

## Vilém Flusser

### Unto the Third and Fourth Generation<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.3. Eternal Return

A radical change in the method of exposition imposes itself at this point in the argument. All previous chapters are attempts to evoke a past that is "ours" in an archaeological sense, that is, a buried past. Our lives and our thoughts are the result of this past, and our whole way of being is informed by this past. In this sense, the past is present. The task of the previous chapters is to unearth in our minds some of the movements of this past in the effort to understand the present. The method was therefore to delve into the unconscious layers of our Self, and to seek to match the fossils thus unearthed with the so-called "objective" information provided by the general conversation of which we participate. For example, if I find in my self-analysis, Romantic elements that continue to determine my thinking and behaviour, even though knowing that I have consciously overcome Romanticism at the age of fifteen, I must then try to understand this determining force by adequating it to the Romanticism I know through direct and indirect reading. The previous chapters follow this comparative method. They unearth subconscious movements, and seek to adequate them to the data gathered from the general and so-called "objective" conversation. But after 1940 this method becomes inapplicable. I consciously participated in this kind of past. I cannot, from that point onward, compare subjective data with objective data. Everything is submerged in subjectivity, because everything happens in the conscious layer of my mind. I am subjectively reminded of everything, and every attempt to objectify becomes, from then on, inauthentic.

However, in another sense, the year 1940 is a bygone age. I participated in it, this is true. But that period lies buried by my desire to forget it. The memories it raises are so unbearable that an effort is needed to evoke them. My method will therefore continue to be that of digging up. But the obstacles to be overcome will be others. I will now seek to adequate what I find within myself to the experiences I am trying to forget, and not to the information I receive from others. I will no longer fight against the objectivity of information, but against my refusal to face what I have gone through in order to become who I am now. My exposition should henceforth be an exercise in overcoming conscious inhibitions. The whole argument will henceforth be developed within my conscious mind and with full responsibility. Although those responsible for the events of 1940 are

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still those of the previous generation, I can no longer excuse myself entirely. I was there, and I witnessed everything. I have no excuse.

What I have just said refers to all of us over the age of forty. This is totally subjective, but for this reason, it is totally intersubjective. All of us, over the age of forty, can remember that time. And all of us, I believe, share the feeling that 1940 cannot have been as we remember it. Although we participated in it, we cannot believe it. Something like 1940 cannot have happened. It sounds like a nightmare. That year is, however, an intersubjective nightmare. We all share in this dream. And we are all, kind of survivors. We still exist, in spite of 1940. We escaped. We are the fourth generation, which escaped 1940. This is why the year 1940 is "our" past in a different sense. It is "our" past because we lived through it. I will speak next about this shared past.

I chose the term "eternal return" as the title of this chapter. In doing so I thought, obviously, of Nietzsche. But I also thought of the fugacity and ephemeris of every civilization with all their values, and how easily they return to the eternal bestial foundation that is hidden in man. Now it occurs to me that the swastika is the symbol of the eternal wheel, of samsara, of the eternal return. A second consideration elucidates, however, that these three meanings of the eternal return are not coincidental, but complementary. The Nietzschean eternal return is the ever-renewed return to all that is bestial and despicable in man. The ever-new, and always surprising, fall to the muddy ground is how the human Will comes to power. And the swastika is the symbol not only of bestiality, but also of that which always comes back. As this bloody flag was unfolded, with its sinister symbol in the centre, in the heart of Europe, the unanimous reaction of a perplexed humanity was this: This cannot last, such an abysmal cretinism cannot take hold. And the parts of Europe that had not yet fallen under the shadow of this flag reacted with the following statement: This cannot happen here, this is impossible. And yet, this can last, this can take hold, this can happen here and now. This can always happen, because this is what always happens. This is the eternal return. This is the end of a cycle. This is the goal of progress. The year 1940 is the goal of all progress, with Eichmann as the functionary, Streicher as the idiotic murderer, and Himmler as the faceless man without quality, in sum, the uniform covering a body without soul and without spirit, but with a monomaniacal goal, namely: the apparatus as the ultimate product of progress. With Nazism the destiny of the West is fulfilled. The punishment is done. Hitler declared that his kingdom would last a thousand years. Indeed, he kept his word. The twelve summers and winters that the bath of blood, excrement, and idiocy lasted were the equivalent of a thousand years for us all, who lived through them. For a thousand years we suffered the punishment that struck the West. We are the survivors who have lived through the thousand years. We are very old, the would-be founders of the coming age.

The first barrier to be overcome by the effort to remember is the barrier of contempt and disgust. Nazism as a theory is too stupid to be discussed seriously. And Nazism as a praxis is too

disgusting to be analysed dispassionately. The effort is necessary, because Nazi theory is a consequence of scientism, and Nazi praxis is the first example of the functioning apparatus. The effort consists in the decision not to turn one's back on Nazism in order to vomit, but to face it in order to treat it seriously. We must take seriously the hoarse and historical articulations of the semi-literate, we must read and discuss, as texts, the publications of the party theorists despite being full of grammatical errors and stylistic insincerity; we must analyse and ponder the conclusions reached by the criminals and the mob of the national socialist movement, disguised as Intellectuals. And we must seek to understand the motives that resulted in meetings in breweries, in which sentimental songs alternated with screams inviting mass murder, resulting in the mechanical thud of tens of thousands of boots treading the streets of majestic cities and shaking the foundations of civility, and which resulted in the transformation of the young girls and women of a great nation into a flock of hysterical sheep, dressed in wool socks and impregnated in order to satisfy the guide. In short: we must discuss National Socialism.

However, we cannot do so with a detached spirit. We cannot attempt to describe Nazism as if we were dealing with the myths and customs of the Australian Aborigines. We all share responsibility for Nazism because we are spirits informed by the same trends as the Nazis. Nothing is alien to us from what motivates Nazi behaviour, and we can introspectively understand this whole movement. There is a dimension within us all that is a Nazi dimension. As much as we wish to assert to ourselves that Nazism represents to us everything that is alien to our thinking and behaviour, we would not be honest if we did not admit that, in spite of everything, Nazism is as an organically grown product of the Western humus that supports us, as are the other theories and practices of our culture. Indeed, we must admit that Nazism is the most uninhibited, and in this sense, the most authentic product of all. Nazism is the goal of the Modern Age. When medieval humanity left the cathedral to enter the immanent world, it started to move toward Nazism. By having abandoned the cross that sustains the Saviour who bears the sins of the world, humanity had already chosen, without knowing it, the swastika, which symbolizes the sins of the world. It is in this subjective spirit and burdened with a sense of responsibility that we must deal with Nazism.

In the first place we must admit that Nazism is a type of socialism. It is not, as Marxists would like to make us believe, an ultimate and desperate trick by the bourgeoisie in order to avoid socialism. Nazism is, on the contrary, the ascension to power of authentic socialism. A socialism, in which the Darwinian element predominates over the Hegelian (whereas in Marxism the Hegelian element predominates over the Darwinian), but this does not make it any less socialist. Race theory is as "scientific" as class theory is, and it is equally "materialistic." This type of biology is as vulgarized and deformed as economy is in Marxism. This is a theory as committed to the modification of the world as Marxism is. Nazism is an invitation to the final struggle that will establish a new

order and a perfect new society, as is Marxism. If we have the feeling that Nazism betrays the scientific and humanistic spirit of the West (and it is in this reactionary sense that the Marxist affirms this scientific and humanist spirit), we are mistaken. Both Nazism and Marxism are equally scientific, because both existentialize a particular science, elevating it to pseudo-religion, and thus deforming and transforming this science into its own opposite and caricature. And both are equally humanistic, because they conceive man as an immanent being, as an articulation of reality's creative Will, although Nazism conceives man as an animal, and Marxism conceives man as an instrument. Both are, therefore, logical and necessary consequences of humanism. We feel a certain repugnance in thus equating Marxism with Nazism. But this disgust is the second barrier to be overcome. I do not want to deny that there are ethical and aesthetic differences between Nazism and Marxism. The values of Marxism are Christian values, only without the transcendent background that gives meaning to these values. Nazi values are all negative from a Christian point of view, they are all a frank admission of a total lack of meaning and therefore of the total annihilation of all responsibility. But an analysis will show that this difference is only formal, and that in practice the behaviour of Nazi society resembles the behaviour of Marxist society. Apart from the transcendent background, all values, whether positive, or negative, become empty, and everything becomes permissible. As for aesthetic differences, it is obvious that the articulations of Marxist intellectuals, and even of Marxist political leaders, are much more current, refined, and aesthetically elaborated than the articulations of their Nazi counterparts. It cannot be denied that reading a Marxist theorist provides an aesthetic pleasure, whereas reading a Nazi theorist causes only disgust. But this aesthetic difference is a vision we have as the intellectuals we are. I can well imagine that there are people who experience Nazi pronouncements as the most beautiful. Nazism is a type of Marxism for the semi-literate. Therefore, it comes close to the Marxist ideal of "communication with the masses". And in the end, both are equally anti-intellectual because they betray both the spirit of fulfilment and the ironic distance that characterizes the authentic intellect. But Marxism is a betrayal on a higher level. From the perspective of a pure intellect with unprejudiced seriousness, they are both equally repulsive. From such perspective, there is no essential distinction between the two.

Having admitted the similarity between Nazism and Marxism, we have, I believe, taken a decisive step towards overcoming the Modern Age. This was a very painful step. It is very easy to despise Nazism because it offends our scales of values. It is very difficult to disregard Marxism, because it represents, as I have striven to show in the previous arguments, the ultimate form of a pseudo-faith in the West. In admitting the fundamental identity of Nazism and Marxism, we are, in effect, admitting the bankruptcy of the Modern Age and announcing our refusal to participate in this age. If Marxism is the articulation of progress and Nazism is the articulation of a reactionary position, and if both are fundamentally identical, then reaction becomes the same as progress. The

very term "progress" loses all meaning, and with this we are abandoning the Modern Age. The contemplation of historical events helps our abandonment. In the 1930s there were various attempts to bring Nazism and Marxism together, as if they both felt their kinship viscerally. The year 1940 which is the theme of this chapter was the year of the Hitler-Stalin alliance. And in this alliance, seemingly absurd, but fundamentally justified, culminates the progress that is the Modern Age. That is why I chose this year.

I do not deny that there is a danger in identifying Marxism with Nazism. The awareness of this danger is the third barrier to be overcome. The danger is this: Nazism is obviously an unparalleled phenomenon in the history of mankind. Never before, and since then, never again, has the apparatus reached such automation. Never before, and since then, never again, have acts of such futility been perpetrated with such brutality. To say that Nazism is fundamentally identical with Marxism represents the danger of exempting Nazism from its responsibility for the uniqueness of its thoughts and deeds. The danger must be faced. It must be admitted that the deeds of the Nazis are nothing more than something which is perfectly achievable by the Marxists, if they were to lose the inhibitions that still humanize them. That the acts of the Marxists in the 1930s already prefigured the Nazi acts. And that, after all, there is nothing original about the Nazi apparatus, which is an improved realization upon the Stalinist model. I repeat that I am aware of the danger that lies in my affirmation. I know that Marxist acts purport to aim at a positive end from the Christian and Western standpoint, whereas the end of Nazi acts is grossly negative, and are a far more obvious pretension than Marxist pretension. I decided, however, to be entirely honest. I cannot therefore deny that the trend is basically the same.

In 1940, having its back protected by its ally Stalin, Nazism threw itself against the West to destroy it. Nazism threw itself against what it used to call "democracies." The situation was, therefore, clear. Indeed, it was enviable in its clarity. On the one side were the socialist forces, ready to install the apparatus in whose function they worked. On the other side were the reactionary forces, the bourgeoisie, desperately clinging to the fictitious control it had of the apparatus. And this bourgeoisie proclaimed to represent the West and modernity. What is the meaning of this statement? What, in reality, did this bourgeoisie, perceived as decadent by the Socialists, represent? Having outlined the existential situation of the attacking forces, I will devote this chapter to an analysis of the defending forces. I will try to show that the Socialists, both Nazis and Marxists, were right in considering the bourgeoisie liquidated. That they did not represent the forces of a renewal of the Modern Age. And that, in fact, the Second World War resulted in the victory of Socialism, that is, of the apparatus, against all deceptive appearances. However, with this victory came the hope of overcoming the apparatus. I will try to show that hope does not lie in democracies, but beyond socialism.

### 3.3.1. Model

I sought to show, in the earlier chapter, how the early schizophrenia of the Modern Age -- the division of reality into "thinking thing" and "extensive thing" -- resulted, at the beginning of this century, in nihilism. The "thinking thing" was revealed by analysis as non-thinking, and the "extended thing" by current physics as non-extensive. It was becoming obvious, at least to intellectuals, that the "thinking thing" as well as "extended thing" were nothing more than fiction, or unrealities. The thinking thing, when analysed, revealed its essence, "the Will," which was anything but thinking, and the extended thing, when analysed, revealed its essence, "the field," which was something very similar to "nothing." In short, it was becoming obvious that the "reality" within which the West moved from the Renaissance was not real. And that, as a search for reality, the Modern Age is lost time. I decided, at this point, to turn my argument frankly autobiographical by existentializing the problem, in the hope of communicating something of this fundamental discovery of our generation.

For me, as indeed for all who suffer with the problem of fading reality, the problem presents itself not so much speculatively, but experientially. Little by little the sense of reality begins to be undermined by doubt, to, in a catastrophic outburst, explode the whole of reality, which now stands as if reduced to pieces floating in nothingness. In my concrete case, reality had a name: Prague, which does not mean simply the name of a city, a culture, or a way of life. Prague means, in a greater sense, the name of a faith in constancy and an assurance of reality. Prague is a millennial city, an organically structured society, which reflects immemorial tendencies, customs, and values that are fluent and malleable within a constant scale, all forming the framework of a sense of reality. A reality full of problems, which is not in itself a problem. A medieval reality, if the term is allowed. However, little by little one discovers that something is out of tune in this reality. This reality consists of solid blocks, but which allow glimpses through cracks. These crevices were not only opened by the sciences of nature and spirit, but also by a force that erodes the whole of reality within. Why Prague, and what does Prague mean? This is the question that creeps through the cracks. What do all these millennial buildings tell me? In what sense is this whole complex and prejudiced society my field? What do all these values mean? A walk through its streets, or attendance at a social gathering, no longer provide a feeling of stability, but of its underlying nothingness. On the contrary, these actions provoke the experience that something is deeply wrong with this city that is synonymous with reality; that all of its problems, however serious they may seem, are mainly froth; that all of its forms of life, as organic and authentic as they may present themselves, are fundamentally poses; that all this is nothing more than a spider's web, complex and perfect, ready to be undone by the icy winds that blow through its meshes. In short: that Prague is not reality "as such", but

only a model, a fiction of reality, a representation that conceals the abysmal nothingness underneath.

Let us call this abysmal vision "Romantic", although this romanticism has a specifically Pragean ingredient. To this schopenhauerian phase of the collapse of reality follows another, which deliberately seeks to recompose the elements, giving them new meaning. Reality can be "explicated," and this explication allows for a commitment toward a better reformulation of the adequation of reality to thought. This is the Marxist phase. Marxism is already the result of the loss of a sense of reality. We have, therefore, deliberately constructed a model, to then adequate the situation to this model. But Marxism is a type of faith, because it considers its model unique and true. In effect, Marxism says: mine is the correct explication (that is, "scientific"), and the existential proof of it is that apparently meaningless phenomena become consistent when framed in my model. This is the reason for the ardour with which the generation to which I belong was engaged in favour of Marxism: to save reality and avoid confronting the abyss. Marxism was our last escape to avoid confrontation with the dead God. But like all faith, Marxism required the sacrifice of the intellect. And this sacrifice was put to the test during the Muscovite processes and Stalinist cleansing. It was demanded of us that we accept the brutal and bloody absurdities of these Marxist achievements precisely because they are absurd, lest we lose our saving faith. There, it was proved that Marxist faith is not an authentic faith as medieval faith was: the sacrifice was not honest. The absurdities undermined our faith in Marxism. It is possible to say that one was never a true Marxist, because the true Marxist did not experience the problem. But it is also possible to say that the true "*soit disant*" Marxist is no longer a human being, but an functionary, totally encompassed by the apparatus, and that, therefore, the true Marxist no longer has an intellect to sacrifice to the holocaust. The "reality" of the true Marxist is already the Kafkaesque apparatus, while one's own Marxism was still an attempt to save the sense of a non-absurd reality. It is therefore possible to say that one's Marxism was a tragic mistake. It was "parlour" Marxism, bourgeois Marxism, Marxism as "*Ersatz*" of one's lost religion.

Although one's faith was shaken by the Muscovite absurdities, it was provisionally saved by the Spanish civil war. Imagine the scene, so different from that of 1940: on one side the obscurantist forces of fascism with its powerful apparatus of war. On the other side the pure forces of a new dawn of dignity and honesty. And between the two, the hypocritical and treacherous machinations of the corrupt and decadent bourgeoisie. This was a scene that invited, in a loud shout, one's commitment, although one already had doubts about the "purity" of Marxist intentions. These doubts were confirmed catastrophically by the events. The barbarian hordes invaded Prague, overturned our already eroded reality, and soon joined the forces one considered "pure." This was 1940. There was no other resource, even physically. One had to face the abyss of the absurd, into which the

events projected one mercilessly. The following years were like a nightmare. All events lacked the stamp of reality. Hitler in Prague, Ribbentrop in Moscow, occupied Paris, impaled children, scientific experiments with frozen twins, ovens, gas chambers, this is all phantasmagoria. These things do not participate in what one can call "reality". But what can one call "reality", if not this? Is not this exactly what reality is, though one never wanted to admit it?

Let us be reasonable. The Nazi hordes eventually invaded the Soviet Union and forced a situation vaguely similar to that of the Spanish civil war. And they were finally defeated by the bourgeois-Marxist alliance. But did this re-establish reality? Let us continue to be reasonable. The bourgeoisie, after becoming apparently victorious, developed a neoliberal capitalist system, through which all socialist ideals could become realized quickly and efficiently; and Marxism, after becoming apparently victorious, abolished Stalinism in order to get ever closer to neoliberal capitalism. But did this re-establish reality? I believe that for all of us who lived through 1940 all these later achievements have the obvious mark of futility. They are automatic movements of a process that revealed its structure in 1940. They are residual movements and, I hope, possible to be overcome.

Everything I have just said is highly autobiographical and relates to external events. But there is a correspondence between autobiography and history, and between outer events and thought, a correspondence that is difficult to analyse. It would be very convenient if we could be Marxists and say that external events (the "economic" ones) condition thought, and that history conditions the life of the individual and the group. But the case is not so simple. If we are honest, we must admit that the external events I have outlined are, in a sense, a consequence of the thought of our ancestors; that these events were caused by their thinking just like crime causes punishment. And that we ourselves experience these events with a sense of relief, albeit in shock. It was like waiting for a storm that finally broke. Having lost the last vestige of faith, we have opened the horizons. And in this opening we must strive for the establishment of a new faith. Thus external events represent something like symptoms of a more fundamental and significant process. Hitler and Stalin are but symptoms of a development within our soul (if I may use that term).

I had said that this chapter would deal with the situation of the bourgeoisie, which was opposed to Nazism in 1940. It is in this spirit, therefore, that I ask for the previous deposition to be read -- as the testimony of a bourgeois whose reality was destroyed. And this destruction of reality, this loss of faith in something solid and palpable, was articulated in several ways. I propose to consider that articulation which seems to me to be the most characteristic and most penetrating. The one whose spokesperson is Wittgenstein, and which is expressed in his famous sentence "there is no enigma" (*es gibt kein Rätsel*).

In order to understand this type of philosophizing, which is in effect a reduction of philosophy to absurdity, we must, I believe, start from science, this characteristic movement of the Modern

Age. What is science? This is the question that dominates the Modern Age, and the answer to that question depends on the meaning of this Age. I will present the answers that have been given, somewhat summarily, as follows -- Renaissance: "Science is the deciphering of the book of nature by the intellect." Baroque: "science is the adequation of the intellect to the extended thing through nomenclature, that is, by the affixing of numbers to points". Christianity: "Science is a discourse consisting of *a priori* synthetic judgments, that is, sentences that articulate realized perceptions." Romantic: "Science is a discursive method by which the intellect is realized, thus realizing its circumstance, that is, science is a method by which the intellect is objectified." Victorian: "Science is a method of the Will by which it comes to power by creating instruments". We can observe a trend in this chain of answers, and this tendency lies in the gradual transference of the meaning of science as a discipline from explanatory to manipulative. At the beginning of the Modern Age, science meant the explication of something. And, therefore, a sequence of true sentences. At the end of the Modern Age science means the manipulation of something. This is, therefore, a sequence of sentences that are models of behaviour. From meaning the search for truth, science gradually transforms into a manual of applied technique. In short: art is better than truth.

Let us ask a second question. What is philosophy? However, let us not ask this question "in a vacuum", but in conjunction with our first question. Here the meaning of our question will become as follows: if science is conceived as a search for truth, philosophy can be conceived as having two meanings. (A) philosophy is a discourse from which individual sciences originate. (B) philosophy is a discourse to which individual sciences return in order to place their truths. This dual function will be the meaning of philosophy. But if science is conceived as a manual of applied technique, what then is philosophy? Is it a discipline that has nothing in common with science? Or is it a discipline that completes science? Or is it a discipline that opposes science? Or, will it finally be a discourse overcome by the abandonment of the search for truth? Reformulating: if, as it now happens in 1940, science begins to be conceived as a model of doing, are we not returning, as if by magic, to a pre-philosophical stage of thought? I believe it is within this climate of the eternal return that we must locate Wittgenstein's starting point.

The answers given to the question "What is science?" agree, in one way or another, that science is a discursive discipline. Science is something that consists of sentences. This fundamental fact has not been duly considered so far. And in the course of the 19th century, with its anthropologism, this fact was entirely relegated to oblivion. Let us consider, for a moment, what the implication of saying that science is structurally a chain of sentences means. It implies the resolution of the profound dichotomy "empiricism/rationalism" that has problematized science since the Renaissance. And this resolution implies, in turn, if taken totally seriously, the end of science as a method for

the research of "reality". And this ending automatically implies the end of modern thought. Let us try to follow this ending's mainlines.

Science is a chain of sentences whose ultimate meaning is that "reality" called the "extended thing." This is how science was designed by the Renaissance. These sentences are true if and when they mirror situations ("*Sachverhalte*") of such reality. How can they mirror situations? Because they are adequated to this reality. The structure of science, which is the structure of sentences, is the same as the structure of reality. Were it not for the identity of structures, if the reality of the extended thing did not have the same structure as the sentences of science, then science would not mirror "reality." In this case science would be a chain of meaningless sentences. In other words, and to use the Renaissance worldview: if nature were not a book written in scientific language, it could not be read by reason, and if reason were not a linguistic code of nature, then reason would be meaningless. But given the happy coincidence between the structure of reason and that of nature, science is a method for mirroring nature in reason. But this happy coincidence is precisely the problem to be investigated.

Islamic thought, the source of this aspect of the modern worldview, does not see the problem. For Islam the coincidence is obvious, since both nature and reason are the articulations of Allah. Science mirrors nature against the background common to both, which is the transcendent. But the Modern Age, which decided in favour of science, just to turn its back on the transcendent, represses the problem. Therefore, the Modern Age finds itself in between the pincers of the dilemma "empiricism/rationalism", which is the form in which the problem insists in presenting itself. Science consists, of course, of two kinds of sentences. Science has sentences that contain proper names, which are names pointing to "reality." Let us call these sentences "observational." And there are others that contain only class names, which are names of names. Let us call these sentences "theoretical". The problem is this: how can we justify (i.e. make "valid") the passage from the observational level to the theoretical level and vice versa? I believe I have shown in the preceding argument that attempts to justify this passage, undertaken by the Baroque, which are called "induction", have failed. If I adhere to a nominalist ontology as the entire Modern Age must do, that is, if I allow "reality" only to the meaning of proper names, I cannot justify the passage from observation to theory. With Kant the problem is masked, because the linguistic structure of "pure reason" is repressed. It is true that for us, thanks to the analyses undertaken by Wittgenstein and the Neopositivists, the mask became transparent. We know that the "forms of intuition space/time" are masks of the "substantive" and "verb" structure, and that the "categories of knowledge" are masks of the grammatical rules of a given language. But for Kant, the Romantic,

and Victorian times, masks have managed to veil the problem and prevent it from hampering progress. But now, with the recent development especially of the physical sciences, the problem must be faced.

The problem is false. The passage from observation to theory is not without justification. It was a problem only for modern nominalism. If we decide to distinguish ontologically between the meaning of proper names and the meaning of class names, the problem exists. If we say that proper names mean realities, and class names do not, the problem is insoluble. But now this reality of the meaning of proper names has evaporated. Post-Newtonian physics has demonstrated it "empirically." The terms "observation" and "theory" do not designate, as the whole Modern Age believes, two ontologically different forms of thinking. They designate two forms of sentences. And the passage between these two forms of sentences is justified by the rules of the language in which they occur. But with this formal (and therefore ontologically unsatisfactory) resolution of the "empiricist/rationalist" problem, the more fundamental problem, that of the coincidence between "reason" and "nature," which was repressed by the Modern Age, reappears.

The statement "proper names mean realities" is not a meaningful statement. It is a tautology. If we are to define the term "proper name," we will arrive at something like "proper names are names of something that is not a name." And if we are to define the term "reality", we will arrive at something like "reality is that whose name is a proper name". The statement "proper names mean realities," is a synthesis of these two circular definitions. To want to say what "reality" is, is to want to give a name to what by definition has no name but has proper names that appear in the observational type of discourse. What cannot be said must pass in silence. To want to say that the observational discourse means "reality" is to want to say what should be silent. Strictly speaking, this is not an articulation, but noise. To say that science means reality, or mirrors reality, or any similar kind of statement, is to make noise. Therefore, to say that science has a structure that coincides with the structure of reality is also noise. The most we can say is this: science has a linguistic structure, and in this sense, it is a model for behaviour.

With this definition we complete the transference of the meaning of science from an explanatory to a manipulative discipline. But simultaneously, we return to the starting point of science, that is, to magic. Let us consider this a little.

What we took for "reality" from the Modern Age onward was exactly the subject matter of which science spoke. In fact, this is the only satisfactory definition of the term "reality": it is the subject of which science speaks. This is its ontological dignity: to serve as a subject. And one can talk about this subject by following the structure of a certain language. This is why the structure of reality is the structure of that language. There is no coincidence in this fact. There is no enigma. The structure of reality is a consequence (if I may express myself thus) of the structure of the

language in which it is spoken of. For the Modern Age this language was science, and consequently, reality was structured by the rules of that language. For other ages and other societies, other languages speak about what is considered by these ages and societies as "reality." Reality has, therefore, other structures. And that is all we can say about reality.

A formal analysis of the language structure in which we speak formally reveals this fact. Formally, every language is a symbol system that is tautological at its core and contradictory in its utterances. In other words: being contradictory, every language explains everything. And because language is tautological, it does not explain anything. And so is science, which is a language like all others. Science explains everything and nothing. In fact: science explains everything about nothing. Science does not solve enigmas (they do not exist), but solves problems. And solving problems means simply reducing them to zero, annihilating them. Wittgenstein says that he solved all the problems of philosophy, and that this proves how little we resolved them. Therefore, science as an explanatory discipline is finished.

But not as a discipline that creates models. Models are sets of sentences that serve as models for behaviour. If I decide to accept a particular model, I can orient myself in it. I can guide my behaviour within it. This is what science has been doing in the course of the Modern Age: providing models. This is what we have in mind when saying that science works. But that is exactly what magic has in mind: to provide behavioural models. By taking away from magic its Christian background (which it had in alchemy), we will have science as it unfolds in the year 1940. A discipline for providing behavioural models that explain nothing and mean nothing. Therefore, the emptiness of that reality that has absorbed the interest of Western humanity since the Renaissance has been formally proven.

What is the role of philosophy henceforth? To talk about reality, regardless of the discourse of science? But this would mean to formulate meaningless sentences. To seek the meaning of science? But this would mean making noises. No, the role of philosophy is to analyse the sentences of science, in order to distinguish between meaningful and meaningless sentences. Meaningful sentences are those that obey the rules of language. Meaningless sentences infringe the same rules. "Meaning" has nothing to do with "reality." Philosophy is either language analysis (and more especially of the scientific language), or it is noise. The so-called problems of philosophy are all noise. Philosophy in the traditional sense of the term is consensus. This philosophy is dead. We are returning to the pre-philosophical stage of thought.

It may seem to the reader that the exposition of logico-symbolic thought, which I have just done so crudely, is not related to the autobiographical confession that preceded it. But this would be a mistake. On the contrary: logico-symbolic thought formulates, in its rigorous and dry way,

exactly the experience of the total loss of the sense of reality that follows the loss of faith in Marxism. Let us existentialize this teaching. Science provides models for behaviour. They are deliberately designed models that claim our deliberated adherence to them. There are other models, equally "valid", if the term "valid" can still be applied. Marxism is also a deliberately designed model that claims our deliberated adherence, and it is as valid as any other. Adherence to a model depends on a totally random choice of its axioms. This initial moment of decision can be formally stipulated, as it was by Goedel. But this decision in favour of a model is not equivalent to "a decision in favour of Christ." This decision includes, at its very core, the conviction of futility. I decide in favour of a particular model, just as I could decide for any other. This is a futile and revocable decision. This is not "engagement" in the existential sense of the term. This is only a decision to speak, provisionally, within a certain language. The Marxists speak a particular language. The Catholics speak another, also the Buddhists. The Nazis (*horribile visu*), speak yet another. One language is just as valid as the others. In my futile freedom to choose between these languages I transcend them all. I am beyond Good and Evil in all of them. These models are all the latest wrecks of reality, across which I leap. And from this distance I see what is common to all these models: they are tautological and contradictory, they explain everything about nothing.

Every model claims for itself total validity, that is: every model is totalitarian. But I, perceiving the structure common to all models, am beyond this totalitarianism. Two of these models attack me now, in 1940: Nazi and Marxist totalitarianism. The Nazi one wants to annihilate me. The Marxist one was until recently the model to which I had adhered. I must resist both totalitarianisms. Why? To keep my futile freedom to leap between models. I should try to keep my choice of models open. Why? I do not know how to answer this question at this point. But I already feel, within me, that this decision in favour of the possibility of decision is the fruit of a new mentality. I must preserve myself in readiness for a decision for a new faith. I must preserve myself in readiness for the decision in favor of what lies beyond all models.

The totalitarian ones, those who have adhered to a model without mental reserve, despise this attempt to keep myself open. They are right, from their point of view. For them, I am nothing more than a reactionary obscurantist, who does not realize that their model explains everything and gives meaning to all behaviour. That is why they have decided to eliminate other models that obstruct the way of theirs. And their model, whether Nazi or Marxist, takes the form of an apparatus. The apparatus is the realization of a model. And the apparatus is also the empirical proof of the validity of the model. The apparatus works. This proves that the model is valid and correct. Those who are engaged do not know (as I know), that this is neither a happy coincidence, nor proof. They do not know (like I know) that the apparatus works because it is the consequence of a model, and that therefore, it was not the model that was adequated to the apparatus, but that it

is the apparatus that is adequate to the model. The victory of Marxism would not prove that Marxism is a correct model. The term "correct" is meaningless beyond the model. This is what the so-called "democracies" are fighting for. To prove that no model is "correct", and to give opportunity to a plurality of models. This is absurd. If no model is correct, what is the value in the plurality of models? Marxists are right: the struggle of "democracies" is absurd. And, what is even worse, this a struggle with false pretences. Democracies say that they are fighting for an "open society" (which gives opportunities to various models), when they are already caught up, without realizing it, within an apparatus that is the realization of an "overcome" model. This is one aspect of the Second World War. But there are others. I will try to consider a few more among them.