This is, properly speaking, the mystery of freedom in knowledge. Like all true mysteries, it is entirely a mystery of love. The ideal picture that the knower cherishes when he is also a lover is as much subjective as it is objective. Its subjectivity does not consist in the fact that, say, it does not conform to the truth; it is subjective because its truth attains to real, objective truth only through a subject, just as a fruit can come to maturity only in a certain climate. Unless the knower presented the ideal, the object known would never have dreamed of aspiring to it, or else it would have grown faint because the attempt would have seemed too fantastic. It takes the faith and confidence of the knower animated by love to give the thing known faith and confidence in the truth of the ideal held before it. At love’s bidding, the object ventures to be what it could have been but would never have dared to be by itself alone.

On the other hand, the lover will always consider the image that he presents to be something objective. He knows that the possibility he sees is truly embodied in the beloved; the lover does not invent it but simply observes it. It would lose any value in his eyes if it were merely a product of his subjective imagination. The image was only concealed in the beloved, and the eyes of love had to come and raise it from the depths. Thus, the lover will always regard the realization of the ideal as a deed of the beloved. When the realization is successful, he will be pleased to have known all along “that the beloved could do it”, that he was not wrong about the beloved. The beloved, on the other hand, will know that the realization of his best potentialities is, not his

merit, but the creative work of love, which impelled him to realize them, held before him the mirror and the ideal image, and bestowed the strength to attain the goal. In this creative happening, every distinction between subjective and objective becomes meaningless. The image that love saw and held up is doubtless an image of the object. Not, however, of the object as it is, but of the object as it could be. It is the ideal, not the real, reality of the object. This ideal reality exists nowhere else than in the love of a subject. It is only in this space that the ideal can unfold. There is no free-floating "ideal reality" in some impersonal, abstract "domain of pure formal values". The actual locus of these ideal images is the personal love of another being.

The setting up of such an image and the gradual or speedy realization of it have to be seen as a truly creative act, in which the lover cooperates with the beloved and both try to fashion reality according to the envisaged ideality. If the result is a real, or even just approximate, correspondence, the object thereby attains its own truth, what was hidden is unveiled, and its possibilities are realized—all in accord with its primordial idea. But the idea was nonetheless sighted and creatively stamped by the lover. It is his ideal that is really formed in the beloved, so much so that from now on the beloved owes what he is to the lover, who has given him the true image of himself.

The conformation of the real image to the ideal archetype does not, strictly speaking, happen gradually. It does not occur in such a way that one can periodically ascertain how far the process has advanced, perhaps taking as one's measure the achievements and efforts of the object in its endeavor to emulate the ideal set before it. Such a conception of the creative action of loving knowledge would still be bound entirely to the first possibility of free cognition that we have described above. The knower would then content himself with holding up an image to the thing known, in a sort of disinterested "justice", and he would leave the conformation entirely to the other. The productive aspect of his knowledge would be confined to, and exhausted in, the cognitive image and would resign the actual realization to the known object. But this would not be loving knowledge in the full sense of the word. Rather, the image placed before the object in love is inwardly endowed with a power of reality and making real. The lover considers the ideal image of the beloved to be his true reality and directs his action according to it. He keeps his eyes on the "true" image of the beloved; he addresses him in view of this image; he treats him as if he were this image. Thus, he overlooks the other, "real", imperfect image. It is not as if he deluded himself about this imperfect reality because of the enthusiastic blindness produced by being in love; it is not as if he thought that the coincidence of the ideal and the real had already been realized in the beloved. He does see the gap, but at the same time he overlooks it. He is not interested in the beloved's faults. And by overlooking them like this, he overcomes them.

The lover simply lets the real, imperfect image of the beloved sink into nonbeing. In the lover's eyes, this image has no validity, no weight, no right to exist. It is, so to say, crossed out, banished from the cosmos of existing things. It is not honored with knowledge. It is not accorded the same measure of significance as if it were meant to unveil itself, as if it possessed, in other words, a truth of its own that was pronounced enough to take seriously. The fact that it is ignored, that it is not even offered the chance to unveil itself, is a powerfully effective contribution to the work of annihilating it. Any being that is deprived of the right to unveiling, that is, to truth, perishes in the long run from want of air and light. Love treats what should not be as it deserves, as something that has absolutely no lawful title to being and whose punishment is simply to have its existence overlooked. Thus, the obverse of the creative proposal of the ideal image is a sort of creative

effacement of the real image. The beloved has to rely on this double creative event of loving knowledge. In order to attain to the ideal that is treated as the reality, the beloved has nothing to do but act *as if* it were already the real thing; in order to get rid of the reality that is to be obliterated, he has nothing to do but to act *as if* it already no longer existed. The beloved ought to be fully aware of the creative event happening in the lover's knowledge. He ought to know that the lover has recognized the deficient reality, that in this relation he has not glossed things over or been naively infatuated. He should know that the movement of love proceeds from this unbiased, objective, and "just" knowledge of the real but that it leaves this starting point behind, turns its back on it, in order knowingly to hold up the other reality of the ideal as true and valid. He ought to realize: Prom now on, I am someone else for this person who knows me in love. In the strength of this creative affirmation, the beloved himself will find the strength to cooperate in accomplishing the transition in his own name as well.

Having said this, we have made the momentous discovery that there is not only knowledge that unveils but also knowledge that veils, that covers. Nothing is more perverse than the opinion that the way to tackle what should not exist is to expose its apparent truth. No errant person is cured of his ways by having his attention drawn to his errors. Only when he looks at the ideal will he be capable, if at all, of feeling repentance for the reality. And only when he knows that the ideal, which seems unattainable to him, is anticipated by another knower as the true reality will he find the courage to strive to emulate it. He will observe with amazement that the one thing that he never would have dared believe is possible: the annihilation of the reality that should not be through creative knowledge. He will accustom himself, when he falls back into his old errors, to realize that at bottom he is living in an already obsolete, no longer real reality. This veiling knowledge is the only way to help the beloved. The refusal to realize this is one of the unpardonable sins of psychoanalysis and of most of the practical schools of psychology. No one comes to any truth through analysis alone, however "realistic" what has been uncovered may appear to be. By breaking down a living thing into its parts you destroy its life. By uncovering what the gods graciously "cover with night and dread", you do not create suitable conditions for life. Only when the roots of the plant are hidden in the soil can its corolla unfold healthily. Essential to the truth of the living thing, then, is that a part of itself must remain veiled. And it belongs to the truth of free, intellectual substances that a part of themselves must be consigned to oblivion. Not every truth—as we said earlier—has a claim to be perpetuated forever. An ordered cosmos of truth comes about only by selection and preference of some elements: a great deal that is hidden must be fetched out, while a great deal that is unveiled must be returned to the state of oblivion.

Now, it is clear that this sort of creative handling of the truth places man before a very grave responsibility. He is not only to know what is but also what should be and, through knowledge, to secure validity and reality for it. He is to hold up to the objects that trustingly open themselves to him a model to guide them. Will he be qualified also really to perform this creative deed? Will he not run the risk of proposing to objects false ideals, purely subjective imaginations, and thus cause them to lose their way and be led astray? Does not the subject, in its generation of the truth, need in turn a pattern by which it fashions the ideal of knowledge?

God alone primarily possesses knowledge that is not an image but the archetype of reality, whose truth is not measured by things but measures them. God's knowledge is generative of truth; it is pure spontaneity without admixture of any receptivity in relation to the things he knows. The

truth that his knowledge posits in being is the measure of the truth of things. Human knowledge can never be archetypal knowledge in the absolute sense. Yet the law of the analogy of being and of secondary causality implies that God allots to the creature something of his creative power even in the domain of truth. If man's cognitive function were purely measured by things, he would be, at least in this respect, no longer a cause, but a pure effect. His cooperation would be limited to the potency for the sheer reproduction of already existing truth. He would, of course, be enriched by insight into the order existing around him, but he would be incapable of intervening creatively in the truth of things themselves at the level of knowledge. He would have the power of a secondary cause only as a subject acting in the practical order, but not also, like God, as a subject acting in the order of knowledge—with the possible exception of certain limited sorts of cognition, such as artistic knowledge, in which he would be able to fashion a piece of reality according to a freely projected idea. But this does not seem to satisfy the law of the analogy of being. The active potency that God has bestowed upon his creatures cannot have only an incidental effect in the domain of truth; it must have a more central significance than is usually accorded it. There must be an analogy of creative knowledge, and this analogy also implies the solution to the question raised above concerning the model that should guide the generation of the ideal.

God's knowledge of things is absolutely archetypal and exemplary. He has in himself the ideas of things. This image is the correct one, not because God sees things more objectively than we do, but because the image he projects is as such the one true image that is both subjective and objective at once. *Because* God sees things thus, they should be as he sees them. It is to this idea of things held in God's safekeeping that all of man's creative knowledge has to look. Only in God can one man see another as he is supposed to be. Only in the light of God can he place before the other the ideal image. Only in reference to God can he encourage the other to correspond to this image. If he did all of these things without God, his fancied assistance would be nothing but arrogance and vanity; he would presume to be better and smarter than his neighbor; he would require his neighbor to be bound to an ideal and would force him into total servitude to this image. But one finite man has neither the strength nor the authority to lay an absolute claim on another. Without God, this supreme achievement of human knowledge would rather be a Promethean act that he ought never presume to take upon himself. Only when you can point man to God, when you can show credibly that the image you behold in loving knowledge is the one that God holds in his safekeeping—only then may you take it upon yourself to share in the fashioning of the world. In order to do so, you have to have learned, better, to have received from God the grace to love and to contemplate men in God himself, the original source in whom the image of knowledge and the image of love coincide.

C. The Administration of Truth

Both the object and the subject possess truth not only in themselves, as nature, but for themselves, as freedom. Insofar as they are nature, they find themselves at any given moment already set in motion toward the truth. The object finds itself in the movement of self disclosure, the subject in the movement of disclosedness to things. But insofar as they possess freedom, both have a share in controlling the actualization of these movements; they have discretionary power to take part in giving truth its *gestalt*. Truth is thus placed in their hands. God does not wish to be in sole charge of the truth but appoints human beings to be his joint administrators [*Mitverwalter*].

At the intersection of nature and freedom we find testimony, Man's high calling and office is to bear witness to the truth. It is not left to his good pleasure to decide whether or not to give a true account of his knowledge. Inasmuch as man is naturally structured to be able to open himself and to be open to others, he can enjoy no arbitrary control over the truth. When he opens himself in truth and is open in truth to others, he is not complying with some heteronomous requirement but with the law of his own being. Because he is spirit, he must bear witness to the truth. He must hearken to this imperative, which is inscribed in his inmost essence. If he wants to keep his mind from ruin, he has to take upon himself this burden, which alone is his happy fortune. And to take over this burdensome responsibility means to devote himself to a task that in any case he cannot evade. For man's truth can be administered only in freedom. The intimacy of both the subject's and the object's space entails that their truth has to be made known in freedom—if it is to be known *ad extra* at all. No one can simply trust that the truth will come to light even without him or assume that the truth will take care of revealing itself. On the human level, truth is permanently dependent on the free, mutual revelation of human beings who bear witness to each other concerning the truth. Because truth does not he open before us naturally, it has to be disclosed spiritually. And because this truth, as the truth of a subject, is not subject to verification, the revealing subject must answer for the truth of his testimony with his full responsibility.

Now, inasmuch as the administration of truth is left to the discretion of man's freedom, a number of questions arise concerning the regulation and the proper measure of this administration. Whoever opens himself up and communicates his truth has to discover what norm determines his self-disclosure. When should he reveal himself? To whom, to what extent, and in what manner should he do it? On the other hand, anyone who opens himself to another's truth has to face the same question: By what norm should he regulate his intake of truth? After all, it is manifestly impossible for him to be at the disposal of any and every truth that happens to come his way.

Doubtless, the virtue of prudence regulates the selection of truth on both sides. This virtue makes the prudent man see, in every situation, the rightness or unrightness of an action. It does so because it is the knowledge of how to apply to concrete circumstances the general guidelines that would remain abstract and impossible to apply without this virtue. For instance, we can say that as a general rule one ought to be open with those who have a right to such openness, who are trustworthy, or who have a legitimate use for the truth and will not misuse it. But it is prudence that must tell us who, in the given situation, these persons are. There are few domains of human experience in which so much latitude is allowed prudence, so much confidence placed in it, and so much responsibility loaded upon it. Fundamentally, its dowry consists of two laws: that the truth must be told, and that it must be told in freedom, that is, selectively. Its task is to bridge the wide gap between these general principles and their particular application.

But prudence would inevitably fail in this task unless it were under the guidance of a higher rule. The prerogative of the virtue of prudence is the spontaneous, productive application of abstract principles to the concrete. But because this act is a genuine creative achievement, even prudence cannot justify it by its own authority alone. It must be able to state in each instance *why* it was prudent to make this or that decision. It must, in other words, look to an ultimate norm to guide its decisions. But, in the final analysis, this norm can only be either egoism or love. All other norms are provisional and take their bearings from this ultimate option. Thus, a man may be very prudent in his self-disclosure, yet the ground and norm of his prudence may be to tell the truth

only insofar as he gains some advantage from it. Or else, a man may have made it his rule to grant admission only to truth that he wants to hear, that fits his preconceived ideas and does not disturb his self-complacent serenity. And he may also carry out this selection with great prudence. Both deal freely with the truth; both have a law of selection, a law dictated by prudence. But this law is egoism, which contradicts the law of love. We have seen, however, that love is inseparable from truth. Indeed, love is at the origin of the movement of truth, both in the object and in the subject. Love is the raison d'être [*Sinn*] both of the act and of the state of being's disclosure. There can be no doubt, then, that love contains the measure of every concrete application of the truth. Egoism, by contrast, cannot have knowledge of the truth in the full sense of the word. It can, to be sure, make use of individual truths; it can apprehend and transmit them as material propositions, but it cannot possess them as its own truth. For the movement that it performs egotistically is directly mimical to the movement of truth, which is guided by love. Whoever communicates truth only for the sake of his own interest may indeed give the appearance of opening himself up and surrendering himself, but in the end he does not. Rather, he exploits the movement of self-surrender as a mere means to become even better enclosed within himself. His action is self-contradictory, and so he is not in the truth at all. His self-disclosure is a mere show, the simulation of a movement of love, and is thus more a matter of lying deception than of truth.

If, therefore, genuine egoism is incapable of any truth, genuine love, by contrast, is incapable of any untruth. For genuine love is at the source of truth, and when this source begins to flow as love, it cannot help generate truth. Love is the selfless communication of what is mine and the selfless welcoming of the other in myself. It is thus the predetermined measure of all truth. Self-communication is a genuine revelation of my unique being when its ultimate raison d'être is to give myself away [*Hingabe*] in love for its own sake. Likewise, genuine understanding comes from the act of receiving others' revelation when this reception is sustained in its turn by the loving self-giving of the object's self-offer. To the extent that love is the very movement that generates truth in the first place, it alone holds the ultimate key to the actual use of truth. Love is the true measure of all communication and of all reception.

Outside of love there can be an imitation of truth, in the sense that a man can handily manipulate propositions that, looked at formally, contain truth and may even be irrefutable. Yet there cannot be the truth that alone makes all single propositions really true: the truth of the self-disclosure of being. The mouth of falsehood can be dripping with individual truths; it can build up astoundingly, flawlessly coherent systems. But, detached from the fundamental movement of love, even these formally correct propositions serve falsehood, and their "truth" only helps to multiply it. Conversely, love may err on single points. But this error is harmless and innocuous as long as it remains embedded in the encompassing movement of love, which as such is never mistaken. Inside of love, a formal error can do no harm, whereas every truth that is used outside of love can only be destructive. This does not mean that a person cannot fruitfully communicate the truth without having love. In this case, he is acting as a mere conduit; he is not the source of the truth that he mediates. Thus, the truth of a Plato or an Augustine can also be transmitted by those who do not draw inward life from it; but it shines through them analogously to the way in which the sacramental graces of Christ are efficacious irrespective of the worthiness of the priest who dispenses them. Nevertheless, even then the truth will not remain entirely unscathed; the medium absorbs a portion of the rays that ought to have shone through it, whereas a suitable medium would amplify the luminosity of what it mediates.

Whoever seeks the law governing the administration of truth need only keep to the rule of love, and he will never go wrong. Every truth communicated and welcomed in love is correctly administered, even though ever so many reasons may seem to tell against it. However unpleasant a truth may be to hear and to say, if it is communicated and welcomed in love, then this communication is the best thing that could have happened. Having said this, we need to see that by its very nature true love always fulfills the justice upon which it rests. If it overtakes and surpasses justice, love does so only in the context of fulfilling it. A love that claimed a right to disregard justice would by that very fact be unmasked as the illusion of an emotional dreamer. For this reason, love can seem hard and ruthless in the administration of truth; it can insist on pitiless unveiling, because it can build only on the foundation of truth. Love knows *when* this unveiling of truth is necessary for the fruitful development of its work. For this unveiling is not always necessary. Many things can remain forever buried, without the beloved's ever knowing that the lover knew about them. On the other hand, many things must be revealed to safeguard the clarity and transparency of a loving relationship. But whatever is revealed (in order to be forgiven and forgotten) may be revealed only for love's sake. Merely knowing about something is never a sufficient reason also for unveiling it. Such an unveiling would serve no other purpose than to proclaim one's own superiority. The intention behind the revelation is to prove that one knows more than the other, perhaps even to wound him under the mask of innocent remarks. Social conversations that seemingly proceed in perfect harmony are often nothing but a string of refined cruelties whose art consists in hitting the partner's most sensitive spots from the cover of one's own unassailable fortress. Often we present roses while we really mean the hidden thorns.

We are not speaking here of falsehood as the perversion of truth but of the abuse of the truth itself through a lack of love. In the end, however, both offenses against truth converge. For even the misuse of truth offends against truth and is thus in league with falsehood. Every unveiling that does not serve love is comparable to an exhibitionism that offends against the intimate laws of love. It is not permissible to reveal everything on every occasion. In the silence of love, which veils both itself and the truth, there is more truth than in any loveless surrender. This point makes it clear how the truth serves love, while love embraces and transcends truth. Truth is the unveiling of being; the laws of love are its limit and measure. Love, on the other hand, has no measure and no limit other than itself

Love not only sets a limit to its own revelations but also respects the mystery of the other person. It is not in love's nature to wheedle truth out of another's intimate space or to extort a confession from him. Of course, there are cases in which a just love requires such a confession, for example, when the higher good of the commonwealth is at stake, but perhaps also in order to heal the person who confesses. When breaching the inner sphere of the other person in this way, the lover has to proceed even more gingerly than a surgeon who cuts open an entrance into another's body with his scalpel: only an indubitably greater good can justify the intervention. But, above all he will refuse the keys to another's mystery when their possessor has offered them, but not for his spiritual profit. He will not be an accomplice to another's exhibitionistic abuse of truth; he will not lend his ears for this purpose. He will be extremely cautious, even mistrustful, about methods of unlocking another's psychic life without mystery, such as hypnosis, and he will always bear in mind how close to prostitution this betrayal of freedom and the inner sphere really is. Significantly, the power of hypnosis cannot be exercised on another man's soul without his consent. For it is intrinsically impossible to enter the intimate space of the person when it has not been opened up from within. True, hypnosis may encroach on the sphere of the other person's

inviolable rights. Nonetheless, the subject implicitly accepted this encroachment as a possible outcome when he first gave his permission to be hypnotized.

The justification of this consignment of authority therefore requires a full trustworthiness in love, and its acceptance requires a supreme measure of responsibility in love. The true model of these natural potentialities is the supernatural phenomenon of cardiognosis, in which God, at his discretion, vouchsafes to one man a glimpse into the intimate sphere of other men's souls. Such revelations never happen otherwise than in love and for love. They never violate the laws of discretion and of spiritual shame. The beholder is shown only what he must know in his office of Christian love and for its fruitful administration. When God himself makes free use of the space of freedom of one of his creatures, he shows how these creatures themselves ought to make use of it: solely according to the law of love and with exclusive regard for love. For even freedom is not superior to love; after all, its fulfillment consists in its placing itself voluntarily at the disposal of love and in losing itself in love.

If love (which is always just) possesses the measure of the revelation of truth, then it necessarily also possesses the measure of truth's nonrevelation. Love may be forced to declare the truth only partially and with reservations. In such cases, the rule for administering the truth is that love itself may not be communicated [*mitgeteilt*] partially [*geteilt*] or with reservations. Everything necessary to safeguard love's integrity [*Ganzheit*] is permissible. Of course, love cannot play fast and loose with the truth. Indeed, when it obeys the full law of truth, it merely obeys itself and the law of its own life. But, in the end, it must have freedom of movement even in this law and must not enslave itself to its own law of freedom. Ultimately, nothing is freer than the love that groundlessly [*grundlos*] reveals and gives itself away. It would be preposterous if this supremely free action of love were suddenly to clap love itself in the irons of a formalistic law. Love must know that its law is to be in the movement of giving away, where it is freer than anything that may impose a moral obligation. Hence, even the law of truth is placed in love's hands, so that love may administer it in a manner befitting love's own essence. In every case love will measure out the proper dosage of truth in such a way that love itself does not need to be measured out in proper doses.

Where the good of love and its integral wholeness requires it, love will reproduce the truth in a fragmentary and veiled fashion. For truth can bear a division, whereas love cannot. Truth, as we know it in the world, always consists of single revelations, propositions, and judgments that unveil a definite perspective. But each one of these perspectives remains finite and must be completed by others. No worldly truth is absolute, even when it is genuine, actual truth. But it is truth only if it coheres with the entirety of truth, if it is really an expression (albeit a limited, measured one) of an unconditioned, unmeasured revelation and total self-giving. Thus, in man's administration, every finite allotment of truth must be the expression of a measureless readiness to give oneself away. It is unacceptable for a man to behave one way in this situation and another way in that, to relate the truth now in this way, now in that, simply because it is convenient for him to fit into each partial situation as it arises. It is unacceptable for him to present what people want to hear, what blends in, and what does not stand out; to bedeck his lack of character with temporizing mimicry. If circumstances constrain him to adapt his selection and telling of the truth to the situation in which he finds himself, he himself must stand behind every one of his statements with his full self-gift and full responsibility. Every partialness, every conscious reservation (*reservatio mentalis*)[3] in his statement of the truth, must make sense within his total

perspective, be consistent with it, and thus be justifiable in terms of it. A man may be duty-bound to present the truth differently in different situations. However, these different presentations ought, when seen in their complementarity, to yield the unitary picture of his life's mission as a whole. This totality has to remain visible and perceptible as the attitude underlying every selective presentation of the truth; if it proceeds from this totality, a partial truth can express the unreserved truth. If it really does so, then no further formalistic casuistry is needed to justify it.

The relationship between the partial truth, which is the only one that can be presented and pronounced in any given situation, and the total truth, which is its background, gives us the key to all of the principal laws governing the administration of truth. Every abuse of truth consists in making the fragment self-sufficient to the detriment of the totality. The possibility of this abuse is at the root of scandal. Men are scandalized whenever there is a closure to the absolute, encompassing truth from the standpoint of some partial truth. This partial standpoint can be a single, preconceived opinion, whose narrowness we do not, or do not wish to, see through. It can also be a whole system of opinions, a "*Weltanschauung"*, in which we have taken refuge and entrenched ourselves and which now no longer allows us to see any bigger picture. In every case, scandal consists in drawing a line with respect to a further truth, in clinging to and absolutizing a finite perspective, which we are no longer willing to regard as a part and an expression of the transcendent, infinite truth. Man's guilt consists, not in the fact that he knows only a sector of the infinite truth, but rather in the fact that he becomes content with it, blocks himself off from enlarging and complementary vistas, and thus severs himself from the living source of truth. Fundamentally, he is scandalized every time he severs himself from love. For he is assured by love of the overarching standpoint that he cannot occupy by knowledge. In love he opens himself unconditionally and is therefore also open to all the truth that transcends him and his personal standpoint. In love he is willing to acknowledge that there is more to truth than he himself can survey and pass judgment upon. Love is the receptivity that gives the other's truth credit for being able to reveal itself as truth. Love is the most all-inclusive a priori there is, because it presupposes nothing other than itself.

In the contest of partial standpoints and perspectives, which is the cause of most discussions among people (from the most quotidian differences of opinion to the most crucial dialogues between world views and confessions), there can be no higher rule for the administration of truth than that of totality. The more truth a partial perspective can integrate into itself, the greater is its claim to be true. Partial truth that persists in rejecting others' truth is precisely thereby convicted of its inferiority in the contest of truths. Partial truth that takes out a part of the truth and settles down with its piece in isolation from the totality is the essence of heresy and sectarianism. Only naivete and personal ignorance about the boundary-drawing at the heart of sectarianism can ensure the adherents of a sect a connection with the totality of truth and thus of salvation. For only one who has love, that is, who is in the origin of the movement of truth itself, is saved. No partial truth can as such be the definitive self-expression of a spiritual, immortal person. Partial truth cannot be exhibited and revealed unless it coheres with the absolute truth. Yet it can achieve this coherence only when it lets its partial knowledge become potentially limitless in love.

Love is the opposite of sectarian insistence on being right. Love's inclination is to acknowledge the validity of another's truth sooner than its own. It has the freedom to affirm all truth, even truth that it does not immediately survey and is not in a position to judge—provided it has its origin in love. But love is also clear-sighted enough to see the full distance separating each

respective partial truth from the totality and can thus order truths hierarchically. Love knows which truths include the others and which are included by them Therefore, it can appropriate what is in each instance the broader and higher standpoint, and this capacity will be its strongest weapon in the dialogue among world views. Love vanquishes its opponent less through acuteness than through fullness. Love shows him that what he has to say is already included in its standpoint, is perhaps already better accounted for in it. It does not pass judgment; it merely shows and leaves the judgment to the evidence of its radiant revelation.

Love, finally, is so convinced of the totality of the truth, so sure of itself in the act of giving itself away, that it is even ready to renounce its own partial standpoint for the sake of this totality. Love sees the necessity of the total truth so clearly and with so much certitude that, as far as love is concerned, it far outweighs being right about any partial truth—even when it is obvious, even when it is the hard-won fruit of a long personal struggle. The authenticity of the truth manifests itself in the perpetual readiness of partial truth to renounce itself when the entirety of truth is at stake. For love, this renunciation is no absurd sacrifice, since love is always ready to renounce what is its own for the sake of others. This willingness can extend to one's personal perspective, to which we are naturally more attached than we are even to external possessions. But no personal perspective expresses the whole truth; rather, this truth is embodied in the world only through love. Love's renunciation of partial truth for love's sake is thus a supreme form of the revelation of truth.

Love makes us clear-sighted; it makes us see into the depths and into the heights. It orders and crystallizes finite truth around the pole of absolute truth. Thanks to its movement of self-surrender, love is given a flood of truth, whose chief characteristic is a fullness that never fits completely into any human schema. For this reason, the more love reveals itself, the more it receives new truth to be revealed. The inner wealth of this truth increases in the measure that love dispenses it. Its mystery augments the more love publishes it. No truth proceeding from the center of self-revealing being is ever exhaustible; it carries the promising hint of ever new and deeper truth. Thus, whoever lives lovingly in the movement of truth always knows more than he can say. Knowing makes solitary, precisely when it is a knowing of love. This love accumulates in the lover a burden of mysteries, under which he would be suffocated unless he could give it back to the infinite truth, to God, who accompanies his knowledge as the possessor of all mysteries. Every act of surrender and unveiling always leaves something incommunicable. This remainder of incommunicability resists analysis; indeed, it increases with increasing communication. Because of it, a further property of all truth shines out from the ground underlying free unveiling. This property, which is in fact the characteristic mark of truth, is the abiding mystery that it harbors in itself.

III. TRUTH AS MYSTERY

We have learned that truth involves freedom, in the sense that it transcends the predetermined outlines of nature. Having done so, we have an entryway into truth's character as mystery. We have already spoken of the mystery of being in several contexts. Our consideration of the object revealed that being was a hierarchical scale of increasingly intense degrees of interiority, which to an ever greater extent eluded the simple grasp of cognition and became a matter of free revelation. Moreover, even the fact of existence (as opposed to essence) shared in this ultimate inaccessibility to the outsider's grasp. Each deeper insight into the essence thrust the mind back upon the primary, inexhaustible fact of existence. This existence was a mysterious wonder, whose sheer "thereness" [*Da*] did not imply poverty but an abundant fullness of being. We now want to consider the evident corollary: The truth of being can no more be without an indwelling mystery than being can be exhaustively unveiled to the eye of the intelligence. By its very essence, being is always richer than what we see and apprehend of it.

Furthermore, this mystery, as it is now our task to show, is not something "beyond" truth, but it is a permanent, immanent property of it. There is no aspect of the truth that in any given act of cognition is ever so perspicuous to the knower that it contains nothing else to be known. Nor, by the same token, does the light of knowledge penetrate its every recess and, so to say, totally convert it into a usable intellectual product. Again, it is not just the finitude of this field of truth that points toward further, as yet unknown, though potentially knowable, objects. Such a purely temporary mystery could gradually be mastered by means of progressive investigation; it would warrant the hope that we might one day completely clear up all the world's mysteries and purge them of their mysteriousness.

The picture is quite different once we see that mystery is, not transcendent, but immanent in relation to truth. On this supposition, the knowledge of a truth, far from annulling its mysteriousness, actually brings it to light. It then becomes manifest that what I have known—really, not just seemingly, known—was a mystery. Before I knew it, I was unaware of this mystery. Now that I have come to know it, my knowledge is richer because it has gained a (permanent) mystery. The foregoing discussion of the freedom of the subject already leads us to conclude that mystery can be an inherent characteristic, not only of being, but also of truth as such. Truth, as we have just seen, is not a fact that we must simply accept as is. Rather, the subject's loving surrender also plays a part in its genesis, even though the subject does not realize how decisive its contribution to this genesis has really been. Thus, behind the manifest is the law of free manifestation, which remains mysterious precisely in its freedom.

In order to bring truth's character as mystery into clear relief, we need to repeat, while deepening further, much of what we have already touched upon. This will afford us the opportunity to come back, on a higher winding of the spiral, to the same conclusions, albeit with a more thorough understanding of them. What we have discovered from the essence of the object and the subject in an abstract, contentless form must now be fleshed out with the lifeblood of concrete existence. We must start where subject and object are primarily disclosed to each other, that is, in the world of images [*Bilder*]; lying mid-way between subject and object, it offers the means for retracing the path back into these two poles of knowledge that underlie it.

A. The World of the Images

The first point of contact between subject and object is the phenomenal images [*die erscheinenden Bilder*], The object shows itself in them. They in turn present themselves uninvited to the subject. The world is composed of these images as its material. The images are altogether manifest. To deny them is impossible. But they are manifest and disclosed in such a way that their very banal obviousness awakens the suspicion that there is some mystery behind them. Things cannot be as simple as the images suggest. This suspicion is confirmed as soon as we interrogate the images in the attempt to discover their sense [*Sinn*].

1. The Inessentiality of the Image World[1]

The images simulate something that they themselves are not: a world. They suggest the idea of essence and existence, but they are neither. They have no essence, because they are nothing but surface without depth. They are mere appearance [*Erscheinung*] and are thus incapable of displaying any interiority at all. In themselves, they have neither distance nor proximity. They float in themselves, without any unequivocal relation either to an object or to a subject. The imagination of an object or subject may have a hand in producing them, but the images themselves know nothing of this. They are what they are, nothing more: this brightness, this sweetness, this noisiness, this quickness, this colorfulness. . . Their sheer superficiality conveys nothing of any hidden background. It is scarcely possible to describe their reality: they are not nothing, since they occur as images; yet neither are they what the subject that apprehends them would spontaneously call being or existence. Perhaps the knowing subject, in a kind of distraction, at first identifies the images with being, until one day it notices that this property does not belong to the images, as it had thought, but was instituted and posited by the subject. Thus, the images float without fixity between being and nothingness, just as they float with no fixed residence in a no-man's-land between subject and object.

Because the images have no depth and no essence, they also have no law. If the images alone existed, the world would be completely random. True, they recur in certain series and sequential patterns, but no tiring guarantees in advance that they will continue to do so consistently. Therefore, as long as they are considered in themselves, apart from relation to any point of reference outside them, they are absolutely senseless. Though this medley of green, white, and blue may produce a certain harmony and evoke a certain feeling of well-being, it would start making sense only when it was looked at, no longer as an image, but as a landscape, as a significant whole, whose center of gravity lies entirely elsewhere than the pure image in which it appears. If they are to start making sense, the images must be lent an essence and existence that they do not possess themselves. To lend them essence is to interpret them as the appearance of a coherent but non-appearing sense; to lend them existence is to interpret them as the index of existing things.

The images crave this double interpretation, without which they would be incomprehensible. They cannot interpret themselves, cannot reveal their sense, any more than the letters of a book can say themselves what the words they form together mean. But precisely the fact that they make no sense indicates that there is a sense somewhere. Precisely their exaggerated manifestness points significantly to a hidden mystery. The images unfold from one another in series and chains. Looked at as a surface, these chains have no more sense than the single image.

But on the hypothesis that all the images in this chain proceed, like the successive points of a circle, from a common, non-appearing center, the alternation of the images suddenly seems to make sense: it now becomes the exhibition of one and the same thing from various angles or in various phases, for example, of a statue that I slowly walk around, of a landscape that I walk through, of a planet whose orbit I investigate. In itself, the regularity of the appearances is senseless, yet it intimates a meaningful regularity in what does not appear—to a mind that habitually strives to discover sense. Because our mind is so structured that it cannot avoid posing the question of sense, it has always already interpreted the world of images in terms of a coherent significance. It always already perceives in the images a perspectival depth that they do not possess of themselves and draws out of them a total form that is more than the bare outline of the naked appearance.

Accordingly, the inessential, inexistent image world that we have just described does not occur at all in natural consciousness. It is an artificial abstraction that isolates the sheer matter of the world from the form that it always already has. And just as the apprehending subject has always already conferred on the images the depth dimension of essence, it has always already given them the dignity of existence. For, as soon as tilings become the surface of an inner space that as such does not appear, this inward space takes on an independent reality, which gives it a claim to existence. This existence, too, does not itself appear in the images. Their mode of being is not the existence that the subject adjudges to them when it states: The tree *is* green; the evening *is* beautiful. The subject does not draw the experience of essence and existence immediately from the images; and since things are not manifest to it outside of the images, it can draw this experience from nowhere other than itself. Out of itself, out of its own substance, the subject nourishes the images and bestows upon them the rank of a portrayal of the world.

The subject does not do this without reason; its deed is no daring, fantastic risk; it simply follows its own law of bestowing sense on everything it encounters. This positing is so spontaneous that it precedes any free deliberation; it is nature. It arises out of the depth of the knowing subject. But its trajectory passes through the image into the depth of the object to be known. It uses the image as a fulcrum to swing from out of the interiority of the subject into the interiority of the object. Of course, one of the primary and ineliminable presuppositions of the interpretation of sense itself is that these two unities are not coincident, that the object known is by no means identical to the knowing subject but possesses and claims its own sphere of essence and existence. The subject would not believe that this presupposition was annulled or called in question even if it could be shown that all the materials out of which its knowledge composes the objective world actually come from its own subjective storehouse. These materials may originate in the subject, but this is no argument against the legitimacy of their application to the object. On the contrary, this subject origin immediately requires it. The subject experiences within its interiority the necessary unity of sense and being; wherever it reads sense in the images, it must also immediately posit being. In conferring essence and existence upon the images, the subject solves the mysterious enigma of their manifestness. The subject finds their unmysteriousness as sheer images so senseless, and thus so anguishing, that it has no choice but immediately to bestow upon them a sense and, therefore, a depth and a mystery. Only if the naked manifestness of the images conceals in itself the unmanifest depth of an existing essence is knowledge able to grasp it.

But in this first stage of knowledge, which confuses the senseless puzzle of the world of images with the sense-filled mystery of the world as it exists in itself, the subject enters into manifold

dangers. At first, the subject sees only the abstract relation between the manifest, but inessential, world of images and the unmanifest, essential world behind the images. It sees neither the necessity nor the law of their relation. It thus becomes uncertain about the legitimacy of the creative affirmation that it has performed as a knowing subject. It becomes a skeptical subject. The subject's experience of the unreality of the images, of their inessentiality and lack of existence, of their utter transitoriness and caducity, can be so strong that it is initially incapable of constructing a solid bridge between the images and the world as it is in itself. In such a situation, it adopts the expedient of shifting all sense from the world of images as such and concentrating it in the non-appearing reality behind the images. The subject discards the world of the images as insignificant, because unintelligible, and denies it any substantive truth. Truth can reside only in what is meaningful and essential; but the realm of essence begins on the farther side of the appearance. It is the realm of intellectual contents, of ideas and concepts, in which the subject's interiority and reflection communicate immediately with the interiority of the object. Truth, real "understanding", is to be found in this intercourse alone, whereas the realm of the images merely produces "opinion" that ultimately contains no truth. It is necessary to shut the gates of the senses, in order to listen within oneself to the voice of reason and to see the light of the intellect; only thus can we become free from the realm of illusion and open to the world of truth. This is the path of rationalism and of idealist mysticism. Both see the images either as a realm deprived of truth or as a pallid copy that is irrelevant for knowledge, if it does not actually hinder it. Both attempt to penetrate to the "essence" by going beyond the images. Both clarify the images by dissolving them into a concept or immediate intellectual intuition, as if the appearances were merely a mist that dissipates in the rising sun. The substantiality of the world's existence in itself triumphs over the inessentiality of mere appearance. And so, in the end, it becomes incomprehensible why there is any appearance at all.

But only an initial burst of enthusiasm made it possible to suppose that the world could be revealed as it exists in itself by circumventing the revelation of the images. This hypothesis falls when we eventually realize that all intelligible reality is ultimately revealed to us only through the senses. Thus, the subject is thrown back once more upon the images that it had previously rejected because of their inessentiality. It must attempt to find the essence precisely in the inessential. It takes the path of empiricism and of the mysticism of immediate experience. It foregoes any truth behind the appearances, in order to seek it immediately in the abundance and flow of the appearances themselves. The stream of images, in which nothing can be repeated and everything comes only once, the subject now takes to be the truth of being: pure change fulness is being's enduring essence, pure unreality is the form of its existence. To leave behind the pure experience of the images is also to depart from the truth. The subject remains in the truth as long as it persists in receiving the images and gives itself over completely to this reception. Whereas, in the previous instance, the inessentiality of the images was the motive for anchoring the truth completely outside of them, it now justifies stamping the truth itself with their inessentiality.

Both experiments are bound to fail, for both ultimately misunderstand the essence of truth: truth is, in fact, the revelation in the appearance of the very being that does not itself appear. Both systems are incapable of establishing the relation between the appearance and what appears; both are varieties of the same fundamental deficiency. Both are aware that they are dealing with a mystery, but because the one seeks the truth in the conceptless image, whereas the other seeks it in the imageless concept, both arrive only at an *empty* mystery. The pure concept of rationalism and the cosmic ground of idealist mysticism, on the one hand, the unknowable thing-in-itself of

empiricism and the pure movement and transitoriness of the mysticism of experience, on the other, are all empty. In the end, this void thrusts the subject back into itself. Since the world provides only formless material, consciousness seeks salvation in itself and looks to itself to give form. It now recognizes that it is the power that establishes sense and posits existence in cognition; it understands its own subjectivity as the primordial source of all objectivity, at least to the extent that it transcends the world of images. Because these images themselves remain inessential, there is no need to waste time over where they come from and what they belong to. The only important point is that all the powers by which the subject brings order—the a priori forms of perception and the categorical forms of judging reason—come from its own inner store.

This insight seems to account for every instance of knowledge and to explain the essence of truth. And yet this method makes the situation irremediably hopeless. In this "Copernican shift" from object to subject, the images are no longer the revelation and appearance of things but ultimately only a projection of the power of cognition, by which they are in fact posited. But this means that the objects' whole interiority is utterly engulfed by the subject's (now solitary) interiority. By the same token, the images are henceforth merely the external manifestations of this inner realm. These manifestations are, however, hopelessly incomprehensible; it is impossible to make a convincing case that the subject is related to the images as a thing is related to its appearance. This relation has indeed become definitively mysterious (for it must be transferred completely into the unconscious), but it is an empty, alien, artificial mystery that clarifies nothing and obscures everything. In the end, then, this leads to doubt about the truth as such, to skepticism, hence, to doubt about being. Indeed, there is something thoroughly ghostly about all these interpretations, forms, and intellectual schematisms; they are the pure expression of the unconquered inessentiality of the world of images.

2. What It Is that Signifies[2]

Truth does not he in the appearances as such, for we can interpret them meaningfully only when we locate their point of reference behind them. Yet neither does the truth lie behind the appearances, for the pure background does not appear; it is what is not unveiled. Truth can be found only in a floating middle between the appearance and the thing that appears. It is only in the relation between these two things that the empty mystery becomes a full, perennially self-replenishing mystery. It is only in their relation, then, that what initially resisted interpretation can now be interpreted.

The interpretation of the object by the subject presupposes the significance [*Bedeutung*] of the object for the subject. The object acquires such significance as soon as it begins to give an interpretation of itself through its appearances. The agent of this interpretation is the object's non-appearing essence; the means of its interpretation is its appearance, which is to say, the world of the images. But it is the whole that is significant [*das Bedeutende*], and the whole is self-expositing being. At first sight, it might seem that, insofar as they signify, the images themselves are the significant thing. Such, however, is the error of aestheticism in all its forms. In order to be really significant, what expresses itself in the image must be nonidentical with the image itself. We will not, of course, seek this self-expressing reality behind the image, as if it were something existing for itself that we could detach from the image and grasp and examine separately. By doing so, we would once again deprive it of its whole manifestness; we would, like the ape in the fable, reach behind the mirror in order to lay hold of what can be had only in the mirror. But it is

equally illegitimate to detach the appearing image, considered as the signifier [*Bedeutung*], from what it is that in fact signifies [*das Bedeutende*] or, what is the same, from what it, the image, signifies.

Significance is an irreducible phenomenon. It requires an appearing surface upon which a non-appearing depth expresses and indicates its presence. The surface is, so to say, loaded with the whole sense contained in this depth, yet it does not come apart at the seams. What is contained in the hidden center presses outward, as is nicely conveyed by the word "ex-pression". As we have already observed, this by no means involves a mechanical reproduction of the inside on the outward surface. The image holds the significant content; it would therefore be futile to hunt behind it for the archetype, as if the vision of the archetype would render the signification of its derivative image superfluous and rob it of its force. In a conversation, we accept a man's words as the authorized expression of his mind and look for the meaning of his words, not behind them, but in them. In the same way, it is the image world as a whole that presents us with being's sense and significance. Of course, the simile of the word is not yet fully appropriate here, because the spoken word in fact corresponds to an interior, mental word, its relation to which is fully accessible to the speaker's own inspection. In the original signification of the world of images, these two words are at first indistinguishable. Beings are externally manifest only in the image, in which they immediately declare themselves at once for themselves and for others.

The image is therefore an original expression. It is a creation, not an imitation. And yet it is not the being as such that lies before us in the image. Insofar as the image is a surface, it can, of course, reveal the depth and can convey some notion of it. But it cannot itself be the depth. It can, like a painting, employ perspective to represent the third dimension that it itself lacks. In other words, it expresses something that it is not, because it itself is only the expression of something else. Though it is not that something, the image does contain it in the form of expression. Indeed, it is precisely what the image is not—being's power to give an image of itself—that enables the image to be an image in the first place. This plasticity makes being significant and gives it a content and weight surpassing the image world. We apprehend the significant reality, then, wholly in the image, yet it is not limited to the reality of the image. In this ineliminable duality, truth begins to reveal itself as a full (and no longer empty) mystery.

The whole world of images that surrounds us is a single field of significations. Every flower we see is an expression, every landscape has its significance, every human or animal face speaks its wordless language. It would be utterly futile to attempt a transposition of this language into concepts. Though we might try to circumscribe, even to describe, the content these things express, we would never succeed in rendering it adequately. This expressive language is addressed primarily, not to conceptual thought, but to the kind of intelligence that perceptively reads the *gestalt* of things. The former enters upon its task only when the latter has fulfilled its function. What does a Mozart symphony mean? To answer this question, one must begin by listening to the piece over and over again and by taking in its fullness of meaning through sympathetic understanding. Only afterward can we talk about the symphony, and then only with those who have opened themselves to the same fullness through the tonal image. While perhaps feeling a need to "paraphrase" verbally the sense of the piece, one will be aware that the attempt to do so is more playful than serious and that it is by definition impossible to transpose the sense of the symphony definitively into concepts. Indeed, to one who has directly understood the expression, these concepts will appear merely as impotent signs, as banalities, compared with the

incomparable uniqueness of the work itself. Concepts, in fact, always apply to more than one thing, but art reveals something having singular, incommutable significance. A thousand adjectives will never convey to one who has not heard it the slightest notion of the overture to *Don Giovanni*. It is charged with spirit down to the last semiquaver, it brims over with sense and significance, not hiding it behind the sounds, but expressing everything that could be expressed. And yet, who would claim to say exhaustively what it really means? Perhaps it would be easier to tell if it were not so perfect. One might perhaps guess from the failure of the expression, from certain fractures, what message the artist had endeavored to impart. One could easily sever sense and expression—the vice of bad program music.

Yet, curiously enough, the more perfectly the two coincide, the more clearly and unmistakably the inside appears in the outside, that is, the more consummate a work of art it is, the more its content eludes interpretive analysis. It is as if, at the moment when the two finite magnitudes of sense [*Sinn*] and image [*Bild*] coincided, the work became infinite—a symbol [*Sinnbild*] that from now on transcends the sum of its parts. No aspect of the work's sense has remained behind the expression; everything that was meant to be expressed has found its form. The upshot is that precisely the perfection of the expression is a perfect mystery. Indeed, it is an essential mystery, which no interpretation can progressively approach or gradually clear up. Every time we encounter it, it is whole and intact and resists all analysis. Here we begin to suspect that mystery is an abiding property of truth itself. In the empty dialectic between being and appearance, the mystery was present only in the form of incomprehensibility, of opacity. Now it appears as a quality of transparent revelation.

It is not by chance that there is an especially close connection between this aspect of truth and the concept of beauty. For the name of this radiant property of truth, which overwhelms by its splendor, its indivisible integrity, and its perfect expressive power, is, in fact, none other than beauty. Beauty is the aspect of truth that cannot be fit into any definition but can be apprehended only in direct intercourse with it; thanks to beauty, every encounter with truth is a new event. It is the inexplicable active irradiation of the center of being into the expressive surface of the image, an irradiation that reflects itself in the image and confers upon it a unity, fullness, and depth surpassing what the image as such contains. Finally, because of beauty truth is always intrinsically a matter of grace. Something of this grace surrounds every truth insofar as it is an original disclosure of being. It is lacking to purely logical truth, which has been explicitly siphoned off from being; the truth it contains is altogether finite and perfectly comprehensible; it itself is only the expression of a relation established by man, not of an original expression of really existing things. By contrast, wherever there is some actuality, the knowing mind stands before a gift that no amount of reflection can thoroughly digest and systematize.

This excess transcending all that we can grasp by conceptual analysis, delimitation, and cataloging, this eternal "more" belonging to every being, saves the revelation of things and the knowledge of them from immediately becoming insuperably boring. The knowing mind is by definition no longer capable of being thrilled by anything that it has thoroughly penetrated, that lies open and unveiled before it without mystery. The mind feels superior to, and looks down upon, whatever it has penetrated in this way. It has no reason to devote any further attention to this expression of sense and significance. It has taken cognizance of the message, and, if the message is constantly repeated, it gets impatient. Its experience is like that of a pupil with whom

the teacher wants to review the same material every day, even though he has already gotten the point long ago: he is sick and tired of hearing the same thing over and over again.

Now, the fact that the same things can surround us day after day, appear before us every morning with the same existence and essence, but not become unendurable is due to the mysteriousness of truth, which is always richer than what we have been able to apprehend so far. The essence of being, which can never be surveyed from a bird's-eye perspective, remains in the background of all its revelations; and the mere fact that being reveals itself at all, that it makes this movement toward us and lifts one of the veils covering its essence, is a daily renewed, perennially inexhaustible wonder. That things exist at all is part of this mystery. The deepest reflection will never be able to account entirely for the simple fact that the most trivial, most inconspicuous thing displays itself before our eyes and shows us the favor of existing and of manifesting this existence even to us, indeed, as it would seem, precisely to us.

Knowledge can never definitively master this permanent residue of incomprehensibility. Knowledge can never get the object under control or hoist itself, as it were, above the object and look down on it like a hunter about to fall on his prey. Even when we have known a thing, it remains in some sense inexplicable, thus compelling us to look up to it with reverent veneration, sure that it is capable of further revelation, that its inner wealth has the capacity to go on infinitely irradiating new truth. To be sure, the original dignity and legitimacy of the urge to know in the sense of comprehension from above, of mastery, remains undiminished. It simply receives a counterweight that is an equally indispensable component of the ethos of knowledge as a whole. A mountain climber certainly feels a sense of victory when he has "conquered" a difficult peak. But does this really put him on top of the mountain? Does he have it, so to speak, in his pocket? Or when an educator succeeds in forming a pupil according to his principles: Does he now really know the essence of this soul; can he elevate himself above it as if it no longer held any mystery for him? Or must he not rather stand amazed before the fact that the unexpected wonder of this education actually succeeded? By the same token, this mysterious "more" is what alone enables us to appreciate works of art. Because their truth is inexhaustible, they shine from day to day with a new, never-spent freshness. Maybe you know them by heart, but you can never see and hear enough of them. This property is not based upon the subject's insatiable thirst for truth and beauty, which, for want of new things to desire, makes do with the same finite things and truths. Its primary locus is entirely in the object; unless this mysterious fascination were truly inherent in the object, it could never enchant the subject in the way that it in fact does.

It is no surprise, then, that the knower is inclined to rest, as it were, in the image world and its signification. He need only give himself to the appearances, need only read them with understanding, in order to be flooded by a wealth of significance. Since this revelation bestows on him more than he can ever lay hold of, he sees no reason to raise himself above the sphere of images. It is enough for him to have life in its colorful reflection. What reveals itself is so rich that it satisfies his entire need for truth; what remains hidden is so mysterious that he knows he is sheltered within its veiled womb. Everything that exists is allusive, is a pointer and a reminder, and any conceptual clarification or univocal definition of these infinite significations would appear to him as an impoverishment, perhaps even as a profanation. He understands *that* things "signify"; they do it so intensely that one simply should not ask *what* they signify. It is enough if they regard us with their deep, inscrutable eye. To say explicitly what their wordless song tells us would be presumptuous, if it were not altogether futile.

This, then, is how the aesthete lives and views the world. He correctly apprehends that there is such a thing as significance. Yet he falls into another, albeit more subtle, form of detaching the phenomenal image from the core of being as if it were a thing in its own right. Because the image world really shows on its surface the whole self-expressing depth, the aesthete believes that he can dispense with the depth itself. He does not see that the signifier stops being significant as soon as there is no longer anything there for it to signify. Yet again the world of images is isolated in itself. As a result, it is once more haunted by unreality. As soon as we cut off the living world of signification from the ontological root that sustains it, it withers and dies. The aesthetic life is therefore just as solitary as the sensory image that has not yet been elevated into spirit. By isolating the experience of beauty, the unreality and solitude of pure aesthetics eventually cause even its beatifying character to fade. When one tries to cultivate beauty in an abstract purity, it produces only surfeit and bitter *Weltschmerz*. And it does this, not only because it happens to be temporally fleeting, but because of its own essential, intrinsic properties.

Once again, the world of images has been misinterpreted. This world, having no reality in itself, is as such the expressive field of reality. It must not be confused with the reality itself. The images are, of course, not unintelligible ciphers, but immediately legible signs of reality. But these signs must not be treated any differently from the letters in a book: you see them, you read them, and yet you are conscious, not of the written image, but of the sense that comes to expression in it. In the same way, the signs in which being reveals itself must be simultaneously read and overlooked. They must be understood in a certain movement and direction, which runs opposite to the direction of being's self-expression. If being moves from inside out, by "dispersing" itself [*äußert*], understanding moves from outside in, by "recollection" [*sich erinnert*]. Although not utterly devoid of truth, the images point beyond themselves to the mystery they harbor. They invite the spirit to a searching movement. In the long run, they allow no simple rest in their significant content but stir up an unrest and levy a demand. It is not enough merely to acknowledge the mystery of which they are the external sign and to leave it undisturbed. Even an aesthetic shudder at the inaccessible mystery of things is not enough. The truth is in motion, it presses upon the mind and calls the conscience to decision. This characteristic of truth undermines the legitimacy of any purely symbolic world view—regardless of whether it proselytizes for the kingdom of the soul and its archetypal images in opposition to the "arch-enemy", the spirit, whose stringency and coldness supposedly make it deadly to the soul, or whether the metaphysics of spirit itself leads to the pure acknowledgment of the "ciphers of being", whose ultimate significance is inaccessible to man's spirit, or else can be attained only in its total "failure".

In contrast to this false resignation, the images convey a clear message: they themselves are a sign pointing to the sphere of spirit. They point by means of their evident changefulness and transience, for in this, to take an idea from Augustine, they are like the single words of a sentence or the notes of a piece of music, which must successively fade away in order that the coherent totality of an intellectual harmony can emerge. In the same way, the reality of truth and being appears, not only in what the images can reflect of it, but also, and no less, in their unreality and transience.

The depth of meaning that Hegel noted in the term "to go to ground" [*Zu-Grunde-Gehen*] cannot be left unmentioned here: when the phenomenal appearances, on account of their inessentiality, perish and go to ground [*Zu-Grunde-Gehen*], they go back into the ground [*gehen in den Grund*

zurück] from which they came, directing our attention by this movement to the depth out of which they first rose to the surface. The unveiling of the essence in the appearance thereby begins to move, so to say, in reverse. It is no longer the essence that actively reveals itself in the appearance; it is now the appearance that, by going to ground, passively allows the essence to become visible as the ground. As in the first movement the essence plays positively in and out of the appearance (as "illusion" in the root sense of the word), so in the second movement the appearance plays negatively back into the essential ground (as "disillusion", likewise in the root sense of the word). In this second movement, the world of images declares itself as such and thereby distinguishes itself from the world of essence. But not until this happens does it become unambiguously clear that the essence is always more than the appearance. Without the movement of disillusion, in which the images wither and fall to the ground in order to make room for the essential fruit of being, the spirit would never have the wherewithal to distinguish what is appearance from what is essential reality.

Contrary to the position examined above, this second, negative movement does not clear away the images in order to open up an immediate, unobstructed intuition of the essence. If such an intuition were possible, the whole revelation of being in the images would be superfluous, for the subject as well as for the object. The point is simply that the function of the image has changed. Whereas in the first movement being demonstrates its pleasing power of self-display, showing something of its inner riches at play in the forms it brings forth, in the second movement it shows its venerable strength, its self-sufficiency, its serene grandeur, whose permanence flashes out the more in proportion as the images fade away and die. In the first movement, being pushes outward, so to speak, from the inside, in order to *reveal* its mystery. In the second, the realization has matured that every revelation is always a revelation of a *mystery*. This mystery reveals itself most convincingly at the very moment when the images, incapable of revealing *more* than what they have already shown, return into the ground of being. The wall of the images [*Bilderwand*] is never thinner and more transparent than at the moment when these images fade in order to let the essence appear through them and, as it were, show itself directly both in speech and in silence.

This return movement of the image into the ground, of the phenomenal appearance into the essence, is also the context in which the transition from unmediated sensory experience to reflexive intellectual activity [*reflektierender Geist*] takes place. A great deal depends on our getting this transition right. It is tempting to interpret this process as if the pure essence supplanted the image, or, in noetic terms, the pure concept superseded sense perception. The only difficulty with this interpretation is that it would force us back into the dialectic we described above and would definitively preclude truth. Rather, the entire relationship between essence and appearance finds completion precisely in this retrogressive phase. The appearance as such was never superfluous at any point during the first movement in which being came out of itself into the appearance. On the contrary, the appearance was really required for the revelation of the essence; it was the light of the essence, made possible its truth, and enabled its emergence from the night of concealment. Nor is the image superfluous now that it turns back to the essence; it is simply that it has begun to serve the revelation of truth in a new form. The appearance's task is no longer to reveal by appearing in its own right and by directing all eyes to, and keeping them focused on, itself as a kind of stand-in for the essence. Rather, it now has to reveal by stepping back, by making itself superfluous, by effacing itself, in order to direct attention, no longer to it, the appearance, but only to the essence itself.

Implicit in this new function of the image, then, is an essential renunciation, and this renunciation alone allows the highest revelation of the essence. I am referring to the image's renunciation of itself, by which it waives any claim to be a reality existing and important for its own sake. This renunciation is a confession of its own unreality. It is a realization that the image is purely subservient to the reality. As soon as this realization about the image has been attained, the essence can appear as what it is: the essentiality that emerges in contrast to the inessentiality of the image.

That having been said, it remains true that so far we have described only one side of this process: the movement of the images as they come up from the essential ground and point back into it. It would, however, be an error to interpret this movement in being as if only some exterior element moved, whereas the inner core—*what* is expressed—remained rigidly immobile in the background. This kind of dualism in being between a mobile outside and an unmoved core, between a fleeting appearance and a stationary essence, would be tantamount to yet another relapse into the ontology of inessentiality that we have just overcome. This solution to the problem of being would be too simple to fit the contours of the truth. In fact, the contrary is the case: when a being reveals itself in the world of images, the images, while not, of course, the being itself, are also not some additional, extraneous element alongside it. Rather, they are nothing other than its self-revelation and impartation. The being that exposits itself in the images has no language other than that of the images. It has such need of these images that without them it simply could not be what it is, namely, being. If it did not have this exposition, it would be a self-enclosed being that could not be unveiled. It would therefore be a being without truth, a senseless being, indeed, when we come to think of it, a being that did not exist at all. To be sure, not every being in particular has to be known by a man in order to have and to fulfill its raison d'être; it need only occur within the totality of beings in the world and occupy a place among the things displayed and offered to prospective knowers. It is then a part of a world that is knowable in itself, yet whose fullness is ever richer, even in extension, than what subjects have the wherewithal to apprehend. Looked at in itself, this being is expressed and thus possesses, so far as it is concerned, an ontological truth, regardless of whether or not this truth now reaches its ultimate teleological fullness by unfolding in a subjective space made available for its expression. Just as many animals belonging to a species never exercise certain functions included in their nature yet are not therefore any less fully representative of this species, not everything in the world has to enjoy a full presentation of itself in a knowing subject in order to participate in truth. It suffices that its essence has entered into the movement of expression. But this is from start to finish the kind of movement we are dealing with. When the images move out of the ground into the foreground, the ground itself moves in them. It does not, of course, move in itself—otherwise being would be dissolved into a pure becoming, and the substance would coincide with its accidents. However, it really is moving in the images as these proceed from it and return to it. We can point to the images and say: Here it is being that is becoming and the substantial essence that is appearing. The two poles can be distinguished but not divided. The appearance is so totally at the service of the appearing reality that this latter, by a kind of transfer of power, assigns to the appearance the authority of the essence itself, so that the essence can be shown outside itself and its power made known to the world. Therefore, as the appearance consents more fully to subserve the essence, it all the more readily steps down and resigns, in order to clear the way for the movement of the essence to become manifest in its own.

The power of the essence lies in its capacity to be outside of itself in its appearances. That it cannot reveal itself except in appearances shows that it is bound in some way. For the moment, we can leave aside the question of whether we interpret this tie of dependency as ontological potency or as ontological impotence. The act of handing over to the appearance functions belonging to the essence would be an expression of being's power in the measure that the essence itself decided—in love and of its own free will—to reproduce itself in the appearance and thus to renounce its solitary self-sufficiency. This same act would be an expression of impotence to the extent that nature had always already decided this act for the essence, that the very creatureliness of the essence imposed upon it the law of a necessary self-revelation. Be that as it may, when the appearance renounces itself and returns into the essence, it echoes an original renunciation in which the essence lays down its autonomous, uncommunicated being-for-itself. The revelatory movement of the images is not their autonomous act. Rather, it is a movement that proceeds ultimately from the essence, whose self-being it reveals. Truth consists in the unveiling of being, in its self-surrender for the benefit of the knowing subject, indeed, in a sort of abasement of its sovereignty to the point of becoming matter for another's knowledge to work on. This truth, then, has the precise form of a reciprocal surrender between essence and image, ground and appearance. In this mutual surrender, the essence condescends to enter into the appearance and to display itself publicly in the world of the images, whereas the appearance wants to be nothing other than a function of the essence's revelation. A mysterious movement thus shows its presence in the heart of being. We cannot describe this movement either monistically or dualistically, but we can say that the structure of truth rests on it as on its deepest foundation. Even though the essence is clearly the principal pole with respect to the appearance, both poles nevertheless remain in a reciprocal relation of dependence.

So far, however, we have been describing the movement of truth only in being itself considered as the object of knowledge. There must, then, be something corresponding to this movement in the subject as well. This corresponding element is the renunciation of the immediacy of sense perception, of self-contained signs that are full of significance in themselves but whose sense is not understood as interpreted. This renunciation exists to enable the apprehending intellectual subject to return into its depth; only in this reflection, in fact, does the subject attain the completion of truth. Reflection means sacrificing the breadth and abundance of sense perception, with its colorful variety, for the sake of what seem to be poor, empty conceptual abstractions. Just as the essence seems abstract compared with the appearance, the concept seems abstract compared with immediate sensory intuition. Taken in themselves, both seem to lose something of the wealth of the image world. But the essence of the object is the ground of the phenomenal world; this latter, therefore, owes all its abundance to the essence, to which it finally also restitutes it. In contrast, the relationship between the two functions in the apprehending subject must initially take a different form. For insofar as the sensorium is primarily receptive, it cannot be the spontaneous appearance of the conceptual faculty. It follows that the concept is not related to perception in the same way that me essence is related to the image. The concept has the capacity to distance itself from the perceptual image and to assume a stance of self-sufficiency in abstract isolation. In doing so, it falls under the sway of unreality, thus resembling the object of sense intuition—the image. The concept thereby distances itself from the vitality of the truth in a way that the essence cannot—except insofar as it knowingly holds back a revelation of itself at the level of intellect that was asked of it at the level of the senses. In this instance, the essence would likewise take on an objective abstractness comparable to the empty concept.

Leaving aside this difference, the subject's mental activity nonetheless has to take the structure of the object as its model. It realizes that a twofold rule is traced out for it in the form of being. In conformity to this rule, it surrenders and renounces the variety and abundance of the senses for the monotony of the universal concept yet never makes concrete use of this concept except in turning again and again to the unreality of the image world (*conversio ad phantasma*), for the abstract concept becomes true and living only in conjunction with this world. The same law governs transcendent objects, which do not appear to the senses. Even these objects—so far as they can be apprehended by human beings—are most adequately reflected, not by a pure concept, but through a genuine synthesis and reciprocal mirroring of sensory intuition and the concept. This double rule governing thought indicates a true movement in the subject: sensory intuition goes to ground in the inwardness of the universal concept; the empty concept goes out of itself into the concrete fullness of sensory intuition.

Now, at first sight it might seem that the phases of this process move in opposite directions in the object and in the subject. In the object, the first thing was egress into the appearance, and only then did the appearance return into the essence. The subject, on the contrary, first abstracts from the appearance, thereby forming the concept; only in a second moment does it bend the concept back upon sensory intuition and verify it therein. But looked at more thoroughly, these two phases coincide. In the object, there is no appearance that is not immediately an appearance *of* the essence. There is no appearance, therefore, that does not just as immediately step back before the essence, inasmuch as its very substance is to be inessential [*das Wesenslose*] and, as such, to manifest the substance of the essence. And in knowledge the event of abstraction from the senses coincides even more clearly with the intellect's conversion to the senses. The very act of abstraction in which the spontaneous power of the intellect (*intellectus agens*) turns to the sensory material in order to illuminate it with its light and to elevate it into its sphere is simultaneously the act in which the intellect inclines to the sensible in order to fill, and to find filled, its own empty unity in the latter's multiplicity. We said that a radical renunciation of the intellect lies at the root of every cognition: its renunciation of itself and the necessity of finding itself again in another through service. This sacrifice of the intellect now finds the complement analytically implied in it. The intellect sacrifices the world it has gained through the first renunciation. Only this second renunciation enables it to return into its own I as an actual knower who has been enriched with the content of the world.

In this movement, the significant reality [*das Bedeutende*], which manifestly signifies something, though what it actually signifies [*Bedeutung*] must remain concealed until the movement from the appearance to the essence has been accomplished, seems to divest itself of its mystery in order to appear as a pure, clarified concept. But the fact is that this movement only further deepens truth's mysteriousness. We saw, on a first level, the vacant mystery of agnosticism and skepticism. By contrast, the fact that on a second level the appearance appeared as a dumb, so to say undecipherable [*undeutbare*] significance already seemed to deepen the mystery. On this second level, the world appeared so charged with sense that the truth it contained always infinitely exceeded any possible interpretation by a human intelligence. The very phenomenon of the appearance itself contained this inexhaustible surplus. And yet this second level of truth is less filled with mystery than the one to which we are now passing, where the appearance reverts into the non-appearing essence. Or, if you will, where the essence appears in the appearance's no longer appearing. Any epistemology that would avoid running aground on the shallows of

empiricism must advance to this point, where it also inevitably runs head-on into a mystery precluding any further interpretation.

One may perhaps succeed in finding similes to convey the mystery that a fullness of being appears in an image, a depth in a surface, even as the overflowing abundance of the mystery remains in the background *as* mystery. It is scarcely possible, however, to explain conceptually the immediate resolution of the surface into the depth that is the condition of the latter's appearance. (Of course, since we do not possess intuitive but only discursive knowledge, the depth as such does not immediately appear, so that the veil of the vanishing appearance is never rent.) In Thomistic terms, the question before us is how the accidents, which let nothing of the substance show through, nonetheless mediate a real knowledge of it; in Kantian language, we are asking how the appearance, which in and of itself contains no trace of universality and necessity, can nonetheless lay the groundwork for universal and necessary knowledge. The answer cannot be simply that the knowledge of the object's essence, which transcends the reach of the senses, is solely the product of the subject's spontaneity, more precisely, of its system of a priori categories, as if the relation between appearance and essence had no role to play in this process. Otherwise we would have to see knowledge as a kind of conjuror's trick that, without having anything to go by in the appearance, successfully guessed, divined, beheld in itself, better, created out of itself, the truth of the *non-appearing reality*. This would once again transform knowledge into an unintelligible process. The only possible basis for knowledge of the truth, then, is the subject's primary ability immediately to mirror—in the intrinsic interconnection between sense and intellect within itself—the mirroring of the essence in the appearance. The subject's mirroring—the fact that its receptivity occurs in an immediately more than sensory, indeed, intellectual space—implies another fact: just as in its movement the appearance reverts to the essence in order to let the essence appear as such, sense intuition resolves itself into the concept in order to enable insight into a being's essence.

This last point clearly brings us face to face with the mystery of universal and particular being, which underlies the mystery of "significance in general". What is given in the senses is individual and particular. Yet, by virtue of its "signification", it points beyond itself to something that is more than it but does not he outside it. This something more unveils itself, at the moment the concept appears, as the universal. What the concept first apprehends, what is primarily correlative to it, is the essence in its universality. But the universal contains the particular just as much as the particular contains the universal. There is no single man who does not embody and possess what it means to be man, that is, the full, undiminished nature of man. He possesses whatever he is or has only inside this nature. He realizes his entire, one-of-a-kind uniqueness exclusively within the universal possibility of which he is a single instance. On the other hand, the concept of man cannot be abstracted in such a way as to leave the individual person's being outside its conceptual content. No individual man is a synthesis of universal human nature and individual personality. For it is precisely *intrinsic* to the universal concept of human nature to be realized from instance to instance only as an individual person. An abstract concept of man's being that did not always already include its concrete realization or concrete personal being would be at best an imperfect, rudimentary, and, so to say, blurry knowledge. Such knowledge may reflect a stage of human knowledge, but never a divine idea of humanity.

A perfect knowledge of man's essence can understand man only as always already personalized (as always this or that unmistakable individual), even though it can see all individuals only as

embodiments of the one nature of man. Just as humanity occurs only as man, so too man occurs only as humanity. The two things mutually presuppose each other. If there were no humanity, that is, if there were no real coinherence at the level of the species, which expresses and guarantees coinherence at the level of essence and being, there could be no individual. And, on the other hand, if the person did not just as immediately give himself up into the abstract thing called humanity, there could be no universal. The averageness of the universal can exist only because personality sacrifices its absolute uniqueness and unrepeatability. The anonymity of the universal concept is neither a mathematical average of the properties of all the individuals in a species nor a somehow superordinate form of being that is intrinsically indifferent to these individuals. Rather, it is, with equal immediacy, both the presupposition of all individuals and their product, in that every individual foregoes asserting his individuality except as an expression of the universal called “man”.

This implies a humiliation for the spiritual person. However unique he claims to be, however creative his achievements, however inimitable his utterances prove to be: they will never be anything but what “a man” can do. Every particular remains included under the genus. Every form, no matter how particular, that the singular may represent is still shaped out of the one matter called “humanity”. Thus, the person, as the singular, goes back into the anonymity of the universal; and he points back into the essence he embodies (humanity) both by standing out from and by resolving himself back into this essence. Whatever the particular does, whether he sets itself apart by appearing or steps back into the ranks: it is always the essence of man that appears in his action or passion.

On the other hand, this essence can appear only in the unrepeatably occurring uniqueness of the singular. The person alone is the field of its expression. It remains essentially dependent upon this field in order to reveal itself and to bring its truth to the light of day. The individual alone can show what is man’s essence, the scope of his powers, his depth and breadth. Thus, in every instance the individual contains the whole (for he lacks no component of human nature), even though the whole infinitely transcends him (since the whole manifests itself in an infinite number of other appearances). The problem of essence and appearance thus points us back into the mystery of the universal and the particular.

The universal is not a naked abstraction based on some similarity among individuals; for such a similarity could never guarantee the absolute unity of the species or genus in all individuals. The universal reflects a reality that occurs identically as such in every individual. However, it is equally true that the universal does not exist outside the individuals; it manifests its totality exclusively within their always differentiated particularity. There is thus a mutual relationship between the universal and the particular analogous to the relationship between essence and existence described earlier. They are distinct, but they can never be separated. They include each other in such a way that the one pole is always an excess, a surplus that never factors into the other without remainder. To be sure, the individual manifests what it means to be a man, but his individuality stands out against the background of the immense life of the species, which cannot be deduced from him. The possibilities that the individual displays are only an infinitesimal fraction of the potentialities latent in his essence, that is, the essence “man”.

We would completely misread and trivialize the entire problem if we tried to get out of this difficulty by making a straightforward distinction between the “physical” and the “metaphysical”

essence. We would suppress the real communication of all individuals in their common essence and definitively lose the key to the problem of the ontic solidarity that links these individuals together on the basis of the singularity of their essence. On the other hand, any solution to the question that tends to reify the universal as such is not viable. The universal is realized in the individual alone, in such a way, moreover, that the individual always represents an inexplicable excess over and above the universal. We learn what it means to be a man only when we lay eyes on an individual human being with his individual character and his destiny, which occurs once only and can never be confused with that of any other. But this particular will always be a surplus with respect to the universal: it was not foreseen in the universal, nor can it simply be deduced from the universal as if it were a possible application of some general rule. To be a particular man never means to be *only* a specimen of humanity. The unique singularity of the person cannot be expressed by the number "one". The individuals of a species can be counted, but persons, insofar as they really have a uniqueness that images and reflects a glimmer of God's uniqueness, cannot be numbered. Each of them is a world unto himself.

Now, inasmuch as man is both an individual member of his species and a person with an unmistakable countenance, he is polarized in the most mysterious way toward two centers. He is the unity that he is in a totally inexplicable way. For if he is considered as an individual, it is his essence that constitutes his unity, the essence being that which connects him with the other individuals of his species. With respect to this essence, his individual characteristics look like accidental differentiations. But if he is considered as a person, what constitutes his unity is this personhood, precisely what distinguishes him, in other words, not only quantitatively, but also—from top to bottom—qualitatively, from all other entities. Compared with this indissoluble unity of self-being, the common essential characteristics that unite him with others look like accidental similarities.

It thus becomes clear that the concept of unity, which everyone takes for granted as something well known and transparently obvious, is at bottom as full of mystery as all the other fundamental concepts pertaining to being. We do not know what unity is in truth; we are acquainted with unity only in the irreducible duality of universal unity and particular unity, and we can never make the two aspects coincide. We can never lay hold of what unity is beyond this duality. The concept of unity, then, despite its manifest obviousness, remains a forever inscrutable mystery. We think we know, of course, what "a man", "a bird", or "a book" is. However, as soon as we press the question, as soon as we ask ourselves whether we mean "any" instance falling under the unity of the species man, bird, or book, irrespective of which specimen we have in mind, or whether by "a" we mean this definite, uniquely occurring thing that can never be substituted by all its fellow members of the species, we see clearly just how far the unity of unity itself slips through our fingers. We can lay hold of this unity only in a movement in which we go out from the empty universal to the particular and return to the universal laden with its fullness. And vice versa: we proceed from the limited particular to the universal in order to return to the particular with its breadth. The movement that needs to occur here is the same that had to be performed on a previous level in the circulation between essence and appearance, which was reflected noetically in the circulation between sensory intuition and the concept.

The circling movement that thought is constrained to perform here implies anything but a gradual, linear conquest of the mystery. The mystery resists any attempt to "work it out" by means of a progressive dialectic. It equally resists any monism of concepts and definitions that

would naively or even subtly paste over the polarity of true differences. Just as the gap between essence and existence can never be closed by thought, there is no way ever to bridge in any real sense the gaps between essence and appearance, universality and particularity. To observe their existence and to circle in an eternal movement around the mystery that they reveal—this is what thought must do. This mystery is not unintelligible; it is sense-laden and harmonious; like an inexhaustible well of knowledge and contemplation, it satisfies again and again our every desire for understanding. For the polarity of essence and appearance, of universality and particularity, reveals *each time more* of the being than the knower expects. We can be *aware* that there are two movements: the movement from the essence to the appearance and the movement from the appearance to the essence; the movement from the universal to the particular and the movement from the particular to the universal. It is impossible, however, really to actuate both movements simultaneously. Thus, one pole always and essentially escapes us, and the movement of thought never comes to an end. In revealing itself, a being demonstrates its ever greater fullness and thus its ineliminable mystery.

3. The Word

At first, the appearance of the essence presented itself in the inessential guise of the world of images, behind whose variegated abundance the essence lay hidden and unknowable. But it subsequently turned out that the images could not be understood except in terms of expression and significance. The essence was not itself its appearance. Nevertheless it appeared in the image to the extent that it was able to transpose its depth onto the imaginal surface. However, the phenomenon of expression was not static; rather, the image challenged thought to move, to search for the essence through the image. The unreality of the image itself invited us to do this by striving to dissolve itself back into the essence through the revelation of its own inessentiality and transience, while the essence, for its part, wished to display itself in the image. Thought followed this movement by forming the concept in abstraction, or, what is the same, through the "conversion" of the empty intellective capacity to the concrete fullness of sensory intuition.

This process finally reaches its culmination where the image is fitted with its highest function: in the word. The sensible appearance as such was already a revelation of the essence and thus a kind of language. The sensible sign contained a fullness of sense. However, this sense did not present itself as belonging to the sign as such but rather as the emergence of an intimate and hidden reality. The leaf, the flower, and the fruit are, of course, beautiful and pleasing even as appearances, but they demand to be interpreted as the revelations of the life principle at work in them, which does not appear as such. Only when we understand the depth along with the surface does the latter take on a decipherable meaning.

Where the appearance of the essence becomes the absolute, free creation of a subjective interiority, hence, where nature-bound expression becomes an intellectual word, the movement of exteriorization, the exhibition of interiority, also attains its *telos*. Every being that has a nature (in contrast to spirit) also has a natural language in which it has always already gone outside of itself. But the purer spiritual freedom becomes, the more this exteriorization becomes a free, creative act that (alone) mediates both the existence and the essence of a spiritual interiority. The sensible sign is now in truth absolved from the essence, inasmuch as the connection established by the immediate relation of expression is replaced by a new, arbitrary connection: linguistic creation. The sounds of a word do not betray the essence of the speaker in the same way that, for example,

his tone of voice or the laughter accompanying his speech expresses something of his frame of mind. The arbitrariness of the appearance involved in speech, which is free, spans the arc between inside and outside with much greater intensity. For if, on the one hand, the freedom to choose the signs strictly forbids any direct intuition of the essence that speaks itself in them—which means that the possibility of conscious deception also enters the scene—it is the same freedom of utterance that, on the other hand, enables something that exceeds the power of mere expression: a direct display of the innermost essence.

Of course, the expression is not abolished as such: the whole sensory sphere also resonates in human language, and vowels and consonants, sound patterns and syntactical forms do not lose their immediate expressive value. But all of these things are now perfectly subordinated to the spiritual sense. The word is freighted with a content that exceeds even the load placed on the relation of expression. Thus, the word is able to reveal much more by effacing itself in service than by emphasizing itself in dominion. Intellectual language is therefore much poorer in sensory expression than immediate, symbolic speech. It imparts a maximum of intellectual content through a minimum of sense material. It completes the sacrificial reversion of the image that, having recognized its own inadequacy, returns into the fullness of the self-revealing ground. (The present discussion concentrates on human language, in which the sensible expressive relation is placed at the disposal of a suprasensible, intellectual end. Therefore, this form of language allows no direct inference as to the form of language that pure spirits might have, because in their case the world of images does not intervene as linguistic material.) In man's sense-bound language, then, the image is maximally transparent to the essence precisely insofar as it is not an expression but only a sign of the content that is to be spoken. It is precisely the inconspicuousness of the word that enables us to measure the excessive magnitude of what the mind holds within itself.

The spoken, sounding word is only one, albeit the paradigmatic, form of intellectual speech. Other forms that are not essentially different from the spoken word are gestural language, "dumb show", and, in fine, every mode of expressing intellectual content through sensible images. The languages of the various arts belong here; for they all surpass purely natural expression. Of course, the arts are closer, and more bound, to nature than free verbal language. Nonetheless, they contain broad areas of free agreement and convention, "stylistic forms" whose differences are analogous to the differences among the world's languages. The excitement of the artistic language of, for example, architecture and music consists in the freedom with which nature-bound expressive forms can be used to bring out the inner contents of the mind. A necessary relation between essence and appearance, hence, a form of truth given in nature, is reshaped by a free relation, so that what is a necessity itself becomes itself the expression of freedom.

Furthermore, the linguistic word includes all free, conventional combinations and groupings of intellectual contents, the "general notions" that lie ready to hand for communication. We are not speaking here of the original power of intellectual abstraction and conceptualization but of what belongs to the official language and so is at the disposal of the speaker as official conceptual material that he takes over without reflection. Millions of speakers, both past and present, have made use of these tools and have more or less filed them down and abraded them. They are the ownerless property of whoever wants to express himself. They belong much more to the matter of language than to its form. They are, to an almost greater degree than even the spoken, audible word, ready-made to receive the content of the individual's thought, when their form does not already determine and mold it in advance. For the same reason, they also pose a much greater

threat to the freedom and personality of expression, partly because they dispense the speaker from the effort of finding *le mot juste* and invite a kind of indolence in intellectual discourse, partly because they give the listener the impression that he already knows what he is hearing because he is familiar with the forms in which a new thought is presented. These thought patterns completely cover over the free revelation of the unique personality with an anonymous, impersonal layer, indeed, with a whole system of veils, disguises, and masks that present themselves to whoever would express himself as the customary, comfortable, universally available, and least taxing means for the job. There are so many of these garments to receive and envelop the naked personal word, and they are so suited to every situation, that for the most part it is harder to recognize one's personal word under all this clothing than it is to find an already existing expression for one's personal opinion; harder to penetrate the waste of conventions and to create a valid field of expression than to go about dressed like everyman in the first garment that comes along.

Because of their overabundance, these expressive forms get entangled in one another, as it were, so that one can no longer make out any precise boundaries and sectors among them. They overlap and issue from one another in a continuous movement: from spirit's personhood, to spiritual nature, to pure matter; from the genesis of the interior word and the formation of the concept to the general patterns of speech, to the freshly coined word. A new picture, seemingly opposed to what was said before, now takes shape. At the beginning of this section, the spiritual word appeared as detached from nature, as a free creation of a free self-revelation that, originating in an act of the will, was suited to give expression to the spirit's dignity. Now, however, the entire spiritual sphere seems powerless to detach itself with any kind of sovereignty from the sphere of sense and matter. It seems, on the contrary, to fall wholly into the clutches of the world of images and its inessentiality. What ought to be a free outward manifestation of spirit now seems to have become a hopeless alienation of mind, mere chatter stripped of all dignity. What ought to have served spirit, to have been available to it for the creation of new, free forms of speech, seems to have gained such power over it that spirit passes through life ensnared and enchained on every side.

To be sure, this aspect of spirit's externalization exposes it to perilous risks. Within its drastic temptations and inauthentic forms, however, it reveals precisely the above-mentioned continuity between spirit and sense, soul and body, inner content and outer expression, the perfect hiddenness of interiority and the perfect accessibility of exteriority. This revelation is so irrefragable that it sheds decisive light on the whole problem of knowledge. Once we see the situation in these terms, it would be an idle abstraction to ask ourselves how the spirit can ever manage to express itself linguistically in alien images. After all, we find the spirit always already expressed in such images, and we find the images always already charged with such spiritual functions. In other words, the bridges already exist, the spirit is already imaged, and the image already spiritualized. The child who awakens to consciousness does not enter into the world as a pure spirit in order to tackle the problem of expression from scratch. Rather, the child awakens from subspiritual life, where there was already a natural relation of expression between inside and outside and where these natural correspondences between signification and the signified were always already saturated with human and spiritual expressive relations. The child's intellectual life unfolds from the sensory sphere, but the latter is always already specific to a spiritual being. Likewise, the child's transition from spontaneous expressive relations to intellectual expression is

even more natural because, in the child's environment, the former have always already been embedded in the latter.

There is nothing gentler or more continuous than this emergence of man's spirit out of the realm of unconscious nature. The living form of man's truth unfolds from a single seed as imperceptibly as the bodily organism grows up. The space of the spiritual soul unfolds harmoniously upward from the senses; on the one side, it is reflected inward into the depths of a free subject, while on the other side it is unfurled outward into the breadth of a worldwide horizon. This unfolding begins from an indeterminate, equilibrated, unconscious midpoint between inside and outside, body and soul, natural expression and state of being expressed. It is sustained both by the energies of the subject, whose operation originates from within, and the influences of the objective, outside world and the environment, which gradually introduce the new being into humanity's traditions and commonly accepted expressive forms.

The differentiated polarity of subject and object emerges gradually from the seemingly indifferent midpoint of the world of images, which as such is neither subjective nor objective. The process of differentiation, which originates from the sensory imagination, increasingly pulls the poles apart to the point of maximum tension, which is expressed in the free act of speaking the word. The midpoint, that is, the power of imagination, already contains the seed of the whole differentiation. This differentiation lies in the mysterious dual unity that characterizes the relation of expression. It is situated in the never-ceasing separation and reunification of the signifier and the signified. At the heart of the image world, the relation of expression awakens like a restless pulsation. Its movement widens out in ever broader swings of the pendulum to the full span of the subject-object polarity. The source of this movement, that is, the power of imagination, plays an equally productive and receptive role. The images differentiate into expressions originating from the inside and expressions originating from the outside. As the development of subjectivity intensifies, the awakening consciousness assimilates external, already existing expressive forms and, in equal measure, invents new, spontaneous ones from within. The growth of its self-consciousness and the growth of its consciousness of the world are thus totally simultaneous. Spreading out from the midpoint represented by the images, consciousness increasingly detaches itself from them in freedom. At the same time, through progressive formation, it grows into the world and into its typical and traditional forms of expression.

It is from the vantage point of this radical unity that we must see the relationship between man's consciousness and his word. Only this perspective can keep us from stumbling later on into a tangle of unfruitful pseudo-problems. Now that we have grasped this unity at its root, we can distinguish usefully the two main branches of the question: the word as the expression of the free person, on the one hand, and the word as a function of being in the world and in the community, on the other.

1. As soon as the first glimmers of awareness present in the imagination attain the inward depth of the spirit's clear consciousness, the possibility of intellectual speech is also born. As was shown earlier (see p. 93), the single act in which I lay hold of myself contains, with equal immediacy, unity with myself and objectivity vis-à-vis myself. Insofar as it is one with itself, the spirit takes cognizance of the unity of thinking and being. In other words, it knows what unveiled being, what truth is. To the extent that it is being, it is also, and simultaneously, truth. But the mind is not this unity only in an immediate, "monistic" form. Its self-possession becomes the act

of a living mind only when it can grasp itself, which it cannot do without some kind of distinction. It must for a moment divide itself "dualistically" into two forms in order to apprehend its own identity experientially in their reunion. It must be able to project an image of itself and to see that this image corresponds to itself. This self-image that the spirit projects, that expresses it, and in which it recognizes itself is its original spiritual word.

It is only in this word that the spirit becomes truly free, because it is thereby enabled to go forth from itself and its immediate unity without therefore losing its oneness. If the spirit were nothing but a monistic identity with itself, it would have no capacity to go out of itself while remaining what it is—spirit. Rather, being a windowless monad, it would of necessity be eternally occupied merely with its own selfhood. The compass of its knowledge would necessarily be identical with that of its being. That the spirit, while remaining within its identity, can set itself over against itself and lay hold of itself again is the *sine qua non* of its capacity to know things other than itself without prejudice to its freedom and completeness as spirit. Moreover, the spirit must, in an original, free expressive movement, externalize itself for itself so that, in pronouncing this first word, which it immediately takes back into itself and recognizes as identical with its self-understanding, it can test its ability to speak other true words. This primary juxtaposition within its own identity will be the context in which it can place all subsequent objective knowledge of other things. Although this mediated unity, whose truth can be immediately verified by reference to immediate unity, belongs to the spirit as such and, therefore, cannot yet be termed discourse in the proper sense, the possibility and legitimacy of discursive knowledge nonetheless begins here. The human spirit's activity of sifting, dividing, and uniting (*intellectus dividens et componens*),[3] in which it spends most of its time and which is its principal mode of elaborating truth, depends ultimately on a first mediation, that is, distinction and reunification, within its immediacy. But this first mediation is also the origin of all communication. Knowing and saying form an inseparable unity.

For the time being, however, we must explain even more precisely the role of the internal, mental word (*verbum mentis*). This original word in which the mind expresses itself becomes its own object, and thereby lays hold of itself as a self, is, at one and the same time, the closure of the subject's interior space in itself and its aperture *ad extra*. These two functions can be exercised only if they are strictly simultaneous. It is, in fact, only insofar as this intellectual space is reflected into itself that it can also reproduce knowledge of foreign objects in itself. The mental word makes two things possible: the segregation of the self from the world and its integration into the world. It sets the self apart from the world by giving it the spiritual freedom to distinguish and retrieve itself in itself without the need for any other thing. It thereby puts the truth relation, and—in an abiding identity—the criterion for measuring it, into the self's hands.

In principle, then, the self is free in its outward manifestations and is no longer bound to any natural expressive form. This freedom therefore necessarily finds expression in the distinction between the internal and the external word. Because the self possesses its interior word for itself, it can shape its exterior word at will. And because it surveys the relation between itself and its word and expression, it can also judge the relation between its interior and its exterior word. Moreover, just as the mental word gives the self the freedom to be a self, it also gives it the freedom to open itself freely to the world. For the freedom that is founded in the word already implies this opening. Insofar as consciousness understands itself as being, it has in principle understood being as such, in an intuition so original, with an evidence so unsurpassable, that

nothing can be more certain than this understanding. Being and consciousness coincide so immediately that any distinction between them would be totally futile. In this insight, being is understood, not as the predicate of a subject that escapes further specification and transcends knowledge, but as the subject itself, indeed, as the subject of subjects, to which all possible predicates can be assigned, behind which there can be nothing other than—nothing. If consciousness has understood any being, it has in principle understood all being. Nothing that is can remain alien to it; nothing that is can be essentially irrational. For this reason, if consciousness has laid hold of itself as being, it is in principle capable of opening itself to all being and, in virtue of the mental word, of being open to it also in fact. Immediate self-knowledge means the potential knowledge of all beings, insofar as they form a unity in being. The self-knowledge mediated in the mental word enables this potential knowledge to pass over at any time into an actual knowledge. It opens up consciousness by fitting it out with the a priori capacity for speech, for talking and listening.

The locus of this first analysis and synthesis is prior to all discursive knowledge; it lies in the still unrestricted openness of the horizon of being. It is thus the abiding foundation of every particular, limited intellectual activity that, reflecting the structure of man's cognitional powers, moves between the senses and the concept. In virtue of its comprehensive breadth, which spans the whole of being, this first operation of the mind essentially includes all other mental and submental functions of thought.

Here we find the key to the obscure problem of abstraction. The spirit has grasped in itself the equation of being and image. On account of this intuition, it possesses the equation between the *verbum mentis* and the sensible word in which it expresses the mental word. Consequently, the spirit is now equipped to apprehend other sensory expressions and to read them as expressions of intellect. It has, in an unsurpassable experience, grasped the meaningfulness of being; it therefore acts in accord with both the essence of being and its own essence when it searches for the sense of everything it encounters. And since it has experienced in its own self-expression that spirit gives meaning to the sensible, it necessarily reverses the process when it encounters other sensible objects, which it investigates in order to discover the spiritual content that expresses itself in them.

Although the sensorium, in the guise of imagination, appeared as the source of the spirit, which it thus seemed to encompass and to release from itself, this relationship is clearly reversed when the spirit attains self-consciousness. The temporal priority of the senses and of the images gives way to the real priority of the spirit, which includes in its larger space the smaller space of sense perception. It can make free use of the sensory sphere as a field of expression and, for the same reason, can in principle interpret it as a sphere of expression. This does not mean that it is capable of immediately understanding every individual expressive phenomenon, every natural or spiritual language. Sense can also be hidden, and there can be incomprehensible, indeed, absurd things in the world. But this is a particular aspect that is captured within being as a whole, whose meaningfulness and, therefore, interpretability as a whole stand firm. Even when the intellect cannot interpret a particular, it knows that it has beheld the self-manifestation of something meaningful.

Being encompassed by the intellect as a field of expression, the sensorium has already always transcended the narrowness of subjectivity and has become an inter subjective medium of

expression. In order to grasp this, it is not enough to invoke the indifference of the image world, as if it already guaranteed escape from the narrowness of subjectivity. After all, the images are in the first instance precisely the incommunicable *quid* that naturally grounds the closed completeness of the subject's inward space. If, therefore, the world of images is to become an inter-subjective space for language and communication, it can do so only in the more comprehensive space of the spirit. At this point, we need to recall the conclusions drawn from our discussion of universality and particularity. The universal as such never exists outside the particular, although it does not follow from this that the particular cannot be a presentation of the universal. Everything that an individual man is and does expresses a possibility of the essence "man" that he shares identically with all other men—and yet, nothing that he is and does is ever an abstraction but is always the expression of his concrete, personal, never-to-be repeated being.

We saw, then, the impossibility of gaining a bird's-eye view of the concept of unity, which tries to center the singular thing both on the side of the species and on the side of the individual. Yet the self-consciousness of the self-apprehending spirit cannot avoid the question of unity. In the primordial identity of being and thinking, it lays hold of itself as a being in its own right and, at the same time, discovers in this act the universality of the concept of being. But at this very moment it has to face the question of unity in its toughest form: the unresolved relationship between its unique spiritual essence, on the one hand, and its openness to all knowable being outside itself, on the other.

This openness belongs intrinsically to the spirit's constitution as such. Indeed, its universality (*quodammodo omnia*)[4] is precisely what enables it to be this singular spirit. Thus, while in subspiritual nature the problem of the universal and the particular, hence, the problem of unity, has to do only with being, at the level of spirit it becomes a problem of cognition as well. But this situation carries the further implication that the self-consciousness of the individual mind must, with equal immediacy, be a consciousness of others. It is necessarily a social consciousness. In other words, the individual cannot know that he is an individual, that he is a self-contained spirit, without—and this follows from his knowledge of his potential universality—knowing at the very same time that other spirits exist as well. Both aspects of unity are so interwoven that it is impossible to catch sight of the unity of the individual without simultaneously becoming conscious of the unity of the species. For the unity of the species is also a real, ontological form of unity (and by no means just an abstract notion pieced together from similarities among individuals).

Thanks to this aspect of unity, then, all individual substances share and communicate in one and the same specific essence. It thus creates a communion of being and destiny so intimate, a solidarity so primary, that the consciousness of this community is necessarily as keen and as evident as the awareness of individual unity. A man knows that he is one man among many as primordially as he knows that he is a man. He knows that he can, and already always has been, spoken to by his fellow men as primordially as he knows that he can express himself in spiritual and sensible language. The transcendence of knowledge, which is given a priori in the universality of the horizon of being, implies a real immanence of the other subjects that by nature participate in the equal, identical universality. The transcendence of the individual knowing subject *is* transcendence only because this subject expresses something of the ontological unity of human nature in which it is immanent.

Now, it by no means follows from this that the contents of other subjects are present in the individual subject's intellectual receptacle in the form of innate ideas. No subject possesses such ideas. Nevertheless, Leibniz' monadology is correct on one point: the spiritual space of each individual subject is immanent in that of every other, and this immanence is much more than a merely potential opening among them—which, after all, could exist even if minds were conceived as purely individual substances that entered into reciprocal relation only as an afterthought. On this hypothesis, each of them would begin with a self-contained self-consciousness, and the question of how these closed spaces could be thrust open and brought into relation would arise only later. But this picture, which seems to be tacitly presupposed by a good number of epistemologies, creates for itself arduous problems where in reality there are none. The human being who awakens to himself awakens just as immediately to the Thou—not just psychologically, but also gnoseologically, because ontologically. It is thus a moot point whether he becomes certain of the existence of the Thou by means of an indirect inference or an indirect vital empathy. Both methods may help him to know the existence of the Thou. However, neither provides the decisive access to the Thou. We must rather seek this access in the primordial disclosure of the real unity of the specific essence, which is the condition of the possibility of existence as an individual person. In other words, contact between the I and the Thou is always already given—including the possibility of, indeed, the disponibility for, exchange through the word spoken and heard.

2. This last insight already suggests a first counterweight to any overemphasis on the individual spirit's self-contained freedom. In our description of the phenomenon of significance, our task was to show that the two elements in the duality of essence and image or of expressed content and expression are not related as act and potency or stationary fullness and mobile emptiness. Rather, even the essence is dependent upon its expressive field—the transience of the images exhibits precisely the potentiality of the being that discloses itself in them. Similarly, our account of the spirit's self-conscious expression in terms of the word is not meant to suggest that the genesis of the interior word is an initial, self-sufficient phase that only subsequently finds outward expression in the language of images. Our consideration of the genesis of consciousness Itself has made it clear that the spiritual center of consciousness develops out of the sensory center of imagination. Nor does the spirit detach itself at any later phase from this origin. Its essential activity remains that of ordering, describing, interpreting, and understanding sensible objects, and it is capable of elevating itself beyond the sensible only insofar as the sensible itself guides it to this height ("tantum se nostra naturalis cognitio extendere potest, in quantum manuduci potest per sensibilia", *S. Th*. 1, q. 12, a. 12 c).[5] Only by turning in this way to the senses does it know and experience itself. In the mirror of matter it knows the spirit; in the mirror of the exterior, it catches sight of the interior.

It follows that the word it speaks is not simply the expression of an interior, already determined, immovable intellection, but is likewise an ingredient in the determination of this intellection itself. The utterance always also enriches the utterer: in exhibiting himself; he becomes understandable to himself, he gets an overall picture of his capacities, his assets, and his deficits. Often enough, the word spoken is a surprise for its speaker himself. In developing the first point, it was necessary expressly to separate—and to keep separate—the intelligible and sensible words, in order to contrast spiritual speech from mere natural signification. Now, however, we need once more the organic unity of the two; this unity, taken as a whole, is the one external representation of the spirit. The cohesive force of this unity implies two things: the interior word is called forth

only by a summons from outside and is therefore always directed to an exterior answer to that summons; conversely, the exterior summons is understood as such only by means of the interior word and can be answered only by means of an exterior word. Insofar as the spirit stands on the foundation of the senses and itself has a nature, it is always already inserted into the movement of expression and is on its way to actualizing itself in it. It cannot come to know itself except in this movement away from itself toward the world and other spirits. Insofar as it is sensible and natural, it is always already expressed, not primarily for itself, but for others. Indeed, man cannot see his own face as all others behold it. Even if he looks in a mirror, he sees himself, not as he is, but as an inverse image of himself. And what is true of his outward image is also true, in a deeper way, of his spiritual essence: he comes to know it (albeit only to a certain extent) only when it appears to him in the mirror of the world around him and his objective answer to its summons. The distinction between the interior and the exterior word in the spirit is meant, not to replace the external relation of expression with an interior, subjective self-relation, but to enable spirit's free, and thus more perfect, self-display *ad extra*.

Being-for-itself and self-transcendence thus grow simultaneously in the spiritual substance. By virtue of reflection, it detaches itself as a being-for-itself and closes the space of its interior consciousness, which it will open again only in freedom. Yet the interior world that closes in this way is itself formed by, and filled with, the things of the exterior world, and the free word that proceeds from it is always already a response to the urgent questions of the world outside it. This world has presented its concerns in the subject's space, in order to get information from the subject about its sense and essence. Only in furnishing this information does the subject get information about itself, its own sense and essence.

Subspiritual entities are expressed to one another in virtue of mere nature, insofar as they have need of this expression. They are naturally unveiled to one another. They live in their truth insofar as they are open to one another in this way and their essence does not refuse to appear. Man, by contrast, must supplement natural unveiling with free self-surrender in order to attain the same degree of truth. Whereas natural entities profess and confess their essence by their sheer appearance, man must make a free confession of himself. If he failed to do so, if he tried to restrict his truth to his interior word, he would deprive the world of a piece of itself. A part of the truth would be missing, a window closed, a light extinguished, a treasure buried wherever he stood. But this egotist would have no joy in his own truth; having refused the unveiling of being, he would have forfeited the truth that is most truly his own. Free entities express themselves, not only to one another, but also in one another. It is only by placing their truth in the space of the Thou through their free word that they first learn who they themselves are. They find themselves in one another. As the spirit's solitude increases with its being-for-itself, its communion with others increases in the same measure. In taking possession of itself as a person, it simultaneously lays hold of the essence of all its fellow persons. Thus, its responsibility for the whole community grows with its responsibility for its own personal essence. Whoever perfects himself for himself must immediately do so also for and in others. Whoever aspires to his own truth aspires directly also to the truth of others: his truth in them and their truth in him. Unity of essence brings about such a profound solidarity of destiny that there is no more room among the members of the community for any exclusive possession of the truth (without prejudice to the mystery reserved to each person). What belongs to one must be for the benefit of all; what one keeps for himself is withheld from all.

At this point, the word, which is the expression of an essence endowed with freedom, becomes a *dialogical* word. By the same token, truth, as the unveiling of spiritual being, takes on a dialogical, social character. Truth resides primarily in the relation between essence and image, which now explicitly spans the gulf between I and Thou, so much so that the I achieves its expression (and thus its full essence) only in the space of the Thou. The spirit's self-utterance is always already a dialogue with other spirits, and the full truth comes to light only in this suprasubjective conversation. Here the subject discovers both the truth of the world and its own truth. The *logos* of being initially appeared only as a mysterious doubling of being in image, expression, and concept; it hovered in suspense between unity and duality within the closed confines of the essence. Now, however, it opens to become an intersubjective *logos*, which, suspended between the unity of essence and the plurality of persons, establishes the unity of the word in the form of speech and answer.

In its inmost core, the form of this *logos* oscillates and refuses to be pinned down. In order to be a real mutual give and take, the *logos* must rely on individual subjects like sturdy columns. Without assurance of their free interiority, there could never be any dialogue of truth. Any radical socialization of the free spirit would immediately destroy both the spirit and freedom. But it would be equally impossible to set in motion the dialogue of truth if these subjects did not always already find themselves in a reciprocal relation, if their truth could be realized in some way other than in interpenetrating dialogue. The interior, solitary word and the exterior, communal word form a mobile unity, in which they can be neither separated nor simply fused.

The criterion of truth thus lodges partly in the I and partly in the Thou. It can be attained as a whole only in the movement of dialogue. The criterion within the I lies in the evidence of the *cogito ergo sum*, in the actually experienced coincidence of being and consciousness, to which all mediate evidence must be reduced as the principle and measure of all truth. Every discursive judgment that is made through analysis and synthesis, abstraction from the senses and concretion of the concept, derives its legitimacy from this ultimate, incontestable evidence present in the self-contained space of the spirit. And yet each epiphany of this evidence occurs only when the spirit goes out of itself in order to record its personal word in objective work in the world, in objective conversation with the Thou outside itself. It can look into the mirror of the inner evidence only when it seeks itself not in itself but in what is not itself. This going out of itself, in which the spirit discloses itself to the community and finds its truth in it, is so much the movement of truth that it becomes truth's second criterion. In this way, the analysis and synthesis of the *intellectus dividens et componens* extend beyond the solitary activity of the spirit to the ever new differentiation and union between self and community, in order to find in dialogical movement its rest and its conclusion (which always remains open).

The truth of this world remains suspended between these two poles. Sustained by the interior evidence of the individual spirit, truth is solid enough to resist falling into a shifting relativism. The spirit receives an abundance of light and certainty in the lightning-like epiphany of being's essence; bolstered by this truth, which is like a light streaming into it from the eternal truth, it has the confidence to measure, order, and direct every relation it encounters in the created world in accord with, and in orientation toward, this truth. Nevertheless, it always receives this evidence for one purpose: as a starting-point for new movement. This evidence is less a stationary content than a principle, a tool of thought, a ferment that exists for the progressive realization—in an inconclusible movement—of truth within the world. The certainty of truth is a gift that is meant

to be brought and distributed immediately wherever there is uncertainty, a mission to be exercised wherever the light of truth has not yet penetrated. The spirit thus has a twofold task: to allow its certainty to shine as a light into the darkness but, at the same time, to understand itself as the always new darkness, which is lit up only by moving toward the light. It has the truth only insofar as it bears it in itself like the spark of a mission in order to proclaim it outside itself. It has the truth only insofar as it finds itself, as a member and part of the world, in the eternal movement of dialogue, insofar as it moves toward the truth, insofar as it strives at each moment to realize it anew by the movement of its existence.

The truth of the world is thus neither a mere being nor a mere becoming. If it were merely being, it would be one with the eternal truth and would no longer need to regain the truth from moment to moment. If it were a mere becoming, a constant flux, it would no longer be truth but would be one and the same as the inessential transitoriness of the images. But in this way it is simultaneously becoming and being: it receives ever new assurance of its being for the sake of ever new becoming; it is enkindled ever anew by the spark of being in order that it may strive after this being in eternal becoming. Both things, being and becoming, are equally legitimate parts of the full picture of truth. Truth's dialogical essence is not something that must finally be overcome for the sake of a simply static possession. Rather, the dialogical element itself is the permanent vitality—which only goes on growing in intensity—of the essence of truth. A representation of truth without this living quality, which is perpetually re-igniting, welling up, driving forward, would be a caricature and a falsification. Truth without life, without dialogue, would immediately cease to have any meaning: it would be unveiling, but no longer unveiling for anyone, a word that would no longer be heard and answered, a light that could no longer shine because of a lack of air. It bears repeating here that we cannot consider inward self-evidence as complete act and outward actualization as incomplete potency. Rather, both aspects are inseparable; they display together the one—actual and potential—mystery of creaturely truth as a living reality. For even inner self-evidence is a constantly new starting point for the realization, in movement, of itself.

Once again, then, we see that the sense of truth as a whole is *love*. We have seen that the unveiling of being transcends the I in order to attain completion in the Thou. We have seen, then, that the *logos* of being becomes *dialogos*, which is to say, a communication that can never be closed again. We can now add that, as soon as this occurs, love appears as the definitive interpretation of the entire movement. Love alone justifies self-consciousness and the interior word: as the condition of the possibility of further self-giving. It alone ensures the meaningfulness of the external word that each speaks in the other. Without love, such an intimacy and communion among beings could appear only as bothersome, embarrassing, and indiscreet: everyone would be satisfied with his own truth and at most would use the truth of others in order to fill his own treasury of, and need for, knowledge. In such a world, truth would be senseless. Its whole movement as communication would, as a movement, no longer signify; its own act, whose sense is love, would become unintelligible, and truth itself would thereby cease to be true. It might still be the formal norm whereby one could measure things, but this norm would have become empty, indeed, self-contradictory.

In this way, we also get a clearer picture of the unity of faith and knowledge, which we described earlier (cf. p. 96), in particular of how faith is not simply an imperfect, preliminary stage of knowing, but increasing knowing implies increasing faith. When a spirit freely expresses itself,

and thus makes itself known in a way that is not objectively verifiable, faith is the only objective attitude in which to receive truth. But this is what occurs when a spirit speaks a word *ad extra*. He who utters this word backs it up by his free authority, putting his own self on the line: he vouches for the truth of his statement and can demand faith on the basis of his commitment. The receivers are free to check the truth of this statement, as far as they are able, against the inner criteria of evidence. In this light, they may compare it with other statements, facts, and indications in order to ascertain its truth. That notwithstanding, an element of faith and trust attaches to every exchange between free beings. Only through the ever new risk of faith in the truth revealed by others can the spirit gradually assure itself of the objective, intersubjective world of truth. As soon as love is seen to be the sense of truth, this demand for faith will no longer appear rigid or irrational. For just as one's own revelation is a free, creative re-presentation of oneself that necessarily demands faith on the part of the other, the reception of another's truth can occur only within the same accommodating attitude. In love, then, it is immediately understandable why faith is necessary for knowledge.

The faith meant here has nothing to do with vacillating opinion. Opinion and conjecture (δόξα) are at home in the image world, in which there is no objectively communicable knowledge. Faith, by contrast, is an essential component of intellectual knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), insofar as such knowledge is always also a matter of one person's testimony before another that moves dialogically between them. Indeed, ever more certain knowledge generates ever stronger faith, because the ever new experience of the certainty of truth gives rise to an ever new readiness to entrust oneself to the movement of truth.

Wherever freedom is in play, responsibility comes into play as well. Faith in accepting truth is the correlative of responsibility in pronouncing it. The transcendence of the movement of truth reaches its logical conclusion in this responsibility. The more the subject pledges itself on behalf of a truth it proclaims, the less satisfactory is its mere protestation that things really are as it claims or that its statement is worthy of belief. Increasingly, then, die statement itself must be put to the test through an intensified commitment. Now, this commitment can consist only in a *deed*. The subject will prove by its life, its action, and, if necessary, its suffering that its whole being stands behind what it says. It throws its whole self into the balance. And it is precisely this gesture that brings its utterance to completion. Initially, it pronounced its truth as one enunciates a theoretically correct proposition. But, in doing so, it shouldered a responsibility that compelled it to go farther than it had foreseen and to make ever new, ever weightier statements. In the end, it is forced to utter its whole existence, its inmost essence, in deeds. The subject's life thus becomes the proof of its assertion. Life shows what weight its truth actually had. And in fact the truth that it has pronounced comes to the perfection of truth only through this testimony of life. In this way, a lover can profess his love; but whether his oath is not believed or whether he himself feels compelled to demonstrate its truth, he will, as time goes on, adduce his whole life and all his actions as evidence of his assertion and so, if his first declaration was really true, direct his life according to the norm of truth. Love, therefore, shows itself more in works than in words: because works are the gravity of its words. Without proof through the deed, not only would love's word be not fully credible, but the lover himself would not really have exhibited or uttered his love. He would not have had the chance to unveil his own hidden mystery and to make visible its power, depth, and fullness.

The response to such an existential proof can only be a firm, certain faith. This faith is knowledge; it has, in fact, received more proofs than were strictly necessary for a theoretical certainty. However, even as knowledge, it nonetheless remains faith, because it includes the act of recognizing the lover's ethical commitment and of placing trust in the truth that he proffers. The element of faith that the beloved brings in response to the lover does not weaken certainty but is itself the specific quality that the free answer to a freely proffered truth by definition has to have. It is the sign that one's answer to the ethical significance inherent in love's word is itself ethically significant. Trusting abandonment remains the a priori of every true knowledge between free spirits, and this attitude fulfills and completes both the objectification of the subject in the object and the objectivity of the receiving object vis-à-vis the subject. Faith, then, is so little in opposition to, or even in tension with, knowledge that only the unity of knowledge and faith is perfect knowledge, perfect openness to truth.

The truth, as a free deed, has become entirely an ethical matter. The ethical criterion thus allows us to shed new light on the double criterion of truth and to corroborate its justness. The measurement of the ethical deed as such is incumbent upon *conscience*. Whatever else we say, one thing is certain: conscience is a single function. Man does not have two consciences. But the unity of conscience follows the guidance of two different norms, thereby revealing itself to be a creaturely measure. The first norm of conscience is its interior evidence, in which it recognizes good as good and evil as evil. Man has to direct his ethical action by this evidence, so much so that he may not perform an act whose morality his conscience doubts. Nevertheless, this inner evidence of conscience is not autonomous and incontestable. Rather, it has to take its bearings from the objective norms of morality. Otherwise we could not speak of an erroneous conscience or enjoin upon it the duty of correcting itself in accord with the objective norms of good and evil. To be sure, someone who has performed an objectively forbidden act in obedience to an erroneous conscience is innocent and not liable to punishment. Nevertheless, he would become culpable as soon as his insistence on a supposed autonomy led him to refuse to recognize any law other than his own conscience and thus to balk at orienting it in accord with a suprapersonal norm that obliged him just like everyone else.

The same movement between self-determination and determination by another, between interior and exterior norm, that comes so clearly to the fore in the domain of the good persists also in the realm of the true. This two-sidedness is a hallmark of worldly goodness and truth: only thus do both reflect the character of created being and its essential duality of act and potency, essence and existence, matter and form. (As we have shown, what is true for truth and goodness is also true for unity.) It would be inconceivable if a being so furrowed by dualities, which proclaim its nonidentity with the divine being, did not also display these same tensions in its fundamental, transcendental properties. Yet although the irreducible duality of the ultimate criteria of worldly truth is an index of its creatureliness, this dissimilarity to God nonetheless reveals something of the divine truth: its intrinsic unity of self-determination and dialogue, on the one hand, and its eternally vital word and surrender, which escape definitive systematization, on the other.

B. Truth as Situation

As it traced the development of the image, through expression and signification, into the intellectual word and dialogue, the previous chapter brought to light the vitality inherent in the truth relation. Our intention now is to compare this vitality more thematically with what we have

said concerning the freedom and intimacy of truth, intimacy appeared as the antithesis of publicity and general availability; it made truth a possession of the individual being endowed with interiority; it underscored the significance of each being-for-itself, of the unicity of the ontological midpoint from which truth reveals itself. This character of being always mine, thine, and his is an irremovable counterweight to the universality of truth. It also unexpectedly deepens everything we have said about expression and word: even if it is outwardly like minions of others, every individual expression and word occurring within the context of speaking and listening acquires the weight of an uninterchangeable, unique event. Truth and its administration thus become situational.

Now, one might object that this view personalizes truth to the point of jeopardizing its universal intelligibility, of endangering its suprapersonal validity, its totality, and therefore, ultimately, its rationality. Before undertaking the description of truth as an always personal situation, then, we can usefully clarify the connection between its universal validity, on the one hand, and its irreducible personal horizon [*Jemeinigkeit*], on the other.

1. The Mobility of the Idea

The freedom of every spirit, indeed, the intimacy of every being, is an essential component of its nature. There is no freedom as such—which would be pure indeterminacy, that is to say, nothing—but only the freedom of a being having a determinate essence and existence. Every worldly entity is primarily a thing of nature, and freedom pertains chiefly to this nature. But nature fundamentally means a totality ordered and moved purposefully and ideologically in accord with an underlying idea that regulates individual movement and thus transcends it. In light of the mobile interrelation between the expression and its content, we can say that this idea is always embodied and realized in nature. The essence is always already exhibited in the appearance. Consequently, it cannot produce itself in an absolute creation by an absolute act of the will. It cannot bring itself forth from total freedom, from indifference to all possibilities, ultimately, from nothing. No, it has always already been thrown into the appearance that naturally expresses its essence. Now, all of this shows that freedom can move only within a framework fixed by the idea and the plan of its respective nature. Freedom within the world always means the realization of the idea of a nature; it is used meaningfully only when, serving and obeying the idea, it helps realize the plan of its own being or that of another. This is also the case precisely where freedom is granted the space in which to cooperate, not only in the unfolding, but also in the shaping of the idea itself. This participation in shaping a thing's purpose and definitive goal is, not an irrational, arbitrary function, but rather an elevation of creaturely freedom to collaboration with God's impartation of meaning in the world.

Now, the plan of the world and the things in it is shaped in part by universal laws and by common natures, genera, and species, which provide the fixed framework for entities'spontaneous and free self-expression. In this respect, truth is public property, and its knowability is suprapersonal. It is the task of the "natural" sciences to investigate these natures and structures, though we must bear in mind that even man has a "nature"—not just insofar as he participates in subspiritual nature, but also insofar as he is spirit. This is no less true of the angel. Because this natural dimension of existence is primarily the domain of structures and laws common to entities in a genus or species, it permits an abstraction that can, without detriment to the truth (*abstractio non mentitur*),[6]

prescind from the individual case (and thus from whoever may happen to be the knowing subject). Here the rationality of truth has the property of a suprapersonal universality.

We see, however, that the transition from this kind of "natural" science to the science of the individual substances that move and realize themselves within the abstract framework of nature is not abrupt but fluid and gradual. This affirmation already follows immediately from our earlier description of the levels of intimacy, where it became clear that even the entities on the lowest level of being, and, to an ever increasing degree, those occupying each higher level, have an interiority that is not completely reducible to any universal. It would thus be perfectly possible, though perhaps not rewarding, to write the history of a particular molecule, of a particular plant, or of a particular animal. This history would contain a bit of truth that could never be deduced from any universal and abstract law. Now, this is especially true when the human spirit freely performs actions that cannot be predicted on the basis of any natural datum—when, in his free encounter with other persons, each unique person brings into being situations whose essential meaning is expressed precisely in their unique occurrence and unrepeatability.

It must be stressed, of course, that truth is less no "rational" when it appears in a form determined by freedom, by personality and situation, than it is when it occurs in the form of abstract nature. To speak of the *individuum ineffabile* is to assert only that the individual can never be transposed without remainder into universal terms, not at all to claim that it therefore cannot be known in its own way. To be sure, as being, and, therefore, the truth of being, gradually shades over from nature to freedom, from universality to unicity, the *method* of knowledge, the adequate medium for receiving the truth, changes along with it. Whereas an impersonal, purely objective posture is sufficient for knowledge of the abstract universal, the reception of the unique and personal requires a *ratio* that itself conforms to the prerequisites and preconditions of personality. That having been said, the fact that an object imposes certain preconditions upon all prospective knowers and is therefore accessible only to those who comply with them obviously does not mean that it is less knowable or less rational in itself than any other object. Its rationality *has an equally universal validity*, only the knowledge of this validity is tied to certain requirements that not everyone is capable of fulfilling. For example, every eye could, theoretically speaking, enjoy the view from the summit of a mountain that is difficult to climb: only there are certain practical obstacles to reaching this vista. This kind of extension can be termed, in contrast to the abstract universality of laws and structures, concrete universality, for the unique as such has universal validity. Our claim is not contradicted by the fact that the truth presented in the concrete form of a uniquely occurring event is, or is meant to be, accessible only to a few, or perhaps just to one, indeed, that this concentration of uniqueness is precisely also what protects truth from anonymous publicity. Even the extreme form of this unicity, the situation—which only one who "was there" fully understands—does not attenuate or erase the meaningful content and thus the rationality of an event. Nor must we forget that every situation, no matter how concrete, always falls under the general concept of situation, which means that the pattern of nature persists even in the field of personal, free utterances and that freedom never becomes freedom from nature.

We remarked above that the transition from universal structures to individual being, which entails the transition from "natural" science to historical science, is a fluid one. This claim requires further elaboration. The idea of an entity itself, which governs how this entity is displayed in existence, therefore shares simultaneously in the realms of "nature" and of "history". The idea is at one and the same time immobile and mobile. It is the total idea that stands as a definitive norm

over existence (εἶδος, ἰδέα) and, at the same time, the form really unfolding *in* existence itself (μορφή ἐντελέχεια) that directs it through constant, flexible readjustment. These two aspects of an entity's plan and raison d'être intimately penetrate each other and together constitute its truth and rationality. The knowledge of this idea must therefore be definitive and normative, on the one hand, and historical and adaptive, on the other. An educator may have painstakingly investigated his pupil's essential make-up, but this does not dispense him from having to accompany with equal painstakingness this pupil's development from phase to phase or from needing to adjust himself to each new situation. The idea of an entity is never expressed in such a way that it loses its infinite possibilities, because the idea itself is never something finished once and for all that is no longer capable of further modulations. After all, the idea of an entity in the world is always the idea of a development, of a path that includes manifold chances, destinies, and changes of fortune. To be sure, insofar as it is a governing norm, the idea comprehends and traces out this path beforehand. Insofar as it is immanent, however, it follows the path in all its phases and thus changes from situation to situation. For instance, the totality of a plant is fixed once and for all at the level of its structural plan, yet it remains open in potency to an infinity of possible modes of concrete actualization. This same totality will actualize itself in completely different ways depending on the climate, the weather, and on favorable or unfavorable chances and influences.

The same is true, to a more intense degree, of the human being in his freedom. There is even less predetermination in the case of man's idea, because it depends, in part, upon his own freedom and the freedom of his environment. The dialogical nature of truth now begins to play a role. What one ought to be and can be is decided, not by some abstract destiny, but always also by the concrete community, whose vitality takes outward shape in the situation of question and answer. The plans of all lives are vitally interlocked. Crucial parts of one man's idea are located within the idea of another. Complementaries meet unexpectedly in unforeseeable encounters; new possibilities spring forth from unfulfilled situations; things that seem incompatible become linked in lasting unity, whereas time unmasks the deceitfulness of seemingly indissoluble bonds.

These intertwinings are, to be sure, immensely various, but their intricacy and copiousness are no argument against their knowability in principle. True, we may get to see only minute fragments of the plan as a whole. We may repeatedly have to refrain from judgment and evaluation because we lose sight of the individual thread in the tangled web of the whole design. Still, none of this constitutes a cogent objection against the rationality of historical life. Theoretically, it remains possible to get a view of the whole picture (of the sort promised us in the comprehensive vision of the Last Judgment). To be sure, the understanding posits relations and weaves contexts of meaning. Yet there is no reason why its judgments should draw only on the abstract objects of the natural sciences and not equally on the paths and meetings making up unique situations. By the same token, historical thinking does not even need to seek abstraction, to strive at all costs to impose upon the course of history, or to underlay it with, a general law, a typology, a morphology, or a periodicity. It need only ponder the unique weight of a unique situation, recognize a great personality in die light of its incomparability, and, in this way, grasp, as nearly as it can, the sense of a particular encounter.

Thus, insofar as the ideas of the world both move themselves and are moved from outside in the most manifold ways, knowing them requires an equally mobile, plastic, and supple understanding that is flexible enough to change along with its changing object in order to read the real law of its unity from the abundance of its transformations. The unchanging determinants of being are so

general and so empty that knowing them is no assurance of any substantial insight into reality. Because beings themselves are alive, only a living thought can apprehend their truth. Whoever wants to grasp this fluidity must not stand watching on the shore, but must jump in and swim along with it. No one ever learns once and for all what life is, but must be docile enough to learn again and again in life's own school. If he were to reject this experience as superfluous, he would become inwardly estranged from life, abstract himself from development, and thereby forfeit knowledge of life. So much so that, humanly speaking, we can hardly imagine eternal providence—whose supratemporal, immutable plan transcends, and thus anticipates, everything that happens in time—except as accompanying each new turn of history. We cannot picture providence, then, except as exercising ever new creative inventiveness to establish and plan, together with the freedoms whose interplay helps shape destiny, the meaning of the world from situation to situation. For from moment to moment, the unforeseeable variety of decisions moves the world toward the realization of some new aspect of the possibilities (*possibilia*) that God foresees, so that, just as the sun appears to revolve around the earth, divine providence also seems to move with this onward-rushing world.

2. Perspective

The individualization of being, and thus of truth, can be considered from two different points of view. We can look at it in terms of essence and of existence—provided that, instead of mechanically separating what are in fact inseparable poles of being, we distinguish them only in the context of a totality that always remains in the picture.

The first mode of individualization is the easier to grasp. It is based on a progressive determination of a subject by means of its distinctive essential features. Looked at abstractly and in themselves, these characteristics belong, or at least could belong, to other subjects as well. When, however, they are mixed in precisely this manner, they constitute the uniqueness of an entity and of its situation. Their particular composition produces what we could call a "constellation" in the strong sense of something that presides over one's destiny. This constellation places both being and truth in a determinate state that, while in itself caused by general forces, nonetheless channels their operation toward the production of a unique outcome. If we picture the subject as occupying the center of this constellation, we realize that the subject therefore sees truth perspectivally. The subject's central position in its constellation gives it a definite angle of vision from which it beholds the world of things and values. Certain places are close by, others more distant, and these orders of magnitude result to a large extent from the perspectival character of the subject's vision. Looked at in this way, the truth appears as a spacious, indeed, immense land, in which one can settle in almost any number of spots. The same mountain or river can be looked at from an infinity of positions and, for the same reason, also presents the beholder with an infinity of nuances and profiles. The result is an innumerable manifold of personally colored world views and *Weltanschauungen*. Each of these represents a certain particular angle of vision, in the best case a panoramic view of the land of truth, albeit one conditioned by where the beholder stands. In no case, however, can such a viewpoint afford a comprehensive grasp of the whole, a sort of bird's-eye view of the overall lay of the land.

It is, moreover, a good thing that it cannot. In order to get a comprehensive view of the whole, we would have to do away with standpoints altogether, and in order to accomplish this feat, we would have to do away with the intimacy of truth. The spatial-geographic image fails to convey

the perspectival character of truth precisely insofar as it suggests the possibility of looking down on things from above. For no entity can definitively leave behind—and below—its own perspective. Whenever he feels tempted to dwell on the narrowness of other people's perspectives, the knower must modestly acknowledge that his own field of vision is also limited. Nevertheless, the relativity of his own field of vision is no reason to despair, because he has at his disposal plenty of ways and means to complement and enrich his own perspectives through those of others. He can inform himself about other points of view in the give and take of conversation. He can, through reflection and judgment, compare them with his own (the topographical image breaks down here, too), appropriate them, discover ever richer relationships within the infinite field of truth, and adopt ever more comprehensive standpoints. Precisely insofar as all individual standpoints participate in a single truth is it possible to compare them, to coordinate them, and to order them in relation to a unity, albeit a unity that is never fully attainable. The decisive method for comparing standpoints remains, as we already noted earlier (pp. 128-29), integration into an ever greater totality.

There is only one fruitful way to contrast world views: the positive method of incorporating the particular into a more encompassing totality. Only rarely will we have to say that some perspective contains no truth; very often we will be able to lead it upward to a greater height, to a broader vista. Systems of thought that do nothing but polemically contrast their differences are dispiriting tokens of narrow-mindedness, whereas those that overcome the narrowness of limited standpoints by positive opening to more encompassing standpoints liberate and edify.

There is only one proviso: we must not forget that this method of synthesis can never wholly prescind from one's own standpoint and that it can never claim to have really looked at the perspectives of others through their eyes. The perspectival character of truth is not simply a temporary condition that can gradually be sublated and synthesized into a total standpoint by an intensive information, by a sort of thorough reconnaissance of the land of truth (as Hegel, for example, attempted to do in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*). Such an attempt would lead, like abstract scientific thought, albeit in a more subtle way, to the vaporization of the positive element in perspectivity: the intimate character and personality of the truth. It would presuppose that the thinker's standpoint could after all coincide with the absolute standpoint, that the individual thinker was secretly identical with the world spirit that runs through all standpoints. Such a person would be in immediate danger of falling, in an inexcusable absentmindedness, out of his own personal situation and thus out of his own truth, if he had not done so already. Apart from Christian revelation, there is only one way in which the thinker in the world can progressively lay hold of the truth: by taking seriously the personal situation in which he finds himself, on the one hand, and the inconclusible dialogue with all the perspectives surrounding him, on the other. He must do all he can to satisfy at one and the same time the two, contradictory requirements that Nietzsche stipulated in this regard: to consider things more personally, with more decision, with a greater acceptance of responsibility, and yet to attempt to look at them through the perspective of many other persons. This movement is, in principle, open and resistant to closure; it is yet another reflection of the two-sided essence of unity, which is at once a unity of the person and a unity of the species. We find a sort of sketch of the highest form of this movement in the mode of knowledge that Thomas Aquinas ascribes to the angels. According to Thomas, the angels have universal concepts that are more unitary than our empty and abstract concepts. At the same time, these concepts enable the angels to know, in its particularity, each individual, concrete thing that falls under them. This mode of knowledge reflects, says Thomas, the angels' more spiritual mode

of being, which as such is at once more personal and more universal than ours. It would, then, realize the concept of the concrete universal, which for us remains a never wholly attainable ideal.

But the individualization of being and truth in terms of the constellation (the characteristics of a thing's essence) and of perspective remains one-sided. It unavoidably gives the impression that in itself the truth is universal and impersonally objective, while subjectivity arises only because of the limitation of standpoints and their perspectives. This false impression is dissipated when the other side of individualization is considered: the individualization of being through existence, which first brings to completion the personality of being.

3. Personality

Here we touch upon the real mystery of being. For when we speak of existence, we are using an expedient to designate the counterpole of the essence. But this counterpole is not simply the naked presentiality [*Da*] of existence, but equally the whole fullness, the indescribable density, vitality, and weight of being, which, for Thomas, is compressed in the word *esse*. It is, in short, what makes being appear ever richer than any essential predicate can express. From this point of view, the essence seems to be the aspect of beings that from moment to moment appears, can be apprehended, and is amenable to description, whereas the fact of existence contains the ever greater plenitude thanks to which the essence itself always transcends our apprehension of it. Existence thus transcends essence in two senses: in the adamantine factuality, which thought can never bend to its own purposes, that sets it apart from nothing and gives it the look of an indissoluble unity and uniqueness; and in the plenitude, which equally eludes exhaustive possession, that mocks the intellect's every attempt to master it through order and control.

These two aspects together complete being's personal character; being as a whole now appears as the bearer of the personal uniqueness that, from the point of view of essence, appeared as perspectivity. The source of its being, which seems to nourish it with a power and an abundance surpassing all apprehension, now streams forth precisely from the center of personality. Being-for-itself no longer appears as one quality among others common to countless substances, but as an incircumscribable property that sets one individual spirit apart from all others and gives it its precious value as something that cannot be compared with, compensated for, or replaced by anything else. The being receives an inner space that as such has infinite value; its principal property is incomparability, incommutability, resistance to any classification under a generality or any subordination under a category. As individuals, beings may appear to be "specimens" of a species or genus; as persons, as intellects existing for themselves, they have the unity of being in themselves and can no longer be subsumed as a multiplicity under any other unity. The core of being itself, and, for the same reason, truth, now becomes subjective. This consideration rules out a sphere of general, impersonal ideal contents that is somehow more encompassing than persons, a sort of world of ideas that contains the quintessence of their truth. The world appears as a cosmos of free monads, whose truth coincides with the uniqueness of each one's being. Since there is no truth outside this being, truth follows and expresses its movements and transformations from moment to moment: "Veritas creata est mutabilis" (*S. Th. 1*, q. 16, a. 8; *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 6)[7]

This personal aspect of being and truth is, of course, just one aspect among others. It remains the case that all human beings have one and the same human nature and, in consequence, that the truth of this nature can only be *one*. But just as one and the same human nature really exists only in thoroughly individualized, personal entities, the one, identical truth really exists only in a unique, always personally differentiated form. The multiplicity of persons no more degrades or cheapens the value of individual personal truth than the infinite value of the person is injured by the coexistence of countless others. The truth of an individual human being is as precious as he himself is. No cognition of truth by a person can be exchanged for any other; every communication of personal truth is a gift for which nothing else can compensate.

By personal truth, we mean the opposite of an ownerless, anonymous truth that one casually picks up and does not make a part of oneself: we mean the truth that one acquires by personal decision, that one maintains and hands on with personal responsibility. The heart's blood of a person's spirit clings to this truth; he has endured privation and hardship for its sake, and this fruit of his spiritual labor pains is no less precious than the fruit of another's body. If you give a truth like this, you are ultimately giving your own person. In such an exchange of personal truths, spirits feed one another, as it were, with their own substance. By its very nature, this kind of truth is always ripened through decision, and so it demands new decision from its recipient. There is no room here for any sort of synthesis of standpoints and perspectives that prescinds from drama and decision. What the individual spirit thereby loses in extension—because it can have the attitude of decision only in a few situations—is more than richly repaid by the intensity that it now acquires in its relation to personal truth. The man who has a tranquil, monogamous marriage gets more knowledge of love than the debauchee who gives himself up to every sensual enjoyment. In the same way, whoever resolutely devotes his time to the truth assigned to, and intended for, him will learn more of the truth than someone who, foregoing decision, loses himself in the limitless expanses of the knowable. And even if thousands of his forebears and contemporaries make what seem to be the same discoveries, for him they are never-to-be-repeated events, and their discovery by others takes away nothing of their value in his eyes. They are as exciting and breathtaking to him as the genius' first discovery of a new force of nature, a new planet, or a new and revolutionary formula.

This uniqueness of personal being and personal truth brings home with elemental impact the mysteriousness of both. No mind that tries to bore into the abyss [*Abgrund*] of existence will ever get to the bottom [*Grund*] of it. Being is ever actual, and this actuality is so indivisible and unfathomably [*unergründlich*] full that it springs upon every attempt at intellectual mastery and knocks it to the ground before it even gets started. One can grasp connections; one can tie and loosen threads that offer some insight into the structure of existing things. But as soon as the thinker draws close to the incandescent heart of the mystery of being, as soon as he peers into the unfathomable eye of existence, his breath stops short and his heart falters. He knows that any contest with the mystery of being, any gigantomachy, is out of the question. Nor is the proper attitude a tragic restlessness, an angst-ridden "existential" pose, but only the humility that, in faith and in love, confidently entrusts itself to the gift of existence, knowing that this gift will always be infinitely more than what an intellect could expect or a heart long for. Humility knows, in other words, that the gift of existence is, not an irrational chaos, but such a fullness of light, order, and truth that the foolish human spirit will never master it. Existence is a gift and can only be received with thanksgiving. And, as we have said above, because there is eternally more in the

depths of being and truth than we have grasped, faith has to be an immanent property of all knowing.

This inner dimension belongs to all being, but it does not disclose itself until being has become consciousness, person. With this breakthrough into the depths, every being "is elevated to the state of mystery" (Novalis). This is true of one's own being perceived in consciousness and, ultimately, of every being that shares by its inferiority in the mysterious depth of being in general. Once someone has become aware of this depth, he can never completely miss it again, even in the superficiality of everyday life. Not only that, he will no longer feel and experience the other side of truth, the universal validity and anonymity reflected in the impersonality of natures, genera, and species, as something opposed to truth's personal depth. Rather, he will see this anonymity of everyday truth as a sort of mantle enshrouding the all-too-naked, all-too-precious mystery of being; as the envelopment of the wonder of being in the gray of the ordinary; as the street clothes that conceal the precious garment of personal truth—though not entirely. In fact, one of the strongest reasons for veiling this preciousness from the individual is to keep him from losing himself in it, from succumbing to it as an aesthetic enchantment, so that he might, by a hidden but fundamental *renunciation* of the uniqueness of personality, sacrifice it to the good of the whole.

There could be no community without a certain balanced, tempered, and average truth. This averageness is not only a natural datum based on the participation and communication of all subjects in a common human nature. Rather, it is always also the product of a common renunciation in which all persons forego the exclusivity of their personal truth for the sake of the average truth that community demands. The individual members veil the great mystery of existence in the publicity and anonymity in which for the most part man primarily dwells. Prom the point of view of personal truth, this anonymity may be deemed "inauthenticity" [*Uneigentlichkeit*], a "mode of deficiency", perhaps even an untruth and a falsehood—and it may well be all of that, too. Looked at in terms of its deeper essence, however, it is the covering that every mystery needs in order to remain such. Ultimately, we can express the preciousness, the mysteriousness of personal truth only by contrasting it with the superficial, quotidian truth of the man on the street. Personal truth, although in principle accessible to anyone, has the stubborn quality of being *rare*, as people realize when they find it under the rubbish pile of the all-too-plentiful, all-too-available version marketed by the impersonal mass. Not until he enters the temple of truth, leaving the profane outside, does the individual come to understand the nature of the sacred.

4. Situation

All that we have said suggests a fundamental property of truth: it is conditioned and shaped by what we could call *situation*. We can approach the description of situation from two sides: in terms of what we have said about perspective and in terms of what we have said about personality. Perspective, we said, originates in our partial view of the totality of truth, which is determined by our particular standpoint. This implies, moreover, that certain truths are closer and others more distant, that certain relations exist between them on account of a particular point of view, that a certain narrower or broader horizon encompasses the field of vision. This is how perspective appears when we consider and explain it from the knower's point of view. But we can also understand perspectivity as a matter of certain constellations of truths, whose particular

composition, mixture, and coloring produces a particular, one-of-a-kind synthesis, something like the moment of destiny brought about by a certain constellation in the horoscope. Man unceasingly finds himself in such constellations; he comes to know the truth only in them, and it is with them that he must contend. He never finds truth purely and absolutely as it is in itself, but always in a certain selection, application, or profile, which forces him to test it to see what truth it may contain, to measure and, as far as possible, to equalize the distances, to compare and relate what now appears with what appeared before, with what is now hidden, with what may appear but has not yet done so, and so forth. Yet perspective affords only an external description of the situation; it shows only that it is a specification of the truth based on quantity and selection. The authentic, qualitative sense of the situation, hence, its full urgency, does not come to light until it is explained in terms of the mysterious existential side of being [*(Da-) Seins*] that we touched on in our account of personality.

Existence, as *existentia* and as *esse*, can be described only by contrast with its counterpart, essence, as *essentia* and as *quidditas*. Because of this supremely mysterious duality within the unity of being, being itself, and not merely the determinate composition of individual beings, has an immense perspectival depth. We think that we know the meaning and content of these two poles or aspects of being when we consider them by themselves, but precisely their inextricable reciprocal relation makes them an ever new mystery. On the side of essence, being can be progressively described and analyzed into properties, and the individual entity can be defined ever more closely from all angles. But for this very reason we see that every attempt to grasp any being in a definitive way necessarily shatters on the inexplicable, adamantine facticity of its existence. The sum of all essential properties never amounts to existence, nor can existence be in any way counted as one essential property among others. Existence is rather the presupposition of essential analysis in the first place. Even in the case where we imagine a merely possible entity that does not actually exist, existence is still the common thread that always already unites all these properties. Looking at the question from the opposite side, it is always already existence of which essence is predicated, which is broken up into its essential properties, and whose fullness and content are analyzed.

There are, then, two fundamental relations between essence and existence. These relations remain irreducible to each other, and their mysterious dual unity is the eternal mystery of every ontology of the created world. Existence appears (as *existentia*) as being essentially outside the series of beings' essential properties, as being "adventitious" [*zukommt*] to them (*esse accidens*)[8]—or, if the essence exists only conceptually and possibly, is not "adventitious", either now or ever. But it also, and equally, appears (as *esse*) to be the source to which all essences can ultimately be traced back, so much so that any given essence is only a part of the plenitude of actuality of existing being. Conversely, there is never a moment of its existence when the existing essence has realized the whole plenitude of its possibilities. Rather, it always inevitably displays only a small part of them. What it is in a particular cross section of its life is only an infinitesimal part of its entire essence, to which it stands as the cutting under the microscope stands to the whole fullness of the organism. The essence, then, far from being realized at any given moment, is something like a supratemporal idea (εἶδος) that maintains itself as a uniform plan during the whole course of an existence, but also something like a plastic potency (μορφή) that progressively unfolds and displays itself in this existence.

The distinction between essence and existence within the indivisible unity of worldly being (*distinctio "realis" inter essentiam et esse*, or *inter existentiam et essentiam*)[9] is ever new, indeed, because of perspective, inexhaustible. It reveals, then, a *movement within being* occurring between its two poles. It is as impossible to give a univocal account of this movement as it is to describe univocally the relationship between the poles themselves. If the essence is conceived as the known, static pole, it seems that existence, rather than becoming intrinsic to this essence, is always "adventitious", touching it, as it were, only at one point, grazing it like a tangent on a circle (the simile comes from H. Conrad-Martius). But it is also, and equally, true that the whole of the existing essence can be conceived as the actual tip of an otherwise only possible and ideal essence lying below it. From this point of view, then, it is an essence whose realization depends on this infinitesimal point that seems to be incommensurable with its totality. Finally, worldly existence can be considered as, so to say, the form (*existentia* in the literal sense) that has emerged from being's plenitude. In this sense, we know that it is outside the plenitude by the outline of the essence that limits this fullness (*quidditas* as the *limitatio* of *esse*). And yet, in striving to maintain its share in the fullness of being, and thereby to keep itself in existence, the essence receives being, an always presentially focused being [*jeweils-jetzt-Sein*], in a measure determined by the eternal totality.

Regardless of how we consider this movement in creaturely being, one thing is clear: the mysterious nonidentity between essence and existence is intimately related to the phenomenon of *time*. Indeed, insofar as time is a fundamental structure of being, this nonidentity is even coextensive with it. This does not mean, of course, that being and time are the same thing: even on this understanding of time, time remains a particular, albeit fundamental, property of the creature's being. Our affirmation does mean, however, that the phenomenon of time belongs to the core of the creature's ontological make-up and that the philosophical analysis of time is the most adequate entryway to a living, concrete understanding of the real distinction. But from the very beginning we must be clearly aware of one thing: the manifold ontological structures highlighted in our description of the relationship between existence and essence, *esse* and *essentia*, do not all rest simply upon the nonidentity interwoven with creatureliness as such. They are not, in other words, founded upon a sheer negative. Our analysis brought to light an inner richness in being that indicates just the opposite: inasmuch as we have in fact glimpsed something of the essence of being, the essence of time, which in the concrete form familiar to us is of course worldly and creaturely, nonetheless contains elements that also offer positively a reflection, a likeness, and an imitation of eternal being. We can go farther and say that the distinction in worldly being between existence and essence, precisely as a distinction, mirrors mysteries pertaining to the vitality of eternal being itself. Indeed, it is perhaps precisely through this window that opens *in* nonidentity that we glimpse something of the immense richness of the divine identity. We can recall in this context our earlier discussion (pp. 102f.) of the real distinction between essence and being as the specific point where being's ever-greater, ever-richer character irradiates with the most elemental force. For every inquiry into essence ultimately leads us to a still untouched and unravished virgin existence, while every inquiry into facticity ultimately leads us to the mysterious essence that remains eternally behind the facts beyond the reach of inquiry.

With this caution in mind, we will beware of considering time and its inherent properties simply as a negative factor separating it from eternity. We will have to bear in mind that every aspect of time always has two sides, in which positive and negative, likeness and unlikeness, an affinity to

eternity and to nothingness, are inextricably interwoven. It is to this interweaving that we must now attend in our explication of situation.

The truth is being's being unveiled; it is manifestness, an offer to approach and to enter. The movement that we have described therefore endows truth, in the first instance, with presence [*Gegenwart*]. This presence differs from a general, indifferent condition of being at hand, of being the case, by reason of the forcefulness with which it announces and introduces itself, as it were challenging you, saying with particular emphasis that it is *here [mit einer scharfen Betonung des Da im Sein]*. But the full weight of this presence does not strike us until we consider that it includes a twofold inner movement of a coining toward [*Zukunft*] and a passing away. Presence occurs as that which is just arriving at each new moment. It is like the opening of a door, the entrance of a person, an event coming toward us [*zukommt*], the arrival of a message, the commencement of a story, the springing up of a source, the shining out of a light.

From moment to moment, presence is always just now coming toward us [*zukommt*]. This is its futurity [*Zukünftigkeit*]. The future is not a state of being or time lying alongside, and separate from, the present, but a direction within the present, within existence itself. Because of this immanent futurity, existence is essentially open-ended; even more, it is essentially a beginning, a promise, a *hope*, an upspringing. The form of its being is to be just beginning at each moment, to be an inchoative, or, what is the same, to be on its way toward being, that is, toward more being than there is at any given moment. Being thus has a *comparative* character. This character, then, does not lie outside of existence, in an unattainable distance beyond what we have achieved so far. Rather, it lies nowhere else than in being itself; being itself contains the direction, the promise, the announcement, indeed, the anticipation of its own being always more. This excess is one that comes "later" only insofar as it is also already intrinsic, albeit in a way that always exceeds our capacity for it, to the gift of existence, which has already been offered, presented as presence. If we could thoroughly grasp and fathom the whole of this gift, there would be no more future, better, we would have made the whole future present in the present. But this is intrinsically impossible. And it is impossible not only because we, being finite creatures, are incapable of comprehending all at once the plenitude of the gift of being, but equally because this plenitude itself is infinite and is therefore always richer than itself. The characteristic of futurity, of always just beginning, of springing up from the source, of heading toward more, is thus one of the most positive, most unsurpassable aspects of being as such. If being, especially eternal being, and abidance within it, is full and vital, it is because of this futurity. The gift is always greater than the capacity to receive it. By the same token, the fulfillment will always partly consist in acknowledging this excess of presence [*Gegenwart*] over and above the present [*Gegenwart*], this future-laden, future-generating richness of eternal being.

But this intensification [*Steigerung*] immanent in being itself does not appear in all its urgency until we also see the constant possibility, the constant reality, of failing to seize it. The presentation of being is always coming now, and the always now is, at its most extreme tip, an always *only* now. What you do not seize now is a lost opportunity that will never return in this form. However abundant the womb of the future may yet be, however much the loss of the "now" may be offset by what is still to come, your missed opportunity will never be offered again. The sun that is shining right now will set and never rise again; the water that is gushing from the spring right now will flow away and never return. The moment of being is transitory, so transitory that it can never be brought back. It is only with this transitoriness that the moment

becomes fully, irreplaceably precious: its value is so great that literally nothing can make up for it. The moment is not just a singular event, but the very singularity of all events, the qualitative specification of every last fragment of being. This relation of the present to the past, indeed, this intrinsic precariousness of the present, which itself contains the seeds of its own passing away, is precisely what gives every moment of existence in this world its infinite, eternal weight. The moment demands a constant exertion not to miss the opportunity, a constant decision for fuller, ultimately, for eternal being. This is a sort of judgment immanent in being that reminds us of the full seriousness of our creaturehood. Existence, like an eternal future, spreads before every being an extravagant abundance and unceasingly lavishes it with this cornucopia from moment to moment. Nevertheless, this fullness is not something it may luxuriate and frolic about in without a care in the world; it must try to open every pore of its being to it, not in order to exhaust its overflowing plenitude, but in order really to acknowledge its surpassing richness. If it no longer seized the dimension of the "ever more", it would lose hold of the true point of the present and its existence would become void, ready for the scrapheap of the past. Its life would no longer strive toward the beginning but would be turned toward the end. It would be moving, no longer in the direction of openness, but in the direction of what is closed, concluded, over and done with. Deep down, its present would already have the form of the past. The life that it still had left to live would always be an already missed opportunity, would lack the one thing that makes it worth living: its futurity.

Now, the fact that the past threatens the present from within is doubtless what gives the present age of the world its distinctive character. It is this fact, not futurity, that distinguishes the present time from the time promised to us in the coming eternity to which we already look forward. Eternal life is a life whose present contains an eternal future but no past. Eternal damnation, on the other hand, would be a life whose present is turned entirely toward the past. It would thus be pure hopelessness. Eternal life would be the perfect fulfillment of the eternal intensification within being itself; it would be what the comparative of life looks like when it has become a state. By contrast, eternal damnation would be the total evacuation of this ever greater plenitude from existence. It would be the futility and absurdity of being become a state.

The temporal form of our earthly life includes both a promise and a threat, an indissoluble mixture of hope and fear. Yet we are given the choice to attend so fully to the present that it increasingly becomes for us the beginning, indeed, the very presence, of an eternal future. By directing our lives toward this eternal future, we can turn our back on the past and rob it of any power over our present. The past remains in this present only as a constant warning to devote ourselves more earnestly to what is coming [*dem Zukommenden*] than we have so far, not to evade decision, not to think that any possession is definitive. It no longer has an independent power to counteract the futurity in being.

The purpose of the foregoing was to show that presence is a supremely eventful, supremely meaningful form of being. What goes for being goes equally for truth. Now, truth as it appears in this temporal guise is what we can call *situation*. In the situation, the truth comes to a head in an emphatic presence: you have to grasp it *here*—or nowhere. This presence is not necessarily meant in a chronological sense. It is an inherent property of truth, and it can remain equally intense over a long stretch of time, a "period", without diminishing or dissipating the urgency of the offer of truth and the demand for decision. As long as truth has the character of a definite situation, it does not occur to us that we have plenty of time and that we could put off deciding,

say until the end of this situation. Rather, the quality of urgency inheres equally in every single chronological instant of the situation. Both dimensions—the offer that comes our way [*zukommend*] and the warning threat of its withdrawal—are intrinsic to situation. In each situation, it is left to us which of the two aspects we prefer to choose.

There is no need to insist again that truth's situational character does not impair in the least its "universal validity" and "supratemporal" value. The truth is universally valid and supratemporal in the same way in which each individual human being is, in his individuality, a quintessential example of his kind. Just as the essence of the kind, the species, occurs in each individual with an identical set of features—which are nonetheless susceptible of infinite variation and modulation from individual to individual—the one, identical truth shows up in all individually differentiated situations. On the other hand, just as there is no human nature that is not perfectly individualized at every moment of its existence in a singular essence, there is also no truth except in the concrete form of the individual situation. To consider the truth apart from this concreteness is by definition to busy oneself with a mere abstraction. Admittedly, it is easier to prescind from individual constellations, which are determined by perspective, since, measured against the essence of truth itself, they are always in some sense accidental. By contrast, it is impossible, without seriously impairing truth, to prescind from the fact that it is decisively shaped by situation. In this case, we are talking about an a priori, a basic constitutive feature of truth as such, which is inherent in truth because it is inherent in worldly being. This feature is what gives truth its whole dignity, its preciousness and urgency, in short, its "value". Because of this property, the corresponding attitude in man has to be more than merely theoretical or speculative: truth lays claim to the devoted attention of the whole mind, a constant readjustment to truth's moment to moment demands [*Jeweiligkeit*], a free decision.

At this point, it becomes a question how far an already discovered truth can be left as is and how far it calls for renewed efforts at understanding. The question, then, has to do with the relationship between *seeking and finding*. The idea that no one has ever concluded the process of knowing anything, that no one has ever thought through all the implications of any truth or fathomed its whole depth, that no one has ever looked at any being from every angle or seen it from all sides, could tempt the knower to believe that he has constantly to start from scratch with the same objects. He might feel that he would be unfaithful if he turned his back on them, as it were, in order to turn his attention to some new and fresh object. But this kind of scruple would make it difficult, indeed, impossible to get on with living. It would increasingly incline existence away from the future toward the past and would atrophy the capacity to appreciate each new situation. In the end, this anxiety about keeping faith with things would tacitly imply that just maybe there *is* something that, with the necessary patience, we could get to the bottom of. It is the very seriousness of each new and different situation that compels us to leave most of what we do in life half-finished, in order to devote ourselves anew to today's most urgent task. It is this seriousness itself that gives us a certain carefree cheerfulness in the midst of the abundance of (seemingly) missed opportunities. Whoever does what the situation calls for in each concrete circumstance knows he is not missing anything, even if thousands of other possibilities have to give way to the one reality. The principle that we discovered in our consideration of personality returns to claim our attention here: What the situation robs in extension by its exclusivity and urgency, it pays back a hundredfold by its intensity. It is in this direction that we find the way to, and the beginning of, eternal life. This is why in our earthly life there are so many things that,

once we have found them, we must refrain from seeking any farther. We must do so for the sake of the essential, which we must seek all the more for having found it.

Accordingly, the actual state of affairs is precisely the reverse of what one would suppose. It is not the case that a person, having found the truth once and for all, progressively shifts his search to the periphery, in order to add to the treasury of what he has found more and more of what he once sought. Rather, having grasped the truth as situation, he will be more and more inclined to pass over the periphery as something already "found", in order to concentrate on the essential core as something that must be unceasingly sought. In this living core, truth has always already been found yet, precisely as such, keeps alive its futurity, its comparative character. We can afford to ignore the inessential, but we have to return again and again to the essential. This is the faith that it deserves and that we must keep with it.

Every deep thing has a way of becoming deeper and more enticing, more difficult to dismiss, more urgent, more youthful, as it were, the more time we spend with it. This does not mean that we have come to know it less and less or that there is no progress in knowledge. Rather, precisely because mystery and overflowing plenitude, eternal futurity and ever-intensifying promise, are immanent properties of truth, a being that is able to display these dimensions is more fully known than one whose value we suppose we have exhausted. What genuine progress there is to be made in the knowledge of the truth is no linear, one-way affair, no simple ascent of the intellectual ladder. Rather, every step forward is, at the same time, a new proof of the ever greater richness of being, which ceaselessly opens out onto an immense horizon and, far from discouraging the knower, entices him precisely in this way into ever new, ever more exciting adventures of knowing. The experience of being overwhelmed by the immensity of all real truth is thus an integral part of the act of knowing, which wants to find only in such a way that, at the same time, it must begin seeking again. We can resolve Lessing's dilemma—either definitive finding or perpetual seeking—if we see that one and the same act of laying hold of the truth necessarily includes both sides of knowledge. There is only one proviso: as we have already noted, the aspect of infinity in truth is due not so much to the subject's insatiable, Faustian urge to know as to the ever-transcending breadth and plenitude of existing things themselves.

One of the principal reasons why truth presents itself to us in the mode of the situation, why it has an urgency in the situation that demands decision, is its dialogical and social nature. It appears, in fact, that, in its inmost essence, truth, as expression and word, has a polar structure and dwells partly in the interiority of the individual subject, partly in the intersubjective realm, where it takes the form of speech and response. This second aspect immediately brings home that the discovery of truth cannot be the affair of an individual, that instead this individual has always already been obliged to appropriate the truth in a give and take with others, in a situation of encounter with other subjects. The constellation that individualizes each truth becomes here a constellation of many subjective constellations and perspectives, each of which has, in its own way, evidence and urgency. The individual who finds himself involved in this situation as a partner has to put all his effort into making the appropriate contribution to the truth that can be found in the discussion as a whole. He has to strive to do two apparently contrary things. On the one hand, he has to bring his particular standpoint into play with enough flexibility and relativity to keep from getting in the way of the discovery and the construction of the truth of the situation as a whole. Once again, then, he is called upon to make the fundamental sacrifice of his personal perspective, in order, not just to find an already existing universally valid truth, but also to help shape it. On the other hand,

precisely in this encounter he must shoulder a more intense, personal responsibility vis-à-vis the truth; he must see the decision to be made in the situation, not simply as a private matter, but as a social one whose consequences, both for good and for ill, will affect more subjects than just himself.

The personal aspect in this movement, then, does not consist in enforcing one's own perspective but in responsibly serving, with the whole force of one's personality, the suprapersonal truth. Whoever truly wants to serve the truth will be more intent on helping the other discover his own personal truth than on selling his own truth as if it were the be all and end all—no matter how hard and how personally he may have struggled to attain it. He will take pains not to convert the Thou into a sort of branch office of his own truth but will rather take the utmost care to ensure the other's freedom to attain to the truth that befits him and his situation. All truth ultimately stands in the service of love, and love is capacious enough to see and to acknowledge others' truth, as long as it really is truth. It will take the greatest delight in performing, like Socrates, the service of midwife that helps each person to *his* truth and thus brings about the highest attainable measure of truth. The intrinsic nature of truth itself will ensure that this multiplicity does not impair its unity. Truth, after all, is as much a unity as is humanity. It is one to the same extent that all created beings find each other in the unity of their creatureliness.

This sheds some light on the nature of error. Error can be a truth sought after but not yet found; it can be a still-veiled truth. Far from violating the order of the one truth, such error fits within this order as a provisional phase that will eventually be surpassed. It does not nullify the inmost movement of truth, namely, shared love. Conscious error, which has seen the truth but still resists it, in other words, the he, is something quite different. Truth is so much one, so much the common possession of all who are in love, that the lie, by placing itself outside the truth, must necessarily be expelled from the unity of being itself. Within the realm of truth, every truth is bound up with every other; infinitely intertwining paths lead from each truth to every other, and whoever really affirms one has implicitly affirmed all the others, just as whoever really, that is, selflessly, loves one human being potentially loves all of them. By contrast, there can be no "realm" of the lie, for every authentic lie, by destroying unity, completely isolates itself. A number of lies may seem to form a coherent pattern, but only because of a deceptive simulation or borrowing of certain aspects of the truth. A system of the lie is as impossible as a communion of hate, since communion always presupposes love in some form or another.

The totality of truth's concrete situations is what is called *history*. History is the result of constant external change in constellations and individual perspectives, and it presupposes the mutability of becoming. Yet it springs equally from the qualitative changefulness intrinsic to the situation itself, which is always occurring *now*. Because history is the history both of the individual subject and of smaller or larger communities, and finally of the world and of humanity, it includes the overlapping of various ontological modalities of time, situation, and presence. In one place, its flow can be quick, in another more leisurely; for a given generation, the present can comprehend a plurality of individual presents, futures, and pasts.

It follows that the individual, being a part of the history of the totality, has to make his respective decision, in accord not only with the demands of his private present but also, and in equal measure, with the truth that his community, his culture, his epoch set before him and commit him to serve. But it is in this way that the total truth in which man lives becomes historically concrete.

Man can perform no definitive abstraction that would detach him from the historical coloring and modulation of the truth. He cannot pull himself up to the level of a supposedly eternal truth free of the decisional character of history, of supratemporal laws and ideal patterns. Concretely, the truth of humanity as a whole is always individualized in the mass and breadth of all human peoples and cultures and in the abundance of the expressive forms and words they have discovered. In this sense, it is like the truth of the individual human life, which can be found only in the entire span that stretches from youth through maturity to old age.

We are not, of course, advocating any kind of historical relativism. In fact, the content of the concrete unfolding that we have described is not a confused chaos without foundation in the unity of man's being, but rather one and the same truth, just as a man is the same being in childhood, manhood, and old age. And yet: just as this being cannot truly be grasped outside its actualization in time; just as, in order to understand it, we must accompany the unfolding of its life, so, too, we cannot grasp the truth of history unless we accompany its immanent process. It is only from within this activity that we can catch the transcendent melody of the whole.

To be sure, one can apply certain formal criteria to concrete history a priori, insofar as each individual situation conforms to the laws of the situation as such, of process as such, of permanence and change as such, and the like. But the frame itself is not yet the picture, and the spirit, in its work of giving form, is interested ultimately in knowing the picture. For this reason, the attempt to grasp the truth in its historical concretion rules out application of supratemporal criteria to the ever actual presentiality of an epoch that would render the individuation of truth in this epoch merely accidental and secondary. We should always be aware that the identity of the one truth appears within reality in a series of analogous configurations, which cannot be assessed and judged either in terms of one another or of an imaginary, supratemporal vantage point. This is the true core of Ranke's remark that every epoch has an immediate relation to God as well as of Spengler's morphological approach to history. Of course, Spengler lost sight of the complementary insight into the real unity of the truth that displays itself in this multifarious way. But this unity rests—and in this respect Spengler is correct—not only upon a schematic norm that can be applied indiscriminately to every culture, but equally upon the ever actual presentiality of each situation, which is fundamental for the truth of history and is equally characteristic of all times. And what is true of history as such is particularly true of intellectual history, not least of the history of the efforts to come to grips with truth itself: the history of philosophy. To be sure, the truth that has presented itself to the great thinkers of all times is, in its essence, always the same, and this unity allows us to compare the systems of Plato and Aristotle with those of Thomas, Kant, and Hegel and, by abstraction, to draw certain conclusions. Nevertheless, these thinkers also thought within a personal, political, and world-historical situation, and the truth that appeared to them was concretized in a given epoch. This perspective sets a limit to abstraction, challenging us, as we attempt to reconstruct their thought, to tailor our judgments to the unrepeatable singularity of each historical situation. If we do so, our understanding will be, not narrowed, but enriched. We can draw even on the concretion of truth in our effort to gain an overall view of the whole.

C. Mystery

After having interpreted truth both as expression and word, on the one hand, and in its historicity, on the other, we can now penetrate farther into its inner sanctum and describe its character as

mystery. This mystery first appeared (pp. 104-106) as the enigma of the real distinction, hence, of the ever greater depth and richness whereby both existence and essence transcend our conceptual grasp of them. We have just added the concrete modes in which being is unveiled and proffered, so that now the mysteriousness of being, to the extent that it is amenable to description, emerges in its full form. This mysteriousness can be described in terms of the interplay of veiling and unveiling and, in a second moment, in terms of the ground of truth as such, which we will expose in the light of the system of the transcendentals.

1. Unveiling and Veiling

Truth, ἀ-λήθεια, is the unconcealment of being. All being is unveiled as such, insofar as it can emerge into existence from its sheltering concealment in nothingness and in the mystery of God's counsel, and so be laid open, as manifest essence, to the eyes of knowledge. Thus, to the extent that being is knowable, it is always already unveiled as such. Furthermore, it is always also unveiled as a determinate something [*Dieses*] having a particular kind of being [*Sosein*], inasmuch as its essence has always already come into appearance and can be read off of the appearance. It may temporarily disguise itself, but in principle it cannot elude the eyes of knowledge. A dog, a cat, and even a human being confess their essence simply by existing: they cannot elude this ontological confession. Insofar as they exist, insofar as their essence appears, they are summoned and incited to a confession that has always already begun and that they have only to continue through spontaneous vital or spiritual acts. It can, of course, be frightening to realize firsthand just how naked things essentially are in spite of every protection, how deeply one can look into their heart already at the first encounter, to what extent they betray themselves, indeed, are already betrayed, even before they think of purposely expressing themselves. In this nakedness, truth calls immediately for the protection of understanding love. The elementary act of knowledge must include an attitude of benevolence, if not of mercy, which receives the defenseless object in an atmosphere of warmth and discretion.

On the other hand, this confession in which things divulge their truth is neither indiscreet nor unlimited. It is bounded by the intimate space in being. Things are not only unveiled. They are, in equal measure, essentially veiled, and they remain so from beginning to end. This veiling naturally entails a limitation of their unveiling but not necessarily a limitation of their truth. For veiling is not simply opposed to unveiling like some barrier confining it within its limits from the outside. Rather, it is more like a form or property that is inherent in the unveiling itself. In fact, things are unveiled as veiled, and it is in this form that they become objects of knowledge.

Unveiled veiling: the paradox apparently contained in this affirmation dissolves when we look back at what we said earlier about being and situation, on the one hand, and about expression and word, on the other. We have seen a number of ingredients in the mystery of being: an immanent movement between essence and being; a surplus of still ungrasped wealth; and an intensification and urgency in temporality and situation. We can say, then, that precisely the encounter with being as being is an inexhaustible source of amazement and admiration, of astonishment, of stupefaction, of joy and gratitude, in short, of all those qualities that are compressed in the word θαυμάζειν. All these acts are called forth by the appearing of being itself, which precisely in its appearing poses the greatest, most irresolvable enigma: itself. That there is being and, in consequence, truth, that reality is real and that truth is true: Who could ever exhaust this mystery?

Here it is really and literally true that the mystery appears as mystery. Precisely the unveiledness of being is as such its deep veiling.

On the other hand, what we have said about expression and word makes it clear that the essence, while appearing, always also remains hidden in its intimacy, in its free interior space. To be sure, insofar as it appears it has an outward side. Yet this exterior is precisely the index of a nonappearing interior behind the appearance, from which the appearance comes forth and which expresses itself in the appearance *by not appearing*. Moreover, insofar as the appearances emerge from this ontological depth, this depth becomes manifest as the precious and holy mystery of being, whose sheer interiority protects it from absolute alienation and objectification. Thus, insofar as the appearing essence never coincides with its appearance, it is always, and at the same time, nonapparent, held back, kept in reserve in its very veiling—though not purposely denied to, or withheld from, knowledge. One cannot say that things make themselves more mysterious than they are, that they jealously shut themselves up in their intimacy and coyly play at mystery. Rather, they possess the same natural protection of interiority that a body possesses by means of its skin or hide. The form that expresses itself in the body's contours is as much of the inside as is meant to be divulged: it reveals an entity's life and purpose, while at the same time covering its interior organs.

One might want to object at this point that the intellect, as its name suggests, can, in contrast to merely external vision, read inside of being (*intus legere*), in other words, that the analogy of skin fails at the decisive point. But "reading within" has to do with knowing being and essence as such; the point is simply that this knowledge is inaccessible to the senses. It has absolutely nothing to do with a capacity to reconnoiter thoroughly another subject's intimate interior space and to turn it inside out. The comparison with the skin remains legitimate precisely because the exterior view of a man's appearance gives away more about his humanity as a whole than we would learn by dissecting him and looking inside his body. In exactly the same way, we can discover more about his soul and his spirit through normal association with him than by the mental haruspication known as psychology and psychoanalysis. One does not become more familiar with a house by entering through the service entrance instead of the door set up for visitors. It may be that by doing that one gets to see things that the guest entering through the front door will never lay eyes on. But however much one gains in this way, one loses even more in true and correct impressions. If they appear closed from the front, one cannot sneak a look at their truth through the back door. Rather, truth comes equipped with a certain form that one cannot artificially circumvent: its essence is always more than its appearance, and this "more" is displayed in the essence of the appearance itself.

This is the only kind of being that knowledge can stand over the long haul. In the end, only something endowed with mystery is worthy of love. It is impossible to love something stripped of mystery; at best it would be a thing one uses as one sees fit, but not a person whom one could look up to. Indeed, no progress in knowledge, not even when it occurs in love, may lift the veil from the beloved. Love itself demands, not only possession and unveiling, but just as forcefully reverence and, therefore, veiling. Whenever man reveres the rare, the precious, the holy, he separates it out; he consecrates and removes it from the public eye; he conceals it in the cell of a sanctuary, in the penumbra of a sacred space; he snatches it from everyday history by investing it with a marvelous legend; he surrounds it with an air of mystery. For depth and the means and motive for reverence come only with mystery. Suppose a lover thinks that he has known and

surveyed as much of his beloved as there is to know; this conviction would be the infallible sign that his love had reached an end. Love would no longer be in movement; it would no longer be able to court the beloved; it would no longer need surrender or help; it would no longer be capable of encounter. Thus, if love is to endure to the very end, then unveiling must not be ultimate, but only penultimate. The lovers must again and again lose their privileged view of the whole; they must enter into a sort of darkness, into a discouragement over the ever-greater mystery of the beloved, over their incapacity ever to resolve it. They must find their way into a kind of loss of love, in order to regain it with greater power precisely out of their uncertainty. But they must also be ecstatic that the person who has chosen them to love and has graciously inclined to them is simply beyond their control. In love, then, there is an unequivocal will to mystery, which, if necessary, invents a new mystery where the old has ceased, if only it can thereby nourish and enkindle love even more. Petty, merely apparent love, which at bottom is only veiled egoism, employs all sorts of games and machinations in order to pass off a false, outward imitation of true love, which does not need these things. True love, by contrast, is so full of the true mystery of being's intimacy that it need never stagnate. Loves remains vital because in its eyes the object itself, even apart from what love might add, is always ever greater and never wholly comprehensible.

It would, of course, be completely one-sided to recognize in knowledge only the urge toward reverent veiling but not the urge toward unveiling. Rather, the two movements are inextricably interwoven, and the life of love cannot be whole without both together. In true love, however, the will to unveiling intends not so much to tear off the veil concealing the beloved object as to unveil oneself before it, to spread out one's whole being before its eyes in naked unconcealment. The beloved must see everything as it is in order to be able to dispose freely of all of it. Even when the lover is constrained to withhold something, his act seems to him like a clouding of the relationship, like a reservation. The lover would like to be transparent before the beloved, to be seen totally by the beloved in his whole truth and untruth. The lover, then, does not want to know himself, to be transparent to himself, in this action. On the contrary: he cares little who he is; he does not want to know. Self-knowledge seems to him like a waste of time when he is trying to apply all his strength to the knowledge of the beloved. He wants to be true above all for the beloved, and for himself only insofar as this truth demands it for the beloved.

This will to transparency in love is decidedly opposed to egoistic concealment, which veils its inner mystery for itself in order to enjoy it in secret without having to share it with another. This mystery is darkness: it is the self-enclosure of being and, therefore, its untruth. It is the refusal of the self-surrender in which love and truth are one; and this refusal is sin. It is the darkening of being in its refusal to disclose itself. In a loving being, there can be much mystery, but this mystery is light. In love, there is infinite depth, but no darkness. It lives in the attitude of wanting to keep nothing back for itself, of being ready to give and to show forth the utmost if love allows or demands it; it remains in a permanent readiness for confession. In this respect, bodily surrender, when it is licit and well-ordered, is only an outward form, a partial testimony, of total readiness and renunciation of personal control.

But this will to transparency would not be a will to love if it retained control of the measure of the unveiling, if it wanted, as it were, to force its own unveiling. It is rather the beloved who, in the end, decides what he does and does not want to see. The measure of one's confession, of one's self-declaration remains wholly in the hands of the beloved. The opposite would be an

offense against love itself, a sort of exhibitionism, an inappropriate, even embarrassing self-imposition. This is even truer when we consider that, if he is himself a lover, the beloved has absolutely no interest in the other's total self-unveiling. What he wants instead is an object of reverence, a permanent mystery that he can go on loving forever. The beloved's wish is so powerful and unequivocal that it excludes from true love the kind of total confession that the lover might desire: not because the will to unveil oneself is lacking, but because the norm of this unveiling is in each case lovingly left to the discretion of the other.

Furthermore, there are occasions when one may conceal things in love without consulting the beloved. In this case, love itself and as such has decided. The humanity of love makes room for a temporary veiling for the sake of a better unveiling and giving. Love loves to surprise. It can wrap itself for lengthy periods in secrets. It can laughingly put the beloved's patience to the test in order, finally, to open the floodgates of a long dammed up joy and let it flow like a wild stream. If he has the right, the lover can hold back anything that might trouble the beloved, nor will he experience this withholding as a reservation in their mutual openness. He will also keep to himself all the pains that he takes and the sacrifices that he performs on the beloved's behalf. The revelation of these things might oblige the beloved more deeply, but the lover would be ashamed to use such means—not the means of love, but of power, perhaps even of a gentle extortion—to tighten the bonds of love. In certain cases where it is necessary to restore a lukewarm love to its first fervor, the lover may reveal these sacrifices to a certain extent. But even when he is allowed for love's sake to shame the lover; he will insist not so much on his own works—in the measure that they are personal achievements—as on the works of love, insofar as these express the love that transcends both lover and beloved and is given to both at the same time. Thus, the general rule stands: Within love everything that fosters love is unveiled, whereas everything that could wound, offend, or endanger it remains veiled.

An even more decisive counterpart to the will to unveiling is the will to *trust*. Within love, nothing is more pressing and vital than the drive to relinquish one's own control, while letting the beloved remain in control. In order to foster this drive, the beloved must have the opportunity for such trust. In love one never insists that the other confess, never demands to look into things to which that he has not granted either explicit or implicit access. Of course, lovers may have decided not to have any more secrets from each other, so that one freely disposes of all that outsiders might regard as strictly the other's secret. But even when people share secrets in this intimate way, there remain certain zones of solitude—especially when it comes to the individual's relation to God—where the tactfulness of love refuses to enter for fear of falling into a promiscuity devoid of mystery. While the individual can waive his own rights, he always has to leave the other his right to secrecy. His willingness to do so increases in proportion as he thereby bestows upon the other his trust, a trust that accepts even noncomprehension of the beloved's deeds and decisions. Once again, certain limits are placed upon the knowledge of truth in order to give love room to be even more limitless. Where these limits lie in each case, to what extent love can afford to forego knowledge and understanding for the sake of its own glorification, is something that can be decided only by each particular situation of love. But as soon as this darkening of knowledge in confident faith led to a darkening of love—for example, to mistrust or suspicion or to serious misunderstandings—it would have to be cleared up for the sake of love.

Having said this, we have, however, not yet touched upon the inmost mystery of veiling in love. To speak of this mystery is to touch the core of love itself. The mystery of being, we were saying,

is an essential, ineliminable mystery. As such, it shines forth triumphantly precisely in the full manifestness of truth unveiled. It is a mystery that has to do with the depth, the interiority, and the inestimably precious worth of being. The possibility and actuality of love have their ground in this depth. If, then, love lives in the core of being, and if this core remains essentially mysterious and intimate, it follows that the mystery wants to remain a mystery to itself. Love, the meaning and goal of all things, is not driven to a total self-perspicuity without any remainder of mystery. On the contrary, it is so substantially mystery that it is always a miracle to itself. Love veils itself before its own eyes because it is all too clear, all too evident to itself. Love is the worshipful core of all things, but it does not worship itself; rather, in an ineffable movement, it turns its gaze away from itself. This movement betokens a further characteristic of love, without which love would be inconceivable: *shame*.

Shame, as it is being understood here, has nothing to do with being ashamed of what is objectively shameful. On the contrary, the kind of shame we mean is aroused by the incommensurability between the offer and the reception of love. It is the magnitude of the mystery that throws the onlooker into confusion, that moves him to avert his eyes and even, when he is suddenly singled out by this supreme reality, to close them altogether. The incommensurability that thus moves him does not have to be interpreted expressly as a feeling of unworthiness, although anyone overwhelmed by the greatness of the mystery might well express his feeling in such terms. For the truth of the matter is that the emotion of shame is fundamentally different from the wish to get away from the mystery or to escape its embrace or to live without the knowledge of it. Shame is not a way of foregoing the truth that offers itself without veils. Rather, it is the receiver's way of offering himself to the ultimate mystery and to its ultimate unveiling. The mystery so overmasters him that he surrenders to it in the form of withdrawal from it. To experience shame, then, is to let go of the will to grasp and to comprehend the truth at the moment it comes flooding in with overwhelming power. The point, however, is not that the subject wants to remove itself by turning away from knowing the object. After all, the act of knowing is already underway, and subject and object have already been united in the identity of the one truth, which has thrown its mantle over both. In this holy *hymen* where truth lays hold of itself, where it catches sight of itself, something comes over it that can only be described as a kind of shame before itself, before the excess of its own glory.

Bodily shame can provide only an indirect illustration of this other, spiritual shame. This feeling of bodily shame is rooted essentially in man's double nature; neither animals nor angels experience this kind of emotion. The conjunction of body and spirit, or, to put it more precisely, the incredible tension between the humility of the bodily fluids and the sublimity of generation and, within generation itself, between the humility of the sexual act and the unfathomable grandeur of its spiritual meaning—all of this makes the feeling of bodily shame an inextricably ambiguous phenomenon. What human beings cover in a physical sense always needs this protection, this intimacy, for two different reasons at the same time. This protection hides what is the all too visible seam in man's nature, where the highest is united with the lowest. But it also veils a mystery that, while, for love, making even the body an intimate, precious vessel to be offered as a glorious gift in love, nonetheless also attests to the poverty of earthly existence and veils itself in order to enhance the light shining on the face of spirit.

Spiritual shame, on the other hand, is not marked by this duality. It is totally an expression of the one, indivisible mystery of being as a whole. It is as if the eye of knowledge were blinded before

so much truth; as if the act of knowledge had to bend the knee in order to receive the gift of truth; as if, when the long-yearned-for object finally appeared, the revelation were simply too much to bear; as if the word required here were much too delicate to be spoken and heard as an external word. (This explains why lovers cannot betray each other's deepest secrets in their mutual embrace but only when they are turned away from each other.) Or else it is as if love itself closed its own eyes before the ultimate union, as if love wrapped itself in a mantle in order not to know what was happening in itself.

Thus, each of the lovers can offer the other a dwelling place in his soul, but he can also carry the other as unconsciously, as unselfconsciously, as a mother bears the child in her womb. The one offers the other his soul like a mantle with which he can cover himself as he pleases. Love thus loves and seeks the night: not because it has anything to hide that could rightfully be claimed by the day, but because in itself it is so unveiled, so fully surrendered, that it has to protect itself from itself; so given over that it has to walk in the protection of invisibility so that it can bear its all too great nakedness. The night that we mean is not first and foremost the lack of external light. It is the dimming of the inner light of love itself. It is love in the form of night, love that makes itself night in order to bear its own excessive clarity. It is love that veils itself because in the end it has nothing else with which to cover itself. At this extreme point, unveiling and veiling have once again become one.

If we descend somewhat from this point, we find a further form of the veiling of truth in love—the form of creative *forgetting* and overlooking, which has already been described above. The measure of this attitude, which seems to run counter to truth, lies entirely in the credit—the love and trust—that the lover advances the beloved. It can be an act of love to believe even in the face of the evidence—to believe when this faith gives the beloved the strength to become who he is meant to be. Perhaps all the individual elements out of which the lover constructs the ideal image that he holds up to the beloved like a mirror are already in the beloved, only in a dispersed form. In this mirror, the lover shows him something like the plan of the finished building; he anticipates its completion in the creative power of love, even though in reality there are scarcely materials for the task of building. And yet the most essential element for the job is there, namely, the faith of love itself. Love makes the impossible possible. Its power is so great that it simply negates the reality it sees before it and overlooks it as if it did not even exist. "I know", says love, "that you are not who you appear to be." Love has glimpsed an image of the beloved, which it does not regard as its own construction and invention but which it understands, at least when it is true love and not self-delusive infatuation, as a God-given exemplar of the beloved whom this same God has entrusted to it. For it is given to all things to perfect themselves through and in one another, to become in the other what they cannot be in themselves. Love alone can offer this assistance, this synthesis, whose power is the opposite of psychoanalytic unmasking. The magic of love is utterly down to earth. It has a clear evidential force and an ethical seriousness that the method of breaking up the psyche does not have, for despite its seeming realism, psychoanalysis is full of fantastic constructions. In fact, the synthetic image that love discovers and holds before the beloved is no subjective and arbitrary invention. Rather, it has been discovered as its inmost reality in the most objective attitude possible: self-forgetful, loving attentiveness to the object, to its meaning, and to the preservation of its integrity. Even when carrying out this work, love remains founded upon a rigorous, objective justice. Because it proposes what should be, it also has in hand the measure of what is. And because it possesses this measure with such assurance, it

can afford to consider reality as it should be and to exclude by forgetting and overlooking whatever does not fit this image.

We have spoken in these pages of love as an absolute power. It goes without saying that this power is never absolutely realized in the world and in man, that its deeds can only occur within the limits of creatureliness. It is the prerogative of one love only to command with sovereign freedom: the unlimited, divine love. We will treat of this love and its communication to the world in the theological part of this study.

2. Truth, Goodness, Beauty

In the end, we can find no clearer way to give an account of the mysteriousness immanent in truth than to offer a concluding, systematic description of the transcendental properties of being in their mutual interwovenness. This completes our entire immanent description of truth and, at the same time, opens it up to the next problem: the relation of worldly truth to God.

Throughout the foregoing analyses, *truth* again and again presented its fundamental meaning: to be the disclosedness of being. Being's opening in truth is not an a relational "opening in itself", but an "opening for", an accessibility that implies that something has been offered to someone. The identity of the beneficiary is for the moment left unspecified. Nevertheless, we have seen that the subject to whom the disclosure is referred is, with equal immediacy, an I as well as a Thou, in other words, that truth both is immanent in what is disclosed and includes a transcendental relation of knowability for others.

The state of being disclosed presupposes the movement of being's self-disclosure and is its actual outcome (which cannot be separated from it). We are, after all, talking about a property inherent in being as such. We can distinguish three elements in this movement: (1) that which discloses itself, the ontological ground; (2) that which is disclosed, the appearance; (3) the disclosure itself as the movement of the ground into the appearance. The appearance is not a second, self standing being alongside the ground; it is the ground itself insofar as it appears and is thus disclosed. Yet because there is a movement between ground and appearance, they are not totally identical; the appearance is rather the exhibition, the mapping, or, if you will, the measurement of the ground. Insofar as it is set over against the ground, it can be termed an image of the ground, but insofar as the ground itself steps forth from out of itself in the appearance, this image is nothing other than the ground externalized. For this reason, the movement of externalization cannot be separated from the ground and its image as if it were a self-standing element in its own right. This movement is the act in which the ground presents itself as what it is: being that appears. At the origin of this act is the ground, which is its origin. Considered in its origin, then, the disclosing of being is an action, an expression, a clearing, a bestowal of participation. The appearance stands at the origin and the end of this act; it is what has been expressed. In the appearance, then, being has taken its own measure, has objectivized itself, and has therein become intelligible because inwardly illuminated.

Yet we must not imagine that being begins with a self-contained, not-yet-disclosed depth, which then, as a kind of afterthought, opens itself to the outside and, if it is so minded, goes out of itself into an appearing surface. No: being does not get its depth until it becomes inwardly illumined, until it obtains an interior space, an intimate zone, until it passes over (or better: has always

already passed over) from the superficiality of mere being-in-itself into the depth and interiority of being-for-itself. It is only when the ground goes out of itself and appears that it therein truly becomes the ground, truly becomes something that does not gain depth until it has first measured its own depth. In the movement of self-disclosure, then, the ground is always also the goal: it is only when it has gone out of itself that being has truly attained itself, knows its own depth, and can present itself to others. The movement can thus be presented as running in the opposite direction: as a movement of the mere appearance, that is, naked being-in-itself, into the ever greater depth of the ground of being, which, as the norm and goal of the movement, first realizes itself as ground only in it.

We can, of course, consider this process from different angles. Thus, we can see it predominantly as the ground's pronouncing itself in the act of its illumination [*Lichtung*]. We can also see it chiefly as the process of the ground's self-realization from the image-idea to the fullness of reality. Yet in either case, two basic terms, which foster, complement, and mutually include each other, play a central role: *light and measure*. Truth is originally grounded in these terms. Insofar as the ontological ground appears, it becomes light both for itself and for others: it is caught up in the movement of communication in which it becomes apprehensible to itself and to others. But it is light only insofar as, appearing therein, it receives its own measure. Now, it receives its measure in a twofold way: as the image set over against its ground; and as the ground that apprehends itself as such in the image. In doing so, it takes its own measure and acquires a measure for others: and in being thus measured within itself—which is also the content of its illumination—it distinguishes itself from irrational chaos and enters into the world of intelligible things.

In this process, mere undifferentiated being also becomes determinate essence: it receives at the same time form and interiority, contour and dimension. The essence unfolds between the two poles. As it expands, it understands that it is posited [*gesetzt*] and, at the same time, participates in its positing [*mitvollziehend sich setzt*]. Both sides of the act of being are always simultaneous: being posited (as nature) and self-positing within this fundamental relation. Insofar as it is posited and, as such, always already existent, it is able to lay hold of what it itself is: its self-positing is not the sovereign act of the sheer origin but the recapitulation of an already given measure: it is nature. But this nature is no dead, passive subjection to another's positing. Rather, it is alive, because it lays hold of itself from moment to moment in a positing that grounds its very being. Indeed, this activity also reflects the flexible mobility of the idea, which, at one and the same time, posits its own end and receives it with new nuances from others and from the surrounding world.

The disclosure of being becomes truth in the full sense as the complete reflection of the inner light in itself, as the self-apprehension, in the interior word, of the measure between ground and appearance. Reflection is the light's returning into itself. As such, it is subjectivity. Precisely this complete closure in itself is its full disclosure for itself. This disclosure for itself is also, in principle, the disclosure of being as such and thus of the world. It follows, then, that to be opened up in this way is to be, in principle, disclosed to the world. As soon as being becomes, through light and measure, an essence that, while posited, shares in its own positing, it has access to, and a place within, the world of disclosed essences. It has gained an image of itself, but not for itself alone: no, it also gives others the chance to form a true and correct image of itself. Insofar as it is

light and measure at once for oneself and for others, it brings to completion the disclosing of being as truth.

Now, our inquiry into *goodness* must follow the same path that we have just described: that of the movement between ground and appearance. In this movement, being communicates its inner content and, precisely in so doing, becomes full of content for the first time. It reveals its own depth, while its revelation is what first makes it an authentic depth. We can distinguish, as we did above, three aspects in this communication: (1) that which communicates, corresponding to being as ground in the sense discussed above; (2) that which is communicated, corresponding to being as appearance; (3) the communication itself, corresponding to the movement from the ground to the appearance. The fact that the communicator becomes what is communicated, in other words, the fact that it resolves to enter upon this movement of communication, indeed, is always already resolved to do so simply by virtue of being what it is—this fact gives beings their *value*. It makes no sense to say that an un-communicated being could still have value. On the contrary, it would be totally indifferent; it could just as well not exist. No one, not even the thing itself, would desire it, because, if it were uncommunicated, it could not even be sought after. It follows that it acquires its value, both for itself and for others, through its communication. It becomes a value for itself in being given to itself in the act of communication: it gets a glimpse of its own depth, which becomes a depth precisely by being communicable, indeed, communicated. It catches sight of itself, not as something alien that is attributed to it extrinsically, but as its own self—the self that is communicated to it in the movement of communication. There is a doubling of communicator and communicated within the identity of being, and this doubling explains how being can become valuable for itself. It receives itself with all the weight and emphasis of a gift that awakens it to the knowledge that it is good to be. And because it does not simply receive itself, but in the receiving is also itself a communicator, it knows that it also participates in the goodness of being, which consists in self-communication (*bonum diffusivum sui*).[10] In one and the same movement, being does two things. First, it renounces its ambition to be for itself alone, in order to open itself in the act of self-communication. Second, it acquires, thanks to this original sacrifice, the weight and dignity of a good, of a one-of-a-kind value. It pays no attention to its precious value—and that is precisely what gives it this precious value in the first place.

In communicating itself, the ground has no other ground than this very self-communication (there is, then, no ground behind the ground). The ground of being, in other words, is this communication itself. For this very reason, however, the ground is immediately one with the good, that is, with groundlessly self-giving love. In this communication being is ground enough for itself and wants no other ground than its own communication. Communication is the ground's going out of itself and entering into the appearance. In this act, being becomes what it is; but in the same breath the appearance, too, is enabled to strive after the depth of the ground, insofar as this depth unveils itself as the idea, as what is meant to be. In one respect, ground and appearance are one; the appearance is actually the ground as appearing. Prom this point of view, the good, in the sense of perfection (*perfectum*), is always already actual. In another respect, however, there remains a gap between ground and appearance—each communication, being always new, keeps alive the act of striving to lay hold of oneself. From this point of view, the good is always still in the process of being realized (by good here we mean the *bonum honestum*).[11] The second point depends on the first, because all striving for the good presupposes that there is a good and that it is worthy of being striven for. At the same time, the first point always already includes the

second, inasmuch as the good is never self-sufficient but is always striving for its own actualization. The complete notion of the good, then, requires the unity of what it is—unbegrudgingly self-communicating being—and what it strives to attain—the full correspondence between ground and appearance, that is, the complete communication of self-communicating being.

We can exhibit *beauty* immediately in terms of what we have just developed with respect to the problem of value. The good goes beyond the true insofar as the mere formal correspondence between ground and image is not in and of itself a value. Of course, because it is a formal relation of correspondence, it displays a certain correctness, but this is not yet the same as saying why anyone should care about this adequation. Thus, even the light of truth could seem cold and joyless if it did not also have the warmth of the good. Indeed, a being could treat its disclosure for itself and for others as a mere fact, without ever feeling enriched by its own selfhood or attracted by the prospect of knowing another. That this is in fact *not* the case we owe to the mutual indwelling of truth and goodness. Because of this indwelling, in fact, the disclosure of being is always already a communication, while the communication is always already an index of value. Thus, every truth is itself a value, and all values share in the unveiling of the depth of being.

We saw just now that correctness is a purely formal correspondence that as such does not yet bring to light the value of being. By the same token, the purely formal relation between appetite and its satisfaction through attainment of a sought-after good is also not sufficient to give us a purchase on this value. To be sure, a good is good for me because I need it for one reason or another, because it corresponds to a need, and because, by attaining this good, I satisfy this need. But if my need were the decisive justification of the good, the good would not only cease to be good once the need was met, but, even worse, being could not be called good in itself but only in relation to something else. The good would thus be at the mercy of a total subjectivism and relativism. Of course, being itself might remain absolute, but it would thereby cease being good. In order to avoid these ruinous consequences, it is necessary to insist that the foundation of the good does not lie primarily in the seeker but in being itself, which is the object of seeking (*bonum est principaliter in re*).[12] This does not mean, however, either that being and value are immediately identifiable or that we can say that being is valuable for itself, as if it could enjoy itself without need of anything else. The point is rather that the communicative movement by which being becomes being, essence, and subject has to be understood as the original and elementary movement of the good, because love bestows value even on being.

As we have said, the ground grounds itself in its communication. It cannot, then, be justified in terms of any thing prior to it. It can be approached and exposited only through something posterior. In being's state of having been communicated, we touch the self-grounding ground. We cannot conceive of this communication either one-sidedly as a relation or one-sidedly as an act, because it is the source of being itself. As such it lies behind both, whence it simply pours itself out, so that its abundance alone makes sense of every act, every measure that is posited, and every act of positing it. Here the ground of being becomes bottomless. The ground of the communication is, in fact, nothing other than the communication itself, which is therefore groundless. Now, it is precisely the fact that communication has no other ground than itself that gives it its character as love.

All truth goes back to this groundless ground: all truth is grounded in the correspondence between image and ground and in the self-apprehension of being (in the light of its interior identity and luminosity) that occurs in this correspondence. But this fact also closes the circle of truth in itself, and it is not possible to go on asking *why* there should be correspondence and luminosity, measure and light in the first place; why anything should have the goodness to give itself and to disclose itself to us in its being; why there should be truth in the first place. This question lies "behind" truth insofar as truth is distinguished from the good, but it also lies "in it", insofar as the movement of being's self-disclosure is none other than that of self-communication. Insofar as we consider the mystery of love as lying "behind" the truth, we have to say that all truth is reducible to it, that truth derives its meaning as truth from it, and that, far from mastering and explaining it as mystery, truth must fall silent in humility before it. But insofar as the mystery indwells the truth itself, insofar as truth is a moment in the self-disclosure of being, the mystery is not something alien to truth. Prom this point of view, the mystery is not some irrational background from which truth emerges. Rather, truth itself irradiates mystery, and it is of the very essence of truth to manifest this radiant mystery through itself.

We needed the foregoing explanation in order to be able to lay hold of beauty in its very origin. Beauty, in fact, is nothing other than the immediate salience of the groundlessness of the ground with respect to, and out of, everything that rests upon it. It is the transparency, through the phenomenon, of the mysterious background of being. In this respect, beauty is in the first instance the immediate manifestation of the never-to-be mastered excess of manifestation contained in everything manifest, of the eternal "ever more" implicit in the essence of every being. What arouses aesthetic pleasure is, not simply the correspondence between essence and appearance, but rather the totally incomprehensible observation that the essence really appears in the appearance (which, for all that, is not the essence), indeed, appears as an essence that is always more than itself, hence, that can never appear once and for all. But it is precisely this non-appearance that appears. It is precisely this eternal comparative that comes to expression in the positive degree.

We can go farther: the ground appears in its specificity as self-grounding groundlessness. Implicit in this appearing is the disinterested character of beauty. Beauty is the pure irradiation of the true and the good for their own sake. It is the simultaneity of self-being and self-outpouring characteristic of communication. It is an elusive, indescribable joy that shares in the groundless joy of the irradiation of being, which, as was said, carries its own ground in itself.

This also accounts for the unbegrudging self-abandonment that we associate with beauty: beauty's radiance overspreads all who behold it, just as the sun overspreads a landscape. At the same time, participation in beauty does not entitle anyone to lay hands on it or to divide it into parts. Beauty can enter into every partial aspect and element, even into those apparently contrary to one another, without being inwardly affected by this individual differentiation. For this reason, beauty can seem, from one point of view, to consist entirely in measure, in proportion, in delimited form, as if the image, understood as the appearance of the essence, were its true home. But in the twinkling of an eye, beauty can also appear to consist essentially in movement, in the rhythm of communication itself, or in the eternal movement of yearning for what lies beyond all delimited forms and images. At one moment it can look like perfect formality, at another like sheer formlessness, but both modes of appearance—one can call them the classical and the romantic, the linear and the painterly, the Apollonian and the Dionysian—are in reality only

manifestations of the same mysterious ground of beauty. Beauty dwells so totally in the mystery of being that it can resolve upon the utmost *surrender* of the mystery, while never forgetting that what it resolves upon will always be the surrender of the *mystery*. Once delivered over, beauty is pure defenselessness, yet no one is as protected as beauty is through itself alone. Beauty retails the mystery of being on every street corner, yet only those who have an adequate sensibility can understand it. Beauty risks everything and, in so doing, risks nothing. Wherever beauty's appearance comes under attack, it withdraws into the essence, where it lives on indestructibly as being's essential beauty.

Truth, goodness, and beauty are so fully transcendental properties of being that they can be grasped only in and through one another. In their communion, they furnish proof of the inexhaustible depth and overflowing richness of being. Finally, they show that in the end everything is comprehensible and unveiled only because it is grounded in an ultimate mystery, whose mysteriousness rests, not upon a lack of clarity, but rather upon a superabundance of light. For what is more incomprehensible than the fact that the core of being consists in love and that its emergence as essence and existence has no ground other than groundless grace?

IV. TRUTH AS PARTICIPATION

The second and third parts of our inquiry dealt with truth as freedom and truth as mystery, respectively. Their primary task was to describe worldly truth in itself. Naturally, this required temporarily pushing into the background the whole question of the relation between worldly and divine truth. Nevertheless, we did this precisely so that, in this fourth part, we could thematize all the more fruitfully, and develop all the more amply, the hints we have already dropped in the first part. We had absolutely no intention, then, of suggesting that we could do an immanent phenomenology of worldly truth without expressly treating the problem of finite and infinite truth. On the contrary, the attentive reader will have noticed that from beginning to end our account of worldly truth had to do with creatureliness and contingency and that it tacitly implied worldly truth's relation to the sustaining ground from which it emerges: eternal truth. Now that we have made this ubiquitous presupposition explicit, we must now go on to develop it thematically.

A. Participation and Revelation

Our initial description (pp. 39-40) has already brought us face to face with a curious property of truth. We saw, in fact, that, on the one hand, truth produces definitive certainty, insofar as it puts an end to the tentative groping to know what is, but that, on the other hand, this closure intrinsically awakens trust and faith and, in so doing, always opens the way to eternal seeking. We then went on to analyze how truth opens: the fundamental act of self-consciousness, in which spirit takes its own measure, ipso facto discloses the measure of being as a whole, in which one's own being and consciousness are embedded. The truth about one being is imparted only with the simultaneous opening of the horizon of being as such. But opening to the horizon of truth means opening to ever more truth, ever more intelligibility. Moreover, this openness, which is an "always more", is an a priori constituent of truth's essence—so much so, in fact, that, if truth should ever lose it, it would immediately cease even to be truth. The pathos of the search for ever further truth draws its life from a promise immanent in truth itself. The failure to deliver on this promise, which is an index of truth's infinity, would be tantamount to a deception at the very heart of truth, hence, to its self-destruction.

At any given moment, of course, being is still unveiled and has yet to be unveiled. We saw above (pp. 55-57), however, that being cannot be knowable if it is concealed in itself and unmeasured by any knowledge. Something can be measured only when it has a measure in itself, and, for the same reason, only what is always already known can be knowable. Consequently, the promise of truth cannot regard merely an indefinite succession of finite objects of knowledge, which could be discovered and known only gradually by the finite subject. Rather, it necessarily presupposes a sphere of absolute truth in which eternal being and eternal self-consciousness have always already coincided and by which all finite objects have always already been measured and, just so far, delivered over to be known by finite subjects.

Our analysis of finite self-consciousness yielded, then, not just an empty, unlimited horizon of being as such, which would function as a supracategorial, a priori condition of the possibility of every finite cognition of objects, but also the explicit and necessary inference to an infinite consciousness, which functions as the condition of the possibility even of finite subjects. In this

way, there opens up an analogy of self-consciousness, whose inmost, irrefragable certainty is the nonidentity of finite and infinite consciousness. At the very moment when finite consciousness touches on the sphere of the divine (and, because it is self-consciousness, it *must* touch on it), it is immediately thrown back into an ever greater distance from it.

What we have said about truth as freedom and interiority finally enables us to understand fully the nature of this distance. Every kind of pantheist-idealist or immediate or dynamic-progressive equation of the finite and the divine subjects is a failure to grasp the most basic laws of truth. Truth always presupposes a free, personal inner space. The more perfect and independent of subspiritual nature the knowing subject is, the more truth involves such personal interiority. But if there is an absolute self-consciousness, it must by nature possess in itself the measure of all being and, therefore, must have no need of any natural, unfree relation of expression or passive receptivity. The infinite freedom that comes with infinite self-consciousness guarantees the infinite subject an infinite interiority and, therefore, an absolute transcendence vis-à-vis all subjects and objects in the world.

Now, this transcendence of God's truth immediately implies a further point, namely, that if there is finite being and truth at all, it is only because of a free creative deed and utterance of God that cannot be deduced from any necessity. This follows from the personality of the absolute, which leaves no room for emanations that somehow precede, or lie beyond the reach of, divine freedom. We spoke just now of the originality of the analogy between divine and worldly being and consciousness. In the same way, the freedom involved in creation and creatureliness must emerge at the very origin of the analogy itself. After all, every other aspect of the unveiling of being as a whole rests upon this primary distinction and the understanding of it.

We are talking, then, about the ontological dependence of finite truth (and not in the first instance about that of finite being). Now, this ontological dependence of finite truth can be inferred immediately from its "creatureliness", that is, from its contingency. This contingency, which will be presented synthetically in the following chapter, is so obtrusive and so penetrating that it is simply impossible to ignore. There is no aspect of worldly truth that simply rests in itself. Rather, the whole remains in suspense, inconclusive, indeed, intrinsically inconclusible, in the sense that it is continually in need of a complementary piece of the puzzle. From beginning to end, everything is tied to the starting point of all cognition: the senses. No knower can behold the truth except in the mirror image of the outward expression. As a result, every existent object that is known is not only marked by contingency but also explicitly receives the truth that expresses it and that is its measure. Contingency is an intrinsic quality of worldly truth, and it is in virtue of this inherent and indelible mark that worldly truth is differentiated, already in the most original act of self-consciousness, from the divine truth.

It is true, of course, that, in this first act in which the finite subject takes the measure of itself and of being as a whole, God can be glimpsed, in however veiled and indirect a fashion, as the necessary ground of all worldly truth. Nevertheless, it is precisely in this knowledge of him as the (in itself) hidden mystery of infinite personal being that he distinguishes himself from finite self-consciousness. God is necessarily affirmed concomitantly, whether explicitly or not, in every cognition of truth. At the same time, this implicit affirmation safeguards two things. First, the manifestness of God's being is immediately traced back to his primordial freedom to manifest himself (which is only a hypothetical necessity: assuming, that is, that God has in fact willed to

create a world). Second, that God's self-manifestation reveals his lordly freedom and thus his concealment in himself. The finite truth apprehended in cognition is a gift given by God out of his treasury of infinite truth. Insofar as this gift-character inheres in finite truth, it proclaims something of God's nature, namely, his goodness as a Creator who communicates what no necessity compels him to communicate. And inasmuch as the *form* of the communication, which is to say, its freedom, adheres to the gift and is encoded in it, its *content* also has the value of a communication that reveals something of the Creator's essence.

At the same time, there is no natural relation between the expression and the one who expresses himself in it. After all, creation is in every respect free and gratuitous. It is impossible, then, to prescind from, or to bypass, God's free utterance in the created object in order to spy out his essence. Knowledge of God's existence and essence occurs strictly within the relation between the finite subject and the finite object. What God reveals of himself in creation has been structured into the nature of the objects and subjects of knowledge. What the Creator has chosen to display of himself in creation has to be gathered from the essence of subject and object, both in their contingency and in the positive values and properties they embody. Thus, in the very act of revealing himself as Creator, God immediately conceals himself as the (in itself) unmanifest ground of the world. He shows just enough of himself for the creature to know that he, the Creator, is in himself perfectly free and hidden.

Only now can we fully understand the mysteriousness of truth. We saw above that the infinite ground appears in the background of every finite truth. Indeed, we saw that by the very nature of all worldly truth, of all that is expressed in any way, there can be no expression without the concomitant appearance of a permanent mystery, without the comparative that intrinsically characterizes truth. Yet we understand why this is the case only in light of the analogy between infinite and finite, divine and worldly truth. *Because* divine truth, being the truth of an *absolute* interiority, necessarily remains a mystery in all of its manifestations, all worldly truth has some share in this mysteriousness. Specifically, the mystery inherent in worldly truth is given into the *possession* of worldly being, which can therefore act freely and spontaneously out of a personal interiority, yet it always remains only a *gift*, the gift of participation in the absolute interiority of divine truth, from which the creature draws its own mysteriousness. However hard it may try, in fact, the creature can never betray and profane its mystery as completely as it might intend by its sin. The mystery, in other words, is never given into the creature's possession in such a way that it ceases to remain, at the same time, in God's safekeeping. This is the seal that the Creator has imprinted upon his creature, thereby branding it as his property.

The foregoing also gives us the key to understanding the necessity of the ultimate groundlessness that emerged from our analysis in the third part of this book. All created truth is groundless to the extent that it does not have its ground in itself, to the extent, in other words, that it breaks through its own ultimate ground into the depth of God's ultimately inexhaustible mystery. But God's truth, too, is groundless, in the sense that it rests upon nothing other than itself, nothing other than its own infinity. In other words, the groundlessness of all worldly grounds is itself analogous to the groundlessness of the divine ground. Of course, the structure of this analogy entails that the unequivocal creatureliness of the world's groundlessness—the fact that the world does not stand in itself and the distance from God that this implies—is the locus where we glimpse the unequivocal godliness of God's groundlessness—the fact that, unlike the world, he stands wholly in himself.

Looked at from the creature's point of view, then, the relation between finite and infinite freedom is one of intrinsic, naturally necessary *participation* (so much so, in fact, that if its relation to God's truth were somehow broken off, worldly truth would instantaneously collapse in on itself and cease to be truth at all), while from God's point of view this same relation appears as one of a free *manifestation* unconditioned by any requirements of nature. This relation is unique and absolutely incomparable, because every truth-relation within the world takes the form of a tension between relative, creaturely poles. It is impossible to subsume the relation of participation and manifestation that obtains between God and the creature under some (univocal) category, as if it were a "case", one distinctive form of participation and revelation among many. The analogy between God and creature established by creation is congruent with every other analogy only in an analogous way. Now, the fact that such an analogy of analogies nonetheless exists is a consequence of the analogy of God's revelation at the level of creation, which is the ground of every inner-worldly analogy. For it is precisely in this revelation that the creature, by God's liberality, acquires a share in God's truth, and God reveals his truth precisely by granting participation in this way. God thus equips the creature to be a relative center of truth, which is then able for its own part to know truth and to express something of itself. The inner-worldly analogies, then, have their ultimate measure in the analogy of creation, yet this very fact grounds the legitimacy of using the former to illuminate the essence of the latter—especially since it is precisely in this process that the inner-worldly receives its definitive interpretation in the light of the God-world relation.

In explaining creation in terms of participation and revelation, we can draw on three inner-worldly forms of truth that were described above: image, significance, and word. The inner-creaturely reality that was expressed by these categories, especially with respect to the fundamental relation between matter and spirit, must be capable of transposition to the relation between the creature and God, so long as we never lose sight of the fact that this latter relation is the measure of the first. In working out this transposition, we need to treat the three categories as a unity, because the natural forms of expression, not being a free word or the expression of an intelligible meaning in material images and likenesses, can furnish only a more remote, more obscure analogy to creation than what man freely utters and shapes. On the other hand, this is no warrant for detaching voluntary speech from the organic bodiliness in which it is embedded, because this bodiliness is, not simply a hindrance, but, on the contrary, an enrichment of man's expressive apparatus. By itself alone, verbal speech offers for the most part only signs that remain extrinsic to the signified, whereas the expressive languages of the body and of all other natural utterances have the advantage of being intrinsically analogous to what they express.

When we look at the world in this way, it appears as one vast image and symbol of the divine essence, which thus expresses and reveals itself in the language of similitudes. To know how to read the world as a likeness is to understand both the world itself and, to the extent that he allows himself to be grasped, the God who expresses himself in it. Matter is to spirit as the world is to God: this proportion gives us the most comprehensive access to the problem of the knowledge of God. Indeed, those who have been trained, both intellectually and existentially, to contemplate all physical reality as a likeness and expressive field of intelligible truth within the world will find themselves best equipped to interpret the whole of creation as a similitude and expressive field of the Creator.

It follows that the process of manifestation shows the same tension, albeit analogically, between immediacy and mediation in two different relations: the relation between God and the world, on the one hand, and the intra-worldly relation between the significant image and the spirit or ground that expresses itself in the image, on the other. One coordinate of this tension is the fact that we know the intelligible only in the sensible image (*phantasma*), hence, that we can have no real intuition into another mind. It is only when the knower interprets the sensible expression, when his reason, working discursively on the image, abstracts and concretizes, that he retrieves an intellectual image and understanding of what was expressed in the sensible image. We saw above that this indirectness of discursive cognition safeguards the intimacy of being in its self-revelation, while also affording the knower a chance to exercise his spontaneity. In an analogous sense, every revelation of God within creation is an indirect manifestation confined to the creaturely sign, and it is only through this sign that the finite subject can learn something of the essence of the God who reveals himself in it. Our entire knowledge of God remains strictly bound to the interpretation of worldly signs, if for no other reason than that all of man's knowledge of intelligible reality outside the I is restricted to the expressive field constituted by the senses. But this is also true, as we have already shown, of the knowledge of God that can be retrieved within the subject's self-consciousness, since even in the interiority of the subject, God is not immediately disclosed in himself, but only indirectly, on the basis of the disclosedness of being as a whole. The finite intellect has no means, either inside or outside itself, to get an immediate glimpse of God; it remains dependent upon the sign language of the things through which God speaks to it.

We have seen that the intelligible content truly appears and expresses itself in material signs. We have also seen that the truth of the world consists in the fact that the ground truly unveils itself in the expression and, having unveiled itself, manifests and certifies itself, so that the appearance is no delusion or concealment of the essence but a true manifestation of it. Similarly, God genuinely steps forth into view both in the world as a whole and in each thing and each truth that it contains. The sign in which he expresses himself does not hinder him in the least from saying what he wants to say. There is no space between the content and the expression, because the expression originates entirely in the revealer and is determined through and through by the content that it is meant to express. There is no alien matter upon which God impresses his ideas; the only preexistent "matter" out of which God creates the world is his free will and his eternal idea. For this reason, nothing hinders God's essence from becoming transparent in creation, so much so that one beholding worldly things can look to the archetype through the image and, in so doing, forget that he is not seeing the archetype immediately but only in the mirror of the creature ("et sic quando aliquid cognoscitur per similitudinem in effectu suo existentem, potest motus cognitionis transire ad causam immediate, sine hoc quod cogitat de aliqua alia re; et hoc modo intellectus viatoris potest cogitare de Deo, non cogitando de aliqua creatura" [*De per.*, q. 8, a. 13 ad 18]).[1]

The essence of worldly things consists so truly in their imaging God, and this image itself is so transparent, that God seems to shine forth immediately (*immediate*) from it. There is, then, a form of "intuition" specific to symbolic cognition, which consists in a psychologically immediate transcendence of the ontological sign (*medium quo*),[2] though without removing it at any time. For the same reason, it is equally correct to speak either of a sort of vision of God in the medium of the creature (Rom 1:20) or of a mediate inference. The "vision" meant here has nothing to do

with some irrational form of cognition, for as a passage from the sign to its expressed content, such vision implies a logical inference and can be translated into one at any given moment of the process. For the most part, this kind of transposition is unnecessary once the knowing intellect has become as adept at reading the world's sign language as it has at reading letters in a book or at gathering the work of art from its colors or sounds.

It must be said, however, that, if God appears in the signs of his creation, he can do so only within the tension that, as we saw earlier, marks the appearance of the ground in the image. On the one hand, this appearance can look like the uttermost manifestation of the ground in the image, so that the image could almost be mistaken for the ground itself. The features are so eloquent, the expression is so vivid, that you almost believe you have the living man before you! The illusion that the artist attempted to create is so powerful that you believe the reality has been set immediately before you instead of the image. Similarly, the look on a man's face can unveil him so deeply that you fancy that his eyes convey an unveiled vision of his soul. The image, then, is filled to the brim with the whole significance of the ground—so much so that the vessel appears almost to overflow, better, that what the vessel contains seems greater than the vessel itself. By the same token, worldly truth, by God's gift, often appears to contain an intrinsic infinity, an inexhaustible truth, beauty, and goodness, an immediate gleam of God's eternity and infinity, an irradiation of something more than it could contain simply on account of its creaturely truth. This mysterious "more", to which we have alluded so often in the foregoing, is the uttermost filling of the vessel of the worldly symbol with the divine content. This explains how a kind of plenitude can invade a moment of time, making it seem to be an immediate appearance of eternity, or how a work of art can be so perfect that it seems to have the quality, no longer of an earthly, but of an immediately divine idea.

This quality, then, can descend upon the creature, and, when it does, it gives the creature its greatest fascination. But it is so delicate, it requires such careful handling, that one has to have a completely ordered relation to God in order not to succumb to the temptation of divinizing the creature. The fascination that creatures can exercise by virtue of the immanence of God's glory in them makes them bearers of a promise, an immediate proclamation of his presence. God speaks from out of them; God draws the beholder to himself through them; God so to say leans out of these eyes of the world to look immediately at the one who has been entranced by the beauty of things. The comparative character of things, which entices the beholder out of their essence into immensity, intends God, not the world. But because this fascination nonetheless occurs within the sign language of worldly things, because even in this uttermost manifestation of God the veil of creatureliness remains intact, the creature has the potentially ruinous power to misuse the appearance of eternity entrusted to it and to pass this appearance off as its own truth. Or else things may naively and innocently irradiate eternal truth, while the beholder, deceived by this appearance, ascribes to them properties that do not belong to them as creatures. What is only a participation and a revelation is reinterpreted as an immanent, permanent property. This use of the world's symbolism immediately perverts the truth into a lie. The creature can no more claim the values it carries as its own property than the artwork can pass itself off as the artist, even when it contains the artist's best. The intrinsic meaning and consistency of these values depends on their being a participation in God and his revelation.

In order to banish this temptation, we need to consider the other pole in the range of God's possible self-manifestations in creation. The fact that the divine truth can demand more space

than the creaturely image has to give shows the sovereignty of God's free decrees and the complete instrumentality of the creature. It is at the very moment when the creature most irradiates God's truth and glory, when God is most immanent in the creature, that the creature is least the content and most the shell and vessel. When God most shines through, the creature has to become most transparent. When God lovingly elevates the creature to the loftiest heights, the creature must humble itself in the deepest reverence before him, acknowledging itself to be only a servant and handmaid of the Lord. Thus, the creature cooperates most with God and his revelation when it lets God use it as an instrument for his purposes. The creature is most alive when, by God's life indwelling in it, it submits in the most deathlike way to the hand of the divine potter. Insofar as the creature's own truth stands over against God's, it can seek this truth only by entering into the pure distance of an instrument that, far from considering itself to be of any importance in its own right, sees itself as a kind of appendage. The objectivity of the creature's attitude consists in this withdrawal before God. Retreating to the point of a thinglike transparency, the creature is no longer noticed, because the onlooker's attention glides immediately (*immediate*) to the archetype who expresses himself in it: such is the correct attitude demanded by the relationship of analogy. All truth comes from God as the ground, and the truth of the appearance is simply to be the appearance of the ground.

The creature thus consciously fulfills the movement in which the material images fade into insignificance before the appearing essence, dissolving themselves in a kind of retrograde motion back into the essence, in order to crown its revelation in them. But even when the creature does not voluntarily adopt this attitude, it is in fact ultimately constrained to do so by God's truth: in the long run, the creatureliness of the images' truth will be revealed in all its transitoriness and caducity. True, this image is a likeness, but "only a likeness". The worldly form can irradiate a fascination that we can almost mistake for its own, yet this fascination fades; the form is left standing like an unleaved tree in autumn, and the deceptive illusion gives way to a sober disillusionment. It is as if the appearance had become detached from the ground and, in trying to stand on its own feet, revealed that, at its core, it is mere seeming. It becomes clear that the absolute truth ultimately resides, not in the creature, but behind and above it and that creatures have their true "essence" (as the German mystics understand this term), not in themselves, but in God. No "proof of God's existence" is as compelling as this withdrawal of God's transcendence into itself. No appearance of God is more overwhelming than this non-appearance of the truth in mere seeming. For example, a man's silence can reveal more of his personal, inaccessible freedom than any extensive discourse in which he attempts to describe his interiority. This does not mean, of course, that creatures are merely appearances, accidents, or modes of the divine substance. The inner-worldly relation between appearance and essence is, after all, only analogous to the relation between the creature and God. Rather, the whole creature, both essence and appearance, becomes a null, transparent similitude that allows the absoluteness of God's truth to break forth triumphantly like a victorious sun through the cloud of the world.

The creature's participation in God and God's revelation is thus analogous to the relation between the worldly expression and what it expresses, between matter and spirit. In the inner-worldly analogy, the two poles seem to be bound by a mediating third—sensory intuition or imagination, which lifts matter into the domain of spirit, though without yet spiritualizing it, and, at the same time, enables spirit to become enrooted organically and physiologically in matter. In the transcendent analogy, the sphere of "ideas" or "archetypes" seems to play an analogous mediating role between divine and worldly truth, inasmuch as it gathers worldly truth upward

and, so to speak, represents it within the divine mind, while serving, on the other hand, as the universal and necessary form in which divine truth takes root and reveals itself within the transitory world.

In reality, however, we cannot extend the analogy between the image-making activity of the sensory imagination, on the one hand, and a world of ideas lying between God and the creature, on the other, without misunderstanding the nature of God's revelation. The imagination exists as part of human knowing entirely insofar as man's cognitive powers are natural (in the sense of subspiritual). The presence of the imagination is the chief expression of the fact that the created spirit is thrown into knowledge long before it can decide whether it wants to know or not, that the material of knowledge is provided from the outside, and that even its spontaneous self-expression has to adhere to the expressive language of a nature that does not depend upon its activity. Nothing of the sort can condition God's revelation in the creaturely world. This revelation is, in fact, the freest there is; it creates for itself, by the sovereignty of the self-revealing God, both the expression and the medium of the expression, and it is not bound to anything other than God himself. If the proposal of a sphere of ideas between God and the world is taken seriously, it is tantamount to a denial of God's freedom and leads to a kind of gnosis or pantheism. There are only two senses in which we can legitimately assign a role to ideas in the relationship of participation and revelation. First, they can be understood as the archetypes that God himself projects in the context of his free decision to create. In this case, they function as the possible imitations of his infinite essence and truth. Second, we can speak of their inscription within the created world, in which case they appear as the intelligible forms [*Sinngestalten*] embodied in it. As we explained above (p. 187), these forms are not only immanent in individual things but, being the laws governing what is and should be, also transcend them. Of course, we need to understand this transcendence properly. The forms embodied *in* things pass over, without any discernible boundary, into the forms lying *above* things. These latter, in turn, are the eternal norms established by God himself that, as the exemplars of things, contain their truth and recapitulate it in him.

Now, we can indeed speak of ideas in this twofold sense. Nevertheless, the rigorous reduction of all laws governing what is and what should be to the Creator's sovereign decree, whose scope is determined by the infinite imitability of the divine essence, rules out any conception of the world of ideas as a self-contained zone lying between Creator and creature. Looked at humanly, this world of ideas is in dynamic movement; for us, it is the constantly new apportionment of unchangeable divine truth to the world's creaturely truth and the constant readjustment of the latter to the former. For this reason, it can even be described as the formal pattern of the analogy between God and the creature, inasmuch as it implies both that the truth begins in God and ends in the world and that there is a movement of expression that goes from God to the world. In this sense, the idea represents the measure of truth. But this measure is not an independent measure standing over against the measure of the serf-revealing God. It is not a measure in the sense of a perfectly balanced proportion between the two terms. On the contrary, anything resembling a proportion between two terms is rigorously reduced to God's sovereignly free apportionment of truth. In a word, any self-contained world of ideas is dissolved into a measure that we can no longer inspect from above but is hidden in the mystery of the Creator.

From the world's point of view, the origin of God's revelation and the goal of the creature's participation is the absolute unity of the divine Creator. The entire multiplicity of the created

world, with all its intra-worldly antitheses between species and individual, essence and existence, norm and facticity, ground and appearance, inner-worldly necessity and inner-worldly contingency, depends without exception on this absolute unity. All of these tensions are constitutive modes and tokens of the nondivinity of worldly truth. The identity of divine truth is revealed in the nonidentity of its creaturehood. This identity, which cannot be broken down into anything other than itself, is the measure both of itself and of all its communications *ad extra*. In itself, it is the identity of infinite being and infinite consciousness. It is, then, an absolute, unconditioned sovereignty resting upon no ground other than itself. Because this sovereign majesty is immediately one with infinite being and infinite knowledge, it coincides with infinite and unconditional necessity, and even in God it is impossible to distinguish necessity from his self-determination and to make the latter in any way dependent on the former. God's truth is an identity of necessity and freedom: God is freely what he necessarily is and necessarily what he freely is. God grounds himself, and this self-grounding is an expression of his essence and of the fact that he is absolute person. His personal freedom does not rest, as in the case of creatures, upon a natural foundation that in one way or another precedes his free spirituality.

Of course, whenever God expresses himself *ad extra*, he performs a nonnecessary creative act that engages his freedom in another sense than we have just described. Nevertheless, this act expresses the intra-divine unity of free sovereignty and necessity. The very idea that God's essence is imitable presupposes at least a hypothetical will to a possible, free creation. And every intra-worldly necessity has its last court of appeal in this self-grounding divine unity of freedom and necessity. Every "essential vision" of necessary ideas above the world is reduced to this unity as to its ultimate ground. For the creature, there is no other grounding than God's sovereign freedom, whose dispositions are right because God's freedom is one with the law of necessity. If God's freedom stood over against the ideas as Plato's Demiurge stands over against the world of ideas, the creature would have in these ideas (*possibilia*) a court of appeal that was independent of God's sovereign decree. God's freedom would therefore be limited and conditioned, and the creature would enter into a secret pact with an unconditional reality prior to freedom. It could use this unconditional reality to assess and judge God's free decrees; it could get behind God's freedom, so to speak, and ensconce itself in a higher sphere that judges and rules it. It would bypass God's freedom in order to establish a secret identity between creaturely truth and the eternal truth in God and, in so doing, would destroy the analogy of truth that God metes out. God's freedom would retain only a limited sphere in which to reveal itself, namely, "existence", as sharply distinct from the sphere of "essence". Existence alone would have to bear all the features of creaturehood that mark contingent reality as God's creature. The essence, on the other hand, could be traced back, without any relation to God's freedom, to a necessity located in the divine essence and its necessary imitability.

Such an interpretation of the analogy between God and the world would neutralize the analogy itself in favor of a hidden identity. Only one aspect of the created world, its existence "outside of God", would express its creaturehood, whereas its essence would exist in a sort of mystical identity with the necessary "ideas" and instability of God's nature. The measure of the creature's truth would immediately be the measure of the divine truth.

Now, this view of things is contradicted by what we said earlier concerning the relationship between essence and existence in the created world. The undeniably real, and irresolvable, tension between the poles of worldly being expresses the contingency, not only of this or that

partial aspect of created being, but of its entire ontological structure. The unity-in-tension of the existent creature's being thus depends entirely upon the absolute divine unity of sovereign decision and necessity. Although the measure of God's creative act is the possible imitability of the divine essence, God tells us nothing about how he wishes to be imitated except by means of his free creation itself. Consequently, as far as the creature is concerned, the ultimate grounding of all worldly meaning is God's free decree, which we have every reason to consider as expressing the highest meaning. Every "why" thus leads back to the answer "because God wills it", and this answer implies that God's will is supreme reason. It is not only the existence but even the essence of the creature that depends upon God's will ("ipsa quidditas creari dicitur",[3] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2), however true it may be that this essence is an imitation of the divine nature. For this reason, the creature's participatory conformation to God can consist only in an obedient insertion of its creaturely freedom into the absolutely sovereign freedom of God's will, which is revealed in and above it. We spoke above of the closeness in which the divine truth seems to fill the earthly vessel to the brim and of the distance in which the divine fullness, revealing its freedom from need, seems to withdraw from the earthly vessel. God can reveal himself in either way, for the modality and form of his self-revelation depend solely upon his decree. Now, in both—in the consolation of proximity as well as in the desolation of distance—the creature's truth consists solely in acknowledging that God's will is, in fact, divine and in leaving to it alone the decision about which of the two states is best.

In each instance, then, the divine truth reveals that it is outside the creature's truth. Nevertheless, all of this comes to a head only when we consider this divine truth in terms of its power to generate situations. Of course, situation is inherent in worldly truth as such. In the context of our earlier analysis, then, we could plausibly describe it in some sense detached from its anchoring in the divine truth. Yet its connection with temporality, on the one hand, and with the social and dialogical nature of inner-worldly truth, on the other, is not yet sufficient to get to the bottom of the whole urgency of the situation. The situation does not take on this urgency until eternity turns its eye upon us through the appearance of worldly truth. If worldly, transitory truth were shut up in itself, there would be no reason why it should place such a serious demand on us. We would be free to appropriate or to ignore its finitude; no one could force us to face the moment as if it were the first, the last, or the only one. Only if the temporal moment, in all its transitoriness, is a participation in, and revelation of, the eternal moment—indeed, only if it reveals this eternity to us as a sovereignly decreeing will—does the moment acquire this unsurpassable intensity. The temporality of being now becomes an expression of God's creative freedom itself. It is the form in which the pure creative act manifests itself: as an act that is always now releasing the creature from itself and always now sustaining it in its dependence. In consequence, the temporal moment is also the vessel of the Creator's will for his creature—a will that is always now revealing itself, is qualitatively differentiated, and tolerates no procrastination. Temporality is the means through which God's truth reaches us as creative freedom. We cannot, then, evade its insistent pressure; we cannot transmute it into some nontemporal world that always still has, and allows, more time, into some supratemporal realm of "universal laws" and "atemporal truths". Rather, the positive intensity of the temporality of existence, its presence that is always coming and passing (away) at every moment, is, as a whole, a medium: the medium through which the infinite intensity of God's form of existence, which is supremely urgent, supremely pressing, becomes transparent. It is this transparency alone that gives time its character as situation. It demands decision, not on its own authority, but in the name of God, and it demands it, not for itself, but for God. It stands, with its inner-worldly situationality, in the service of the Creator.

We see, then, that there is an analogy of the situation: the transitoriness of the worldly moment, which as such indicates the unequivocal nonidentity of the earthly form of existence, becomes the place and the means by which eternity shows its imperishable intensity. It is precisely *because* this imperishable eternity stands behind the perishable moment that the latter is so exciting, so precious, so demanding. Once again, the urgency of the temporal moment is reduced—without any idyllic stopover in some ideal heaven beyond the world—to the naked immediacy of the divine freedom. Now, God's freedom holds the creature's measure and metes out new revelation in every new situation. The creature, too, must acknowledge that its real ultimate measure lies in this truth that God reveals to it always anew. Consequently, the demand of the moment always snatches the finite entity beyond itself in order—at least so it appears from the standpoint of its self-satisfied immanence—to overtax it again and again in every new situation. All that God's will demands of the creature, which is occupied with itself and its earthly well being, seems to overtax the creature, yet in reality God makes this demand only insofar as the creature's own immanent idea refers beyond itself to the transcendent idea in him. The measure of worldly being, considered as a whole, lies in God, so that the creature is in the truth when, giving over its own measure to God, it strives to open beyond itself, its knowledge, and its will and to correspond to the measure meted out to it by God's knowledge and will. This divine measure cannot be guessed, read off, or calculated from any prior earthly measure. It can only be listened for and received in the situation within an ever renewed act of opening oneself to God. The analogy of truth, as participation and revelation, is thus fulfilled in the ever greater obedience of the creature to the decree of the ever greater God as he reveals himself ever anew in each situation.

B. Finitude and Infinity

The truth of the world is grounded in the truth of God that reveals itself in it. But, in the order of creation, this revelation remains indirect; the medium in which God appears is the creature, which as such is not God. Consequently, this creature has a real, creaturely truth of its own that is no more identical to God's truth than creaturely being is identical to the Divine Being. Rather, there is an analogy between both relations. Indeed, because truth is the measure of being, the analogy is perfectly congruent. The creature's truth is as contingent as is its being. But just as the being of the creature has consistency only in God's being that lives in and above him, so, too, creaturely truth is what it is, namely, truth, only on account of the truth of God that sustains and makes it possible.

Just as the creature's being is created, its truth is also created ("Veritas creata",[4] *S. Th.*, 1, q. 16, a. 7). And just as the inmost structure of the creature's being displays and manifests its creaturehood, it also manifests the structure of its truth. The chief characteristic of created being and created truth is its intrinsic finitude. Needless to say, by finitude we do not mean a quantitative limit one might run up against, but rather a *quality* that actively pervades the world's whole being and truth. Moreover, this quality immediately expresses creatureliness and, therefore, immediately expresses the Creator's infinite being and infinite truth. One can feel the quality of this intrinsic finitude in the same way that the connoisseur, by running his fingers over a cloth, can determine its quality, or again, if he is a wine lover, can determine by taste alone the age and provenance of a wine.

The principal expression of the finitude of earthly truth is that the form of human knowing is delimitation and definition. Knowledge comes about in the following way: one delimits the domain of what is to be known vis-à-vis other truth, which is thereby excluded, and, by setting boundaries and by delineating their contour, determines the content of this domain. Every new determination that leads to deeper knowledge, that concretizes what has hitherto been uncertain, is, on the one hand, a narrowing of the universal through increasingly more particular definition and, on the other hand, a progressive exclusion of possible truths by means of ever more extensive differentiation. Once a single object has been sufficiently determined in this way, it becomes possible to set new boundaries within the adjoining domains that were hitherto excluded and, through new circumscriptions, to gain new knowledge. In this way, a field of truth can be parceled up and systematically made "arable". However, this work, which progresses from the most general and indeterminate to the ever more exact, concrete, and particular, is in principle inconclusible. For a single object can never be delineated and divided with such precision that its whole essence and existence can be exhaustively resolved into concepts. The process of knowledge can continue infinitely in this direction. For each new distinction that is required to advance knowledge is like the division of a spatial continuum, which can be prolonged ad infinitum. This infinity has an immanent finitude; in fact, its whole essence is an expression of finitude. For it presupposes an initial delimitation, and its progress, while in one sense limitless, in another sense entails a never-ending series of further delimitations. If one were to prolong it infinitely, one would come ever closer to absolute limit and finitude. The ever greater exactitude and thoroughness of knowledge in *one* domain, about *one* object, is purchased only at the price of ignorance about all other domains of truth. If human thought had no direction other than this, it would be doomed to certain death; rather than progressing toward a maximum of truth, it would ultimately end up with an absolute minimum.

For this reason, thought must be able to move in another, complementary direction: alongside analysis, there must be synthesis. One sets a limited object of cognition within a larger context in order to gain a more universal knowledge of it. Now, it might appear at first sight that this activity could yield no new knowledge, because, in order to classify a particular under a universal, one must already know the limit of both. This statement is true to the extent that we can enlarge our knowledge beyond the individual only by placing it an already familiar framework: that man is a living thing can enrich knowledge only if the specific context of the universal concept of "living thing" is in some sense already known. But the more universal something is, the more empty it is, hence, the less it is known in its concrete applications. The wider the boundaries are, the less determinate becomes the knowledge of the content captured within them. In this respect, synthesis is indeed a march into infinity—because one can go on enlarging the framework ever more universally—but into an empty and bad infinity, which, once again, is akin to the infinity of the spatial continuum.

Now, we must not imagine that this account of the synthetic form of knowledge is at all exhaustive. After all, the judgment "the tree is green" (S = P), which is, of course, an instance of synthesis, nonetheless is no simple subsumption of a particular under a universal. Green is not a superordinate category under which tree falls, even though in the actual judgment the predicate green represents something already familiar to knowledge, which by reason of its universality serves to introduce the particular subject, which as such is what is to be known, into the sphere of this already familiar context. The success of this introduction—and the fact that it actually does succeed is the mystery of human knowledge—depends upon *more* happening than a mere

comparison between two already known items. Something creative has to happen. After all, the subject of the judgment, which is the thing to be known here, is in itself *unknown*, and what appears to be a subsumption of it under the predicate, which is known, is in fact an elevation of it into the light of knowledge. Being, in this case the tree, is represented within knowledge, not in itself, but in the sensible appearance, which as such, as we have already had occasion to observe, is not yet known. Furthermore, insofar as this sensible appearance enters into the intellectual light of knowledge, it is synthesized in the predicate, in the concept. At first, a thing announces itself to the knowing subject in sensory intuition, while remaining totally unknown insofar as it is a subject in itself, hence, in its particular existence. Synthesis then converts this thing into something known or, at least, no longer wholly indeterminate. It follows that the synthesis performed in the judgment is also an inchoative analysis, an initial differentiation of the totally empty "this" that is the subject of the judgment. Accordingly, human knowledge is always a unity of analysis and synthesis; it concretizes the intelligible universal predicate in the subject, the sensible universal subject in the predicate and, in so doing, moves at one and the same time in the two opposite directions that were just now exhibited separately—thus avoiding the risk of getting lost in either one of the two empty infinites.

But it is precisely in this way that human knowing displays more radically than ever its finite character. By its very essence, it moves out from its center in two directions, neither of which can be followed to the very end, inasmuch as each needs its counterdirection in order to lead to any knowledge whatsoever. Taken by themselves alone, both directions are deadly; only insofar as they temper one another do they generate the life of the spirit. Although knowledge strives by its very essence to attain unity, it can seek unity only in two contrary directions. On the one hand, it seeks unity in the direction of the subject of the judgment. Proceeding analytically, knowledge breaks down and sifts in the attempt to fathom the original, indivisible unity of the existent subject, the *individuum ineffabile*. On the other hand, knowledge seeks this same unity, with equal immediacy, in the direction of the predicate of the judgment. Operating synthetically, it attempts to categorize the atomic individuals under more and more encompassing unities and thereby to achieve a unity of being and meaning for the whole in its universality. Now, the unity that knowledge is condemned to seek in these two contrary directions is embodied, precisely in worldly being, only in the tension between universal unity and individual unity, and in this way it displays its nonidentity with the incomparable and unattainable unity of God. It follows that thought, oscillating in this intermediate zone between two equally impossible extremes, is finite down to its inmost core. It cannot free itself from the form of finitization that characterizes bad infinity, because something of its fruitfulness and positivity is always contained in this finitization. It is simply out of the question, then, that finite thought could, through progressive expansion, asymptotically approximate God's infinite thought. The intellectual laws of finite thought are from beginning to end dictated by formal logic, which with its sub- and superordinations of concepts, its never-ceasing delimitations, unmistakably express the inner limitation of this thought and of the truth that lies within its grasp.

Because human thought oscillates in its very structure between the unity of the subject and of the predicate, the content of cognition also remains suspended halfway between the object and the subject of knowledge. The analysis of the object of knowledge can reach only so far as the object itself appears in sensory intuition, but this intuition announces and promises an eternal surplus of intelligibility in the ontological depths lying behind it. Even when we have apprehended a thing's species and its individual property, we can never fully bring to light the ground of its ontological

mystery. But it is equally true that even in the act of knowing, the subject never becomes as fully present to itself as it is in itself. True, there is a kind of intuition in which the subject, becoming present to itself, takes its own measure. Nevertheless, this intuition is so lightninglike and so indirect that it cannot sufficiently unveil the subject's whole being to it. The soul's intuitive certainty of itself ("scientia de anima est certissima")[5] is bound up with the practical impossibility of knowing itself perfectly ("sed cognoscere quid sit anima difficillimum est":[6] *De Vex.*, q. 10, a. 8 ad 8). Immediate intuition sparks only when the intellect is intentionally directed toward an object needing its light. Knowledge brings only this middle region between subject and object into the full light of day, while the background of both shades off into infinity.

Now, the same is true for all the other aspects under which worldly truth can be considered. Worldly truth is always in polar tension, and each pole is always relative to the other. The object avenges every attempt to transform the ellipse into a circle; its irreducible excess increasingly blocks, and stands athwart, all efforts to force it into a system. Worldly truth thus consists in two complementary, though mutually irreducible, forms, one anonymous and one personal. The anonymous form expresses the universal unity of the species, whereas the personal form expresses the unity of the individual. If we sought to impress universally valid features upon the truth at the expense of its personal stamp, we would flatten truth into a commonplace. If, on the other hand, we sought to cultivate truth's personal dimension as if it were the measure of the universal, we would degrade the originality of this truth to mere whimsy. To forego our insistence on either one of these forms of truth can be especially sensitive, even painful. Here man is reminded, more clearly than anywhere else, that he must seek the unattainable unity of the personal and of the universal in God alone.

The attempt to make essential and existential truth coincide fares no better. If the identification of essence and existence is impossible in creatures, then the coincidence of existential and essential truth must be equally impossible. This inference is so simple and evident that one has to wonder why the philosophical systems based on the *realis distinctio* in creaturely being are not equally radical in considering creaturely truth in terms of this distinction. But this tension within worldly truth rules out precisely the sort of systematization that has not been opened up to the historical varieties in which truth unfolds in the course of tradition and, in the end, to the form of personal communication that Plato calls for in his Seventh Letter as the absolutely indispensable complement to systematic teaching and learning. In the course of its development, philosophy is sometimes centered more around the core of essence, sometimes more around the core of existence, and human knowledge conforms to the structure of worldly truth only within the inconclusible movement between essential and existential thought grounded in the most simple structure of the judgment.

Finally, there remains the puzzling tension between facticity and necessity, which is corroborated in turn by the tension in knowledge between intuition and concept. The empiricist and the rationalist attempt, each in his own way, to relax the tension and to harmonize it in a unity, but the implacable historical battle between the two merely illustrates the objective impossibility of any ultimate synthesis. Once again, the two poles here are relative to each other, insofar as the factual must indeed bend under the laws of the necessary, whereas the necessary can and may prescribe nothing other than what corresponds to the sphere of the factual. Intra-worldly necessity remains a necessity of facticity. God's necessity is, in its independence, far removed from this mutual dependence of necessity and mere factual being. The distance consists precisely in the

freedom of this necessity ("sunt autem differentiae entis possibile et necessarium, et ideo ex ipsa *voluntate* divina originantur necessitas et contingentia in rebus,. . . sicut a prima causa, quae transcendit ordinem necessitatis et contingentiae"[7] [*In periherm*. 1, 14 vers. fin]).

The foregoing shows clearly that worldly truth is wholly and entirely the measure of worldly being, which is a "being in nothingness", a being in movement and becoming. This becoming does not tend unilaterally away from nothing toward being, but remains constantly turned toward nothing and inwardly unassured; it is saved from falling into nothing at each instant precisely by the creative hand of God. The potentiality of this being does not univocally progress toward ever greater actuality. Rather, the direction of becoming contains in itself a countervailing un-becoming. Worldly being, then, remains in a constant movement, yet it is by means of this movement that it maintains itself in being in the first place. Worldly truth, which is the measure of this being, follows being's inner movement in every respect. It is mutable to the same extent that being is mutable, and it is constant to the same extent that being remains constant within change (*De ver.*, q. 1, a. 6). This holds even for the truth of the divine idea. Of course, this idea does not follow being and the change that it undergoes, but it is set before it as a paradigm. Yet the idea does not exclude this change, but rather it shelters it in itself (ibid., c) and, in this sense, does not constitute a sphere of supratemporal values without any relation to becoming. Compared with this idea, worldly truth as such appears as a "truth in nothingness", and the knowledge of this truth as a "knowing in unknowing", and, thus, even as a kind of error ("omnis humana deliberatio et cognitio reputatur quidam error in comparatione ad stabilitatem et permanentiam divinae et perfectae cognitionis")[8] (*De ver.*, q. 1, a. 6).

It can therefore happen that all earthly truth seems to the seeker vain and empty, that he becomes tired and fed up with it, that, in his view, it is no longer worth the trouble of seeking: "Habe nun, ach! Philosophie. . . Und leider auch Theologie." He sees that there can be an endless busyness within the finitude of worldly truth. He sees that every true proposition can be further analyzed, divided, related, developed, and reflected from every point of view. He realizes that, by a kind of sleight of hand, one can develop a philosophical world view out of a few axioms, while yet other systems can be developed from other premises. He notices that these systems themselves can be related in thousands of ways, with myriads of overlappings, affinities, and derivations, which are friendly to some, hostile to others. Nor can he foresee any end to the whole affair. But, when he places this fullness on one side of the scale, he can also place the *weight* of the whole, the quality of finitude and its inner neediness, in the other—and can find it too light. Judging this sort of inflation of worldly truth, and precisely this multifariously busy expansiveness, to be a devaluation of its inner worth, he may begin to feel a yearning to escape this compulsive activity and to share in the simple identity of the divine truth.

The person who had this experience would, of course, be seeing one side of earthly truth correctly. But he would be forgetting that the relativity of these individual, partial truths that the mind "divides" and "composes" also really contains the truth of the world and, just so far, is like a fragment of reflecting glass in which the divine truth expresses something of itself in signs and enigmas. He would be forgetting that he could not even suspect the existence of worldly truth without some simultaneous disclosure of the existence and essence of the supraworldly, suprafinite truth. The very fact that the knower can assess the specific weight of the finitude of worldly truth, compare it with the eternal truth, and find it too light shows him that in some mysterious way he already has a foot beyond this world. To recognize creatureliness as

creatureliness means to recognize God immediately within it. To perceive the limit of worldly truth means to apprehend concomitantly and tacitly what lies beyond it. Although worldly truth, by analyzing and synthesizing, can in to some degree enclose the individual, every truth, however modest, nonetheless carries the promise of eternal and total truth. In a word, it not only closes but also opens. The restricted nature of an individual being shows up only against the ever-present background of the disclosure of being as a whole. Moreover, the mind's all-transcending movement, its yearning to know and to lay hold of the truth as a whole, accompanies every stage of finite intelligence as a witness—indeed, one of the most compelling witnesses—that this totality exists as the implicit ground of the whole process.

The very fact that we think at all; the very fact that the finite intellect, under the impact of the limitless totality of being, feels compelled to posit the existence of absolute being and absolute truth; the very fact that, in virtue of this transcendent positing, which infinitely surpasses the finite image and the finite concept that it synthesizes, the intellect adjudges true reality also to the finite object; all of this demonstrates that finite reason itself can operate only because it is indwelt by a living orientation toward infinity. The intellect knows obscurely that it is underway toward this eternal truth and is always already, through the summons of all finite objects, the recipient of its gaze and its summons. Man's reason, then, is not shut up in finitude. Rather, it can function as reason, performing its finite work of knowing finite things, only because it is already in contact with the infinite. If it were not, it would not be intrinsically different from animal instinct but would be restricted to a definite area of being. Its a priori would be like the specific energy of a sensory organ that does not have the whole horizon of being spread out before it. And because it would therefore not know beings as such, it would have no objective knowledge.

It follows from this that even the most insignificant act of thinking implicitly contains the knowledge of true infinity and that every judgment made by a finite intellect proves that there is a God. By the same token, the search for the unity of being itself is at bottom a search for God and, at the same time, the recognition that no creature is God. The bad infinity that knowledge encounters at every turn is like an inverse mirror image of the true, but never graspable, infinity of God. In itself, worldly truth is, in all its finitude, an index of this infinite identity that appears in worldly truth as its enabling ground.

This fact gives man a right, even a duty, to be dissatisfied with the delimited form of *ratio* and its characteristic closure. Yet in this dissatisfaction man should be aware, not only that human *ratio* as a whole is not the limited and limiting function it is often presented to be, but also that creaturely intelligence bears an intrinsic impress and seal of God's infinite truth. We need to insist on this point in response to irrationalism and "vitalism", which is merely the reaction to a narrow rationalism. It is not as if "life", understood in opposition to rational knowledge of the truth, were the factor that continually transcends reason's always finite acquisitions. No, this factor is reason itself, for reason is already self-transcending. The only hope for a satisfactory resolution of the problem of *truth and life* thus lies in seeing that ever richer life coincides with ever greater truth. Truth that could really be detached from, and set in opposition to, life would ipso facto no longer image eternal truth. In the end, we cannot sustain an embrace of life if this means turning away from the truth and refusing to be concerned with it. For the measure of living being is the living truth.

Although there can be tensions and polarities within truth, these never justify dividing the truth of this world into two heterogeneous dimensions: a theoretical, rational truth of thought and a practical, vital, and irrational truth of life. The appearance of these tendencies in the history of thought is an infallible symptom of an atrophied philosophy that has lost confidence in its ability to perform its proper work of knowing the truth. If you measure the advantages and disadvantages of truth for life by the criterion of life itself, either you mean to tell the truth about life and, therefore, to declare that even fife has real truth or else you cast your lot among the animals that vegetate in their drives without knowledge or responsibility. To be sure, once inquiry into truth stops looking to the infinite truth as its permanent background and horizon, it automatically dies and condemns itself to sterility. Historically speaking, moreover, it would be perfectly understandable if the application of such a truth, which was only disadvantageous for life and in no way useful for it, should eventually lead to the opposite extreme of glorifying a life without truth. We can escape this otherwise hopeless dilemma only if our thinking occurs against the background of a constant awareness of eternal truth, the complete knowledge of which is one with eternal fife.

C. In God's Safekeeping[9]

After the foregoing sketch of the more formal relations between worldly and divine truth, we can now describe, by way of conclusion, the ultimate and decisive attitude of the finite, creaturely subject vis-à-vis the truth.

The disclosure of being as a whole does not merely give the creature access to an indifferent, colorless "being as such" but also brings it face to face with the quality of absoluteness and divinity. An initial, and fundamental, point follows from this. The creature becomes familiar with being in light of the measure that it takes of itself, hence, in light of subjective self-consciousness. But to be consistent, it must draw the further inference that absolute being is an absolute being-for-itself. This gives the finite subject the elementary awareness that it is not itself God, that, however similar its being and consciousness is to God's, it remains a creature and, for this reason, is ever more different and distant from God. The two spheres are juxtaposed as master and servant, command and obedience, giver and receiver. The spontaneity manifested and grounded in finite self-consciousness includes a deeper receptivity toward God's infinite spontaneity.

Consequently, the truth of God is not disclosed and made available to the finite subject in the form of an ordinary a priori that the subject can use to carry out its finite acts of knowledge in the same way that it subsumes sensory intuition under the form of a universal concept. There are two reasons for this. First of all, this truth is not disclosed to the subject as it is in itself, but is made known explicitly as something that remains enclosed in its *inner* mystery. Thus, while the existence of such a sphere may be known, its content and its essence are not (*In Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 1, a. 2 c). Indeed, the knowledge of God consists in knowing that we do not know what he is ("hoc ipsum est Deum cognoscere, quod nos scimus ignorare de Deo quid sit")[10] ([*In Dionys.*, c. 7, 1. 4 med.]). Second, we cannot say even that this forbidden zone is known *from the outside* like something that we could simply use for the enrichment of our finite knowing. There is, of course, an empty "form of the absolute" in us that leaves open all content. Yet not even this form is simply at our disposal; we cannot use it as we please or control, scrutinize, or exhaust it in any way. It is given in us only with an infinite, unknown, undisclosed content; it is the representative of God's presence in our spirit and, therefore, is forever surrounded by the aura of all the

mysteries of eternity. We have no means of abstracting and formalizing the ultimate analogy of being in order to rob it of its force and so manipulate it as if it were a simple "category" like those we use to classify objects within the world.

On the basis of the disclosure of being as a whole, we adjudge being to an individual thing. We can do so, however, only in the awareness that this thing also participates in the infinite plenitude of the mystery implicit in this sealed concept. We can do so, then, only if it can be understood as a creature of the hidden God who has revealed himself to us on the basis of our creaturely existence. And because we cannot treat God and his revelation in us as if it were a thing at our disposal—since God's free creation places us from the beginning at *his* disposal—we also cannot claim rights of disposal over our fellow creatures, even when we exercise worldly knowledge in the name of the disclosure of being as a whole that is God's representative in us. Rather, we are thrust back into the attitude that was described in our account of subject and object, namely, the *attitude of service* at the source of the movement of creaturely knowledge.

In this earlier account, knowledge appeared primarily as the subject's service of the object. The object, in fact, enters uninvited into the subject's space, and the subject, without any prior deliberation, is always already occupied with the object in the active indifference of its spontaneous receptivity. What appeared primarily as creatures' service of and under one another in our initial phenomenological description, we now ground in a deeper service of God, which is the prior condition on which the intrinsic meaning of worldly truth rests. Because the original analogy of self-consciousness always already places us in a position of dependent servants before the mystery of God's absolute majesty, this first innate attitude of service also becomes paradigmatic for every attitude toward creatures. The attitude of service is unconditionally primary in all knowledge—so much so that whoever cannot muster up the indifference and the readiness to receive and conceive the object as it wishes to show and give itself lacks the most elementary prerequisite for objective knowledge.

For this reason, the original spontaneity that enables the illumination of the cognitive space and that prepares the knower for possible encounter with beings must be called service, and not striving or appetite (*appetitus*). If this spontaneity were fundamentally about striving, this striving would inevitably be grounded in the subject's dissatisfaction, so that the object striven for would be sought insofar as it could fulfill a need. The movement of striving would have its primary ground in the subject itself, and the object would be a means by which the subject pursued its own ends. If this were the case, man's receptive apparatus, and the sensory datum appearing in it, would be interpreted as the means required for the subject to attain the identity of its self-consciousness, and knowledge of other things would be valued for its capacity to enrich the knower. In the end, even God himself would be used, however subtly, for the satisfaction of the subject's drive to know. This drive would in fact appear so great that only God could satisfy it. The subject, measuring the emptiness in its depths, would be able to calculate just how much fullness would be needed to fill it. And so even the immediate vision of God, which is beyond every "exigency" of created nature, might be required by the "religious impatience" of the subject's (however piously disguised) striving for knowledge. An account of knowledge that makes striving its basic category arrives without fail at the extremely dangerous point where it almost inevitably trespasses upon the rights of the free God—a danger that can be circumvented only by a theologically dictated compromise. Such an account faces a dilemma. It must either posit an original vision of the divine sphere a la ontologism or else, since this is an untenable

option, dissolve this static vision into a "dynamism" that then presses relentlessly beyond all barriers to the immediate vision of God. The last minute insertion of a *velleitas inefficax*[11] effectively denies the purpose for which the whole edifice was constructed in the first place—or else inscribes an already given supernatural revelation into the dynamism of natural reason in a way that ultimately fuses the two into a natural unity.

We can avoid these difficulties only if we understand the most primitive attitude of the spiritual creature to be, not striving, but readiness to serve. This reading is not a far-fetched construction, since it is grounded in the simple fact that knowledge is primitively receptive. It is not the knowledge-hungry subject that first prowls about in search of prey and then pounces upon the object; rather, it is the object that first displays itself in the subject's space, and, in so doing, enables it to do what it otherwise could not, namely, perform an act of knowing ("Cognitio alicuius intelligibilis praecedit cognitionem, qua quis cognoscit se intelligere et per consequens cognitionem, qua quis cognoscit se habere intellectum")[12] (*In Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 1, a. 3 c).

Only when we have acknowledged this primitive indifferent readiness can we grant the subject an actual will to know corresponding to its nature as an intellectual being and a creature of God. Only then can we cite the striving for knowledge as *one* element in a larger account of this luminous space in which the subject stands ready for the cognitive act. Now, the striving for knowledge may extend to the whole world, since the work of formation belongs to the natural equipment of the intellectual creature. Indeed, it may penetrate to God himself, whom the creature wishes to know as its origin and end. But this whole field lies open to the striving for knowledge under one condition: the measure of this striving is the service that the subject is chosen to perform for God and the world. In performing this service, the subject will also receive knowledge of the world and of its Creator as a matter of course; indeed, its readiness to serve will be the indispensable precondition of objective knowledge. Yet the ultimate measure of whether and how and to what extent the subject knows is always prescribed by objects, taken in their totality and as situation. As soon as we recognize this indifferent readiness as the basic affection of creatureliness, we need no longer fear that God's freedom might place a limit on the creature's happiness and inner satisfaction or that the creature might transgress such a boundary, if not by its free will, then certainly by its creaturely nature. For now the criterion of what befits cognitive nature is no longer the law of one's own desire but solely what the Creator freely metes out to this nature. And the ultimate norm of all movement in the world is, not one's own happiness, but the always better service of God's majesty and glory, in which the creature finds its true fulfillment and thus its blessedness.

We can express the same idea by saying that a knowing that grasps is always embedded in a knowing that can let go because it is itself grasped. Once again, we see clearly the nature of creaturely evidence [*Evidenz*]. Evidence is being that lays hold of itself and measures itself in self-consciousness, to which being as a whole is disclosed in this act. But the inner form of this act of measuring is itself a being measured by the absolute identity of being and consciousness, hence, by a free Divine Person. This in no way disables active self-possession or transforms it into a merely passive subjection to another's measure: the identity of the infinite subject equips the finite subject's form of self-consciousness with a kind of infinite authority. Thus, there is no question of doubting the rationality of finite knowledge, because this knowledge is compelled to acknowledge the superior, nonidentical divine knowledge. One thing is true: in its act of self-

possession, the worldly subject understands that it is already possessed and comprehended, that the eternal *prius* of being known is the intrinsic form of its knowledge.

Consequently, worldly knowledge cannot pretend to autonomy. It cannot spread out over all things from a quasi-divine center and finally attain to a mastery even of the divine realm. If this sort of autonomy actually existed, knowledge would encounter God as if he were an extrinsic object, which it could measure by its personal evidence and either accept or reject as it saw fit. Even if, on the basis of its own reflection, the intellect came to the conclusion that there is really a God and, what is more, that it is reasonable to acknowledge him as Lord, to subject oneself to him, and even to believe on his authority certain things that cannot be measured by the criterion of personal evidence, this religious submission of personal insight would still rest upon an originally autonomous decision of the subject that, in its self-command, had judged it good to submit itself and to believe. Thus, the act of faith would have, as it were, two sides. The first would lie within the bounds of reason's natural autonomy, which, on the basis of its self-contained evidence, could judge whether reason warranted the obedience of faith. The second would be this act of submission itself, in which reason, supported by its own insight, cast itself into the abyss of God's transcendent truth. The problem with this kind of rational justification of faith is that the first step appears rationalistic, so that the second seems irrational. Even in the natural realm of creation, there is no evidence so self-contained that it is not always already open to God's encompassing evidence. Already in the most original act of taking possession of oneself, finite consciousness must set itself over against the infinite consciousness that encompasses it.

Thus, it is not merely afterward, in its exploration of worldly being, that worldly thinking stumbles across the problem of the existence and knowledge of God. Rather, already in its first act of knowing, it approaches the object with the inner form of the analogy of consciousness. Given its original constitution, creaturely *ratio* has implicit knowledge of its creatureliness, which it can therefore explicate and so conclude to the existence of its Creator. Insofar as all grasping is itself comprehended by God's grasp, the form of faith is traced out already within natural reason. And when man then decides freely to submit himself in faith to the encompassing knowledge of his Lord and Creator, he is at the same time obeying his nature or, to be more precise, the command of the Creator engraved in his nature itself. At that moment, the second dimension of the act of faith loses the aura of irrationality that clings to it as long as rationality is sought in a godlike autonomy of inner evidence.

It is not the case that reason can first get a sort of bird's-eye view of God, his existence, and his essence, in order then to bow to God's superior view. The creature is granted no such view of God. Its first view is already—and always—an "under-view", which is aware that God alone is "over". Thus, if man had not misused his cognitive powers, the natural knowledge of God could never have become an attempt to lay hands on God, a grasping encroachment upon his absolute sovereignty. Rather, the first act of thought would already have been one of obediential service, in which the knower would have performed his act of knowing under God.

An attitude of faith is immanent in the attitude of knowledge. This immanence provides the ultimate justification of what we said concerning the double criterion of truth, which is at once subjective and objective, personal and social. This inner-worldly polarity and analogy affecting the criterion of truth is rooted ultimately in a transcendent analogy between the divine and the

worldly subject within the act of knowing itself. In intra-worldly knowledge, the subject relinquishes the autonomy of its criterion of truth and shares this criterion with the object. But this relinquishment would be absurd if, from the very beginning, such an autonomy were withdrawn, or better, never given. Because, however, the first encounter with truth already has the form of a communication, this form logically abides throughout inner-worldly knowledge. The subject possesses the truth only in such a way that it also always receives it anew from God. Such a subject, then, will not refuse to receive truth from a worldly interlocutor in dialogical exchange. Here, too, the subject will have the form of believing trust, because it presupposes that it alone is not the creator and judge of truth. This faith, then, is nothing other than the a priori presupposition that there is truth outside the subject and that it is, not simply knowable, but also in fact offered to the subject.

Evidence is embedded in this faith in the same way that the truth of the world as a whole is encompassed by the divine truth. The knower knows that the truth he apprehends is only a part or an irradiation of the total truth in which he is embedded. He thinks within the truth that surrounds him, as knower, on all sides. He can never run up against a limit in this infinite medium in which he flies and swims; whenever he looks around him as from a kind of center, the horizon broadens into infinity. The truth is always greater than a finite intelligence's grasp of it, and such an intelligence grasps it only in the consciousness that it is greater. Without this awareness, it might try to know the truth as a whole, or it might be convinced that because as spirit it desires knowledge, it automatically has the right to perceive the whole truth. It could then deduce from the structure of its knowledge that, because it *can* know more truth, it also should and must know more truth. But once it sees that its primordial evidence is already as such encompassed by God's ever greater truth, finite reason relinquishes these aspirations in order to make room for an attitude that expects from God the measure of the truth to be known. This free revelation of the free personal God, this commandment and, as the case may be, prohibition, contains the measure of truth according to which finite reason must direct its striving.

If the mere striving of nature (*appetitus naturalis visionis* or *beatitudinis*)[13] were the norm of what is worth striving for in knowledge, it would make no sense to set a limit to this striving, and we would have to grant the ancient serpent the right to question this limitation placed on the godlike knowledge of good and evil. Why, in fact, should man not be at liberty to strive to know a certain thing, since his nature is oriented to the knowledge of *every thing? But* the serpent's malice consists in presenting God's truth as if it ought to be disclosed to man because of his natural drive to know, as if it could be attained by knowledge alone, without the attitude of faith. The serpent presents truth as something thinglike, something generally accessible and at hand, which is withheld from a certain man only for some unnatural reason. The serpent thus hides the fact that the striving for truth has no right to unconditionality but is measured by what God's measure metes out. For truth remains, in its essence, the free condescension of an intimate spiritual realm that is hidden in itself; this applies first to the divine realm and, analogously, to every other interior space belonging to created beings. That this freely uttered truth can be known in principle does not yet justify any claim to know it in fact. The serpent thus develops a sort of anthropocentric theory of knowledge, whereas only a theocentric epistemology can make sense of the truth of worldly knowledge.

For this reason, it is no accident that the first sin consists precisely in a desire to know more than is allowed, that evil selects precisely the form of truth to disguise and cover itself. It does this

because the possibility of equivocation and, therefore, of temptation is particularly powerful here. It seems perfectly legitimate to infer from the disclosure of being in itself, which is always given in the evidence of which we are speaking, that being as a whole may and should also be disclosed *for me*. It is in fact true that there is no reason *in me* why this ought not to be so. Because the unlimited horizon of being opens up at the heart of all finite knowing, and because, even on the closest inspection, we can find no gradations, sections, or notches in this horizon, we can unthinkingly expect the empty a priori form of being as a whole to provide a corresponding a posteriori content as well.

The error we thereby commit, which is the primal and archetypal sin, is that man makes himself the criterion and so concludes that where *he* sees no barrier none can in fact exist. Now, it is not so much the yearning for truth as a whole that is to be considered disobedience, but rather the way in which it is sought—as a mere knowing without receptive faith. The fact that truth as a whole is in fact disclosed rests upon a free decision of eternal truth itself. Thus, every yearning to attain this unveiling is intrinsically (and not just by means of a subsequent extrinsic limitation) measured by an attached condition: "so far as it pleases the divine majesty to reveal itself". This is not to assert an intrinsic finitude of truth, or even to do violence to the infinite cognitive capacity of man's intellect. A divine commandment or prohibition can be regarded as an act of violence only so long as man makes his own lust to know the standard by which he measures. But he can do this only by violating his own nature, in which knowing always also has the *inner* form of receptive faith. If man attempts, despite his better judgment, to ignore this essential structure of the knowing spirit, he may perhaps outwardly perform an "obedience of the will" to an incomprehensible commandment of eternal truth. Yet the logic of this exterior submission is actually contrary to the intrinsic conviction of the rightness of the commandment and, therefore, is already yoked to an inner refusal that will undermine it in the long run.

For this reason, the a priori form of faith inherent in the certainty of immediate, analytical knowledge requires an "obedience of the understanding", which at bottom is simply the human intellect's acknowledgment of its own creatureliness and of God's absoluteness. Obedience of the understanding is by nature implicit in the self knowledge of a created intellect, and to refuse it is therefore to act in a way contrary to nature. It is false to say that the intelligence naturally strives to know everything. Prescinding from the fact that there is infinitely much that does not even interest the mind, the lover wants to know only as much of the beloved as the beloved wants to communicate to him. He would find it loveless and shameful to spy out secrets that the beloved had good reasons, which are always reasons of love, for keeping silent. An urge to know that inconsiderately tears aside every veil would very quickly kill love. It would seek the measure of knowing in itself outside love and thus impose on love an alien measure. But love tolerates no measure; it itself is the measure of all things. The truth is the measure of being, but love is the measure of truth. And sin consists in placing the measure of truth above the measure of love. Love, by contrast, delights in receiving the measure of knowledge from the hand of the beloved. It is not afraid of what is unknown and uncommunicated, because it is enough for love that the beloved knows. It is also enough that God loves, enough that God possesses the eternal truth. It does not become truer because I, the creature, also know it. But if it should please God to regard the creature's sharing in his knowledge of his glory as an enrichment of the same, then I will lay hold of this truth with both hands—but much more because God wants me to know it than because I take pleasure in such knowledge. Or, to be more precise, I will take pleasure in it because God delights in my knowing it.

The fact that man's evidence is encompassed by God's is not to be understood quantitatively, as if it were a smaller circle inside a bigger one, but qualitatively, as the preservation [*Aufhebung*] of the relative in the absolute. Once again, the inner-worldly analogy between subject and object provides a point of comparison: the material object is apprehended by the spiritual subject, not as it would be if it remained in itself alone, but together with the radiant unfolding of its possibilities that it first acquires in the sphere of the subject's sensory intuition. For the object, entrance into this realm means elevation into a higher dimension of being. And it is only this elevation, which is not grounded in its natural existence as an object, that enables the object to deploy the wealth that the subject rightly considers to be the presentation of the object's essence.

Analogously, the creature is lifted up into the sphere of the divine truth in order to find there its true unfolding and development. The fact of being lifted beyond oneself is common in both causes. However, unlike the object, which has a being in itself, the creature cannot even be thought of outside of the divine sphere that embraces and maintains it in existence. Moreover, just as the subject's sphere has creative consequences for the object, since it draws out possibilities that the object does not have in itself, the simple fact of the creature's preservation in God is already a creative unfolding of its essence and being by and into the divine essence and being. The archetype of every creature lives in God, and, because it is conceived and beheld by God, this archetype contains and expresses the entire plenitude of the creature's perfection (which is possible only in God). When, on the other hand, the creature considers itself as it is "in itself", this archetype is something totally unattainable that absolutely overtaxes it.

Now, the worldly subject does not consider the object outside its appearance in the subject. It does not compare the object in itself, on the one hand, and its irradiation through the subjective appearance, on the other, in order to remove its subjective properties and so attain its "real" objectivity. In the same way, God does not consider the creature outside the divine sphere in order to know what the creature might be in itself and in abstraction from God. Even where a gulf opens between the archetype in God and its realization in the creature, where what is does not coincide with what should be, God does not, so to say, stand between the archetype and its realization in order to compare the two and determine their difference from the outside. Of course, God is aware of this difference, and the fact that it exists for him raises a serious question that contains the creature's whole destiny: Which of these two truths about the creature is the true one—the truth of the archetype that God has and beholds in himself or the truth of the image, which distances itself, indeed, falls away, from the archetype? If the truth of the image is its definitive norm, the creature is justified and saved, but on the basis of God's creative gaze, which sees and declares what is as if it were what ought to be. If, on the other hand, the truth of the image in its self-distancing from the archetype is definitive, then this image has to be declared inadequate and, therefore, rejected.

At this point, we need to recall our earlier remark that the creature's truth extends in a seamless continuity from the immanent idea (the *morphe*) through the idea embedded in the context of the world to the transcendent idea present in God. There is no idea of the creature that can truly or ultimately be separated from this latter. The creature is so dependent on God that it receives its measure ever anew and directly from God, however many secondary causes play their role in determining this measure within the world. This is why God does not contemplate it outside of his total truth, which cannot be detached from the divine idea. Although he recognizes the difference between the archetype and its realization, God nonetheless always sees this difference

through the divine archetype; he considers it in the medium of his own substance, of whose possible imitability the divine idea is the archetype. For God, all truth lies within his own essence, while everything else is true only insofar as it stands in relation to his essence. Looked at from God's point of view, the creature has truth in itself only insofar as God constantly lifts it out of its own nothingness into the sphere of the Divine Being and the divine truth. Thus, there is no *absolute* way of seeing contingent being and contingent truth in itself. It can be seen only in connection with absolute being and absolute truth. Outside of this context, it is impossible to grasp the creature as it really is.

Once again, we must ask, albeit in a more serious way, how *justice and love* are related in the attitude of knowing. Love is the ground of the divine archetype, because God can be imitated only out of love, and love is the ground of God's ever new apportionment of this archetype to the creature. Pure justice would be the consideration of the distance between the archetype and the image, the naked view of what it is separated from what it should be. But because, as was said, God does not consider this distance in itself, but only within his archetypal knowledge, God's total view of the creature can be described only as one of a love that includes justice. Love is the fulfillment of the *whole* of justice, but it is at the same time something more than naked justice. There is no cold objectivity in love; the only objectivity it knows is one that its creative power has already played a role in shaping and generating.

Because the archetype in God, that is, the higher reality into which the creature is elevated and that counts as its definitive truth before God, is a progeny of love, the creature knows that it is *kept safe* in this archetype. To be sure, it has an existence and an essence in itself, and this existence and essence is a reality in and for itself that is not identical with God; but even this reality of its own is something that it has inside of God. It has this reality only insofar as it is in God, is generated by him, and is protected and embraced by his all-encompassing essence. There is no way that it can consider and understand itself outside of God. It is what it is only in the arms of the Creator. It cannot even think independently of the thought with which God thinks it. The thought of the image is measured by the thought of the archetype, the first passes continuously into the second. If the creature should ever consider itself even for a moment outside God, it would immediately begin to sink like Peter on the waves—into the nothing that lies below it. If it looks at itself instead of looking up to God, it can consider itself only as having been ejected from being, it interprets its ek-sistence as a being in nothingness, from nothingness, and to nothingness. But it can do so only if it struggles against the primordial form of evidence that mediates awareness of its embedding in the infinite truth of infinite being. If it looks at itself, its being in the archetype can seem only like an absolute and unjustified overtaxing; the "idea" seems to float above reality in an unreal realm of mere ideal laws and unrealizable demands. But if, as the original evidence leads it to do, it looks to God, then it knows that it is kept safe in the archetype as its true reality, and it places confident faith in this creative idea present in God. Only when the creature looks at itself does the tension in its being between its total contingency and the eternal archetype that is its idea seem to exceed all measure. In looking to God, it opens its relativity to the absolute in the primordial attitude of abandonment [*Hingabe*].

D. Confession

Now, if contingent being is hemmed in on all sides by absolute being and knowledge, all worldly being and consciousness must be unveiled before the absolute. We would miss this necessary

unveiling as long as we thought of ourselves as standing over against God like any object in the world. It is, however, immediately evident when we ponder the analogy within self-consciousness, in virtue of which God's subjectivity grounds and undergirds all self-consciousness from within (*Deus interior intimo meo*).[14] At first blush, this idea might seem to call into question our earlier remarks about the essence of truth as freedom, intimacy, and mystery. The mystery of truth almost seems desecrated by having to lie naked and unveiled before the absolute. It is as if it had been transformed into the pure, thinglike anonymity that we excluded as an impossible limit case from the sphere of worldly truth and cognition. The wondrous mystery of freedom, because of which the unveiling of the inner, secret truth was an act of surrender and self-disclosure, seems irretrievably gone. We seem, too, to have lost the preciousness that made the act of receiving it a gracious, enriching experience. If God knows everything and sees through everything, what could we still show and give him? Standing before God, the creature appears to have been robbed of its personal privileges, to have been degraded to the status of a thing lacking any rights.

But this is not the case. The absolute truth is precisely not the sphere of general, anonymous truth that is accessible to any and everyone. It is rather the sphere of God's absolute personal freedom and, therefore, also the sphere of absolute mystery. Whatever is unveiled before God is for that very reason hidden and veiled in God. Its face is turned toward the mystery and is covered with its veil. For this reason alone, the creature knows that it is truly in God's safekeeping. A mantle of silence envelops the two-sided mystery in which they are manifest to each other. Nothing is more delicate and less profane than this mutual unveiling that goes on between God and the soul. It is the contrary of the divulgation of something previously mysterious; it is the making mysterious of something hitherto without depth. In this opening to God, in which the creature no longer has any mystery before him, it receives a participation in his mysterious reality and thereby becomes capable of having mystery in itself. In its total unveiling before God, it receives its share of mystery within itself. A mystery that was not created in the mystery of God would be an empty mystery not worth knowing. Whatever personal values the creature has to give it has received by participating in God's infinite personality. If it were not ready to draw its inner mystery from this source, its mystery would be already dried up, and it would no longer have anything left to give.

The creature is naked before God, then. But its nakedness is veiled under the vesture of God's mystery. God sees its inmost essence. But it must wrap no other veil around this inner core than the veiling that it receives in God. The creature should also refrain from trying to veil itself before God—which would be a wasted effort and would cloud the truth that it shares with God. It should also not try to hide itself from human beings except by remaining hidden in God. This hiddenness in God is its true mystery, and even in its relations with other creatures it should refuse to have any secrets other than those it receives from God. The measure of its veiling and unveiling in relation to the world lies in the measure of its unveiling before God and veiling by God.

The ontological unveiling of the creature before God guarantees that the truth of this world is in fact true. Truth is the unconcealment of being, while the full notion of this unconcealment requires someone to whom it is unconcealed. This someone is God and can only be God, because not all worldly being can be revealed to every worldly subject. Because it is unveiled to God, it

can also be unveiled to other subjects, without needing to be actually unveiled to them. It has its objective truth thanks to its unconcealment before the eternal subject.

Like all ontological articulations of the truth, however, this unveiling of the creature through the act of creation immediately requires a spiritual and conscious recapitulation. What is, is also what should be. For this reason, the creature's nakedness before the Creator also requires its conscious unveiling. It requires, in other words, confession and acknowledgment. All creatures find themselves in a permanent state of confession, but they are also meant to know this and to affirm it in its actual knowing. The unconcealment of all creaturely truth demands an attitude of transparency before God that at every moment reaches to the very core of the soul. The creature must not only know that it walks in the light of God and is passively seen, but should also spontaneously offer itself to this light, participating in its ontological unveiledness by a voluntary unveiling.

The creature's destiny, in fact, is to want to be what God wills it to be. God leaves it the freedom to make a real choice to acknowledge, and to identify itself with, his choice. If it is disclosed [*erschlossen*] before God by its very being, it decides [*entschlossen*] for God by its freedom. Decision means an opening of the will, and the measure of this opening lies in the openness of the understanding, which in principle coincides with the manifestness of being.

This effort of the creature's will must accordingly have the same breadth as the disclosure of being as a whole in self-consciousness. It must be unlimited. The disclosure of being as a whole generates only one attitude in the intelligence: active indifference, a spontaneous receptivity that is not predisposed to one object more than to another, but readies the same welcome for any object that might present itself. In the same way, the will's attitude before God can only be one of total decision in total indifference. The creature's will is open to be disposed of according to God's will, and it is here that we find the creature's ultimate attitude before God and the quintessence of all perfection. Just as reason's indifference before all being is the sole a priori of knowledge, this openness is the sole a priori of ethics. Indeed, it is sufficient by itself to lead the creature to the heights of holiness. But for God it is not a matter of indifference whether or not the creature offers him what he already possesses in it. For it is not simply knowledge alone that gives joy to God and glorifies him, but the creature's free self-surrender, its bringing him, together with its being and its unconcealment, its love. In this way, the love that God has lavished on the world in freely turning to the creature is returned to him in the form of reciprocated love. God shares his truth with creatures inasmuch as he makes his ever deeper mystery visible *as mystery*; and the creature shares its truth with God insofar as it acknowledges this mystery and gives it back to God.

But no creature stands alone before God. It knows that its fellow creature, whose mystery is hidden from it, stands together with it unconcealed and unveiled before God. Creatures are veiled from one another in their ultimate truth, but they are unveiled together before God. For this reason, the place where they are unveiled even for one another is no other than God. Just as each of them has its full truth in God, so, too they all have together their common truth in him. If one wants to know another, it must try to contemplate the other with God's eyes; it must, like God, look upon the other's defects through the medium of the archetype and measure, in order to overcome the distance between archetype and image in (an unfailingly just) love.

We can look at our neighbor in this way only in the closest possible reliance upon God, in prayer, and in self-denial. We do not, in fact, seek an inanimate, universally and supratemporally present archetype, but one that God's freedom metes out in each new situation. The lover's creative contribution to the formation of this image attains its maximum fruitfulness to the extent that, in indifference, he hands over and submits the object of his love to God's creative governance. Every active mission to share in shaping the world begins and ends in indifference. To be sure, by its very nature as *intellectus componens et dividens*, man's understanding judges the truth of things. And it is meant to judge as a representative of God's judicial power. Nevertheless, man must be mindful that his judgment is, as a whole, only preliminary and therefore intrinsically includes a restitution of judgment to God. Above all, finite understanding must not arrogantly presume that its judgment attains total clarity about the essence of things, about the inner, intimate core where they are turned to the face of God. True, human understanding can attain objective truth, and what it apprehends of things can in truth be apprehended. But is there ever a moment when it has attained absolute certainty about a being, when, in other words, its judgment has become irreversible? "Judge not, lest ye be judged": This warning places us back in the sphere of contingence, in which our judging belongs and of which it must remain aware. The confession of one's own unveiledness before God and the confession of the unveiledness of one's neighbor before us are both only one aspect within the all-ruling confession of God's mystery for every creature.

We find ourselves, then, at the end of a philosophical inquiry that considers only the revelation of God given in creation; the Creator manifests himself in creation as *Dominus*[15] (*Vat. Dz*. 1806) and *Principium et Finis*[16] (ibid., 1785), while always lying beyond it as an inscrutable mystery. God is known as mystery in the form of self-consciousness. In the small mystery of its self-apprehension in its inner light, in its personality and freedom, self-consciousness catches a glimmer of what the infinite identity of and freedom of the divine truth might be. God is also known as mystery in the form of every creaturely truth, which even in its finitude never entirely ceases to be marvelous, gracious, groundlessly self-opening and self-giving. The inextricable interconnection between earthly truth and the movement of the good and the beautiful points clearly to the sense of this mystery of being, which—in its absolutely perfect, absolutely intense form—can only be the mystery of God himself: the mystery of groundless surrender, to which every graspable thing must be reduced as to its ultimate, self-grounding cause.

God is love. This does not mean, of course, that his essence is substantial love, while his other infinite properties are dissolved into this love. There is an order here: love presupposes knowledge, while knowledge presupposes being. But the love that stands at the end of the sequence as the goal of its unfolding stands, in another perspective, at its beginning as the basic impulse underlying it. Eternity is a circulation in which beginning and end join in unity. By the same token, everything that has a ground, every truth claim that needs grounding, occurs within this order, but the order itself is sustained by the ultimate ground, which is love. To be sure, God is eternal truth and by this truth all other things are true and meaningful. But the very existence of truth, of eternal truth, is grounded in love. If the truth were ultimate in God, we could look into its abysses with open eyes. Our eyes might be blinded by so much light, but our yearning for truth would have free rein. But because love is ultimate, the seraphim cover their faces with their wings, for the mystery of eternal love is one whose superluminous night may be glorified only through adoration.

End Notes

General Introduction

[1] It was therefore both possible and necessary to anticipate briefly in earlier volumes of the trilogy some of the material that is presented with greater precision in the *Theo-Logic*. This applies above all to the simultaneous disclosure of the "I" and of "being" (and therein of "thou" and "we"), which was described in the second volume of *Theo-Drama*, "Freedom as Autonomous Motion" (213-27). As for the *Aesthetics*, much of Bonaventure's doctrine of *expressio (The Glory of the Lord*, 2:282-308) should be compared with what is said here about expression, image, and word. Back to text.

[2] [Source and goal of the world.] Back to text.

[3] [Pure nature.] Back to text.

[4] Cf. J. Pieper, *Philosophia Negativa* (Munich: Kösel, 1953). Back to text.

[5] [The analogy of being.] Back to text.

[6] [Greater dissimilarity.] Back to text.

[7] Karl Rainier, "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte", in *Mysterium Salutis*, vol. 2 (1967), 378. It should be said that our purpose here is not to assess the validity and limits of the "fundamental axiom" that Rahner intends to formulate in this passage. Back to text.

[8] Although the volumes of *The Glory of the Lord* showed the historical trajectory of this anticipatory understanding in modernity, they did not take sufficient account of the continuing challenge of an impersonal, atheistic religion (Buddhism) or, ultimately, irreligion (Marxism and Positivism); my more recent observations on this point should be kept in mind to complete the picture. Back to text.

[9] [For us / in our place.] Back to text.

I. Truth as Nature

[1] [Agent intellect.] Back to text.

[2] [Passive intellect.] Back to text.

[3] [All knowing beings know God implicitly in whatever they know.] Back to text.

[4] [Obediential potency.] Back to text.

[5] [I am thought, therefore I am.] Back to text.

[6] [Insofar as we behold the inviolable truth, in light of which we define fully, as far as we can, not how a thing is. . . but how it ought to be in its eternal principles.] Back to text.

[7] [Abstraction of the species from the sensory image.] Back to text.

[8] [The intellect's turning to the sensory images.] Back to text.

[9] [Mental word.] Back to text.

II. Truth as Freedom

[1] [Will as nature.] Back to text.

[2] [Will as a single conscious act.] Back to text.

[3] [Mental reservation.] Back to text.

III. Truth as Mystery

[1] [The German title of this section is *Das Wesenslose*, lit., the inessential or insubstantial.] Back to text.

[2] [The German title of this section is *Das Beudeutende*, lit., what signifies.] Back to text.

[3] [The intellect that divides and puts together.] Back to text.

[4] [(The soul is), in a certain mode, all things.] Back to text.

[5] [Our natural knowledge can reach as far as it can be led by sensible things.] Back to text.

[6] [Abstraction does not lie.] Back to text.

[7] [Created truth is mutable.] Back to text.

[8] [The act of being considered as accidental (to the essence).] Back to text.

[9] [Real distinction between essence and esse or between existence and essence.] Back to text.

[10] [The good is self-diffusive.] Back to text.

[11] [Good for its own sake.] Back to text.

[12] [The good is principally in (extramental) reality.] Back to text.

IV. Truth as Participation

[1] [And so when something is known through a likeness existing in its effect, the movement of cognition can pass immediately to the cause without thinking about any other thing. And in this way, the intellect of the wayfarer can think about God without thinking about any other creature.] Back to text.

[2] [The means by which.] Back to text.

[3] [The essence itself is said to be created.] Back to text.

[4] [Created truth.] Back to text.

[5] [Knowledge concerning the soul is the most certain.] Back to text.

[6] [But it is most difficult to know what the soul is.] Back to text.

[7] [But possibility and necessity are differences of being, and therefore necessity and contingency in things originate from the divine will itself. . . as from the first cause that transcends the order of necessity and contingency.] Back to text.

[8] [All human deliberation and cognition is reckoned a kind of error in comparison with the stability and permanence of the divine and perfect cognition.] Back to text.

[9] [The German title of this section is *Geborgenheit*.] Back to text.

[10] [To know God is precisely to know that we do not know what he is.] Back to text.

[11] [Inefficacious volition.] Back to text.

[12] [The knowledge of some intelligible precedes the knowledge by which someone knows that he is understanding and, therefore, by which someone knows that he has intellect.] Back to text.

[13] [The natural appetite for vision or beatitude.] Back to text.

[14] [God is more interior to me than my very interiority.] Back to text.

[15] [Lord.] Back to text.

[16] [Origin and end.] Back to text.