



Adorno

The Jargon of Authenticity

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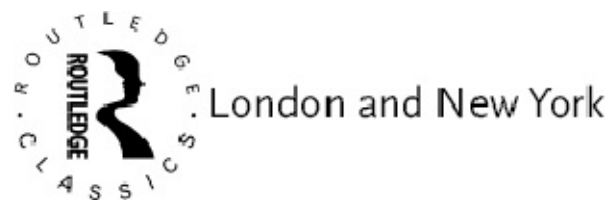
‘Adorno is a political thinker who wishes to bring about radical change. He is also a philosopher with a zest for metaphysics, who is at home in the western philosophical tradition.’

Iris Murdoch

Theodor
Adorno

The Jargon of Authenticity

Translated by Knut Tarnowski and
Frederic Will



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FOREWORD

Philosophy which once seemed outmoded is now alive because the moment of its realization has been missed.

Theodor W. Adorno

Existentialism has been described by Paul Tillich as “an over one hundred year old movement of rebellion against the dehumanization of man in industrial society.”¹ But this rebellion has been viewed as emerging because the solutions proposed by Hegel and Marx proved ineffective for overcoming the fact of alienation.² Thus Kierkegaard, in rejecting Hegel's immanentism of Reason, history simply tried to restore the irreducibility of human subjectivity. For Kierkegaard the suffering of the individual is not justified in a panlogism of history.

The Jargon of Authenticity is Theodor W. Adorno's critique of the ideology of German existentialism. As a member of the Frankfurt school of critical theory,³ Adorno's critique is a Hegelian– Marxist response to the existentialist rejection of critical reason. Although this analysis focuses upon twentieth-century German existentialism, especially its post-World War II diffusion, the basic concern is its notion of subjectivity. That is, Adorno's critique is itself an attempt to transcend and include in the perspective of critical reason the truth of the existentialist concern for the fundamentalness of human subjectivity. In this sense Adorno's analysis parallels that of Jean-Paul Sartre, who in the introduction to the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* argues that, correctly understood, existentialism is a moment of dialectical, or critical, reason.⁴

However, Adorno's intent goes beyond a counter-critique of existentialism and aspires to be a critique of the ideology inherent in its German formulations. Adorno not only wants to salvage the notion of subjectivity from the idealistic tendency of existentialism, a concern he shares with Sartre, but he also wants to show that this theory has become a mystification of the actual processes of domination. In this way Adorno's critique is within the tradition of critical theory's critique of ideology. The intent of critical theory is to reconstruct the generation of historical forms of consciousness in order to demonstrate how they misrepresent actual social relations and thereby justify historical forms of domination. In this way dialectical reason is actualized by critical theorists who, in their reflective critiques of the basic categories of historical consciousness, seek to reconcile men and women to the actuality of their historical possibilities. So conceived, critical theory is the theoretical moment of the “class struggle.”

However, the later Frankfurt school no longer assumed that the categories of Marx's critique of political economy were adequate for the critique of late industrial society (i.e., both “capitalisms” and “socialisms”). It was precisely the failure of Marx's historical agent of change, the proletariat, to become a class-for-itself that stimulated the Frankfurt school's analyses of the ideological reification that blocked human liberation. Their concern for the growth of false consciousness generated by the

“culture industry” and the increased integration, and yet atomization, of persons in the industrial order resulted in a series of critical analyses of mass culture and ideological traditions, e.g., authoritarian social forms, the legacy of the Enlightenment's notion of Reason, etc.⁵ In the absence of a decisive agent of social change, and in the midst of what Marcuse termed a “one-dimensional society,” the basic interest of the Frankfurt school was to restore the actuality of critical rationality. Indeed, the refusal to affirm “mechanical Marxism” or utopian hopes for liberation is perhaps evidence of the consistency in staying within the limits of negative critique. For them, only in the negation of pseudo-integrations and resolutions was emancipatory action clearly possible. Hence, the Frankfurt school became a tradition of revolutionary theorists who, in the absence of the objective possibilities for the transcendence of industrial domination, attempted to uphold the ideals of critical reason that anticipated the emancipation of mankind from the unnecessary power constraints of nature and history. In this way their work is basically a critique of the reifications that conceal the truth of critical reason. Since “reification” is for them “a forgetting,”⁶ their work is essentially a remembrance, from the historical setting of the mid-twentieth century, of the notion of critical reason.

Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* continues the critique of existentialism that had always been a central issue for Frankfurt theorists.⁷ The continuity of this critique can be shown by Adorno's 1939 essay “On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love,” which anticipates and is assumed by this book.⁸ Adorno shows that Kierkegaard's notion of love transcended human differences, happiness, and even historical morality itself. The most remote neighbor was to be affirmed as much as the most intimate friend; “preference” was to be overcome, and love as *agapē* was to be experienced in a radical inwardness that transcended the natural inclinations of *eros*. Adorno argues that this love's extreme inwardness conceived of itself as its own ground. Hence, while Kierkegaard's doctrine of love aimed at overcoming the reifications of historical context, it actually became, Adorno claims, a reification that could not be actualized. In oppressing both natural drives and the right of the mind to question, radical inwardness loses love's power of reconciling the antagonism between natural instincts and socially formed selves. In abstract inward love, both historical need and happiness are effectively denied. The real object of this love's “desire” is redemption—which becomes the ultimate reality sought.

Adorno shows that this radical Christian inwardness evades the actuality of secular injustice and inequality. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard is more deeply aware of the transformation of the person in the bourgeois epoch than his contemporaries or his later German existentialist followers. That is, he recognized the mechanisms of industrialization that force men into alienated social patterns and reified communications. But this insight only confirmed Kierkegaard's sense that the progress of civilization was the history of advancing decay and further inclined him to the hatred of “leveling” mechanisms and the rejection of the motives of the bourgeois epoch. Only in the radical inwardness of Christian love, in the leap of faith that suspends the ethical, is it possible to hope for eternity, for redemption.

But Adorno's central point is that Kierkegaard's radical inwardness has lost the dialectical mediation of subject and object—which was the achievement of Hegel's critical philosophy. That is, the constitutive presuppositions of human subjectivity must themselves be dialectically related to the historical context in which determinate subjects are formed. Failure to so relate the subject and object of historically situated knowledge results in the fallacy of “objectivism”—or the reduction of subjectivity to the in-itselfness of facts (e.g., positivism) or the innate principles of mind (the idealistic philosophy of the identity of reason and mind). Both forms of objectivism are the loss of critical (dialectical) reason. Only the tradition of reflective critique conceived of human subjectivity in a way that did not reduce it to the determinateness of natural facts or absorb it into the spiritual

principles of absolute idealism. Kierkegaard's radical inwardness becomes an idealistic objectivism by failing to comprehend subjectivity as a historical category.

Dialectically conceived "subjectivity" is historically formed and yet not reducible to historical determinations; historical subjectivity is reconstructed from the framework of reflective critique that the limits of constitutive synthesis establish the range of possible experience. Only in such reflective reconstruction of the genesis of subjectivity is it possible to distinguish between real possibilities and those modes of appearance that are but abstract illusions, e.g., existentialism's transcendence of historical domination. So conceived, the dialectical notion of subjectivity is a fundamental category of critical reason. In reflective reconstructions of self-formation processes, it is possible to show the pseudo-necessity of socially unnecessary motives and thereby to promote a reversal of consciousness that can dissolve the causality of these objective illusions.⁹

In *The Jargon of Authenticity* Adorno applies the method of immanent criticism to contemporary German existentialists (e.g., Buber, Jaspers, Heidegger, etc.). His basic thesis is that after World War II this philosophical perspective became an ideological mystification of human domination—which, by pretending to be a critique of alienation. Use of existentialistic terms became, Adorno argues, a jargon: a mode of magical expression which Walter Benjamin called an "aura." In the aura of contemporary existentialism the historical need for meaning and liberation was expressed, but in a way that mystified the actual relation between language and its objective content. Adorno's critique focuses on the jargon's incapacity to express the relation between language and truth, in that it breaks the dialectic of language by making the intended object appear present by the idealization inherent in the word itself. The jargon, therefore, falls into an objectivism that conceals the difference between philosophical reflection and the in-itselfness of the object of reflection. Such objectivism loses the intent of reflection to maintain a self-consciousness of the mediation of fact through the thinking subject. Consequently, in the jargon objective consciousness is compressed into self-experience, and an idealism results.

But the societal result of this idealistic tendency is that the jargon shares with modern advertising the ideological circularity of pretending to make present, in pure expressivity, an idealized form that is devoid of content; or, alternatively, just as the mass media can create a presence whose aura makes the spectator seem to experience a nonexistent actuality, so the jargon presents a gesture of autonomy without content. Adorno's analysis here continues Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities, that the symbolisms of the jargon do not represent actual social relations but rather symbolize only the relations between abstract concepts. Lost in the fetishisms of the jargon is the actuality of the historical development of human consciousness. That the subject itself is formed, and deformed, by the objective configuration of institutions is forgotten, and thus reified, in the jargon's pathos of archaic primalness. Consequently, there is a loss of the objective context of human society and an idealistic compression of all historical consciousness into the sphere of self-experience. For example, Adorno cites Martin Buber's *I and Thou* and Paul Tillich's stress that religiosity is an end in itself, as instances of the shift to subjectivity as an in-itselfness. In both cases the words are referred to the immediacy of life, to attitudinal and qualitative aspects of self-experience. One needs only to be a believer; the objective content of belief has been eclipsed in the subjectivization of objective content. To be a Christian seems to be a personal question—independent from the historical divinity of Christ. Without necessarily intending to do so, this extreme subjectivity transforms existentialistic language into a mystification of the objective constraints that block the autonomy and spontaneity of the historical subject.

Hegel proclaimed philosophy a "homecoming" that critically reconciled objective discord and

subjective consciousness. His intent was to maintain a meaningful totality by the reflective mediation of critical reason. Reflection had as its aim the critique of abstractions, or in Marxian terms, reifications. In this way Marx's work attempted to demonstrate the nonequivalence of exchange in the capitalist economy—thereby restoring to human consciousness a critical mediation of economic exploitation.

Adorno implies that contemporary German existentialism began from a higher level of capitalist development, in which the socio-cultural antagonisms are much deeper than economic exploitation and extend into the subject's ego itself. Therefore, the haste with which the existentialists and the jargon attempt to achieve a reconciliation, irregardless of the objective processes of alienation which block meaning and autonomy, indicated only their awareness of the depth of the need. The resulting movement to a radical inwardness and its expressions of authenticity, freedom, etc., is an attempt to actualize these ideals outside of the objective social context: to fulfill heroic cultural models independent of the society. Behind these empty claims for freedom the socio-economic processes of advanced capitalist integration continue, intensifying the dependence of all persons upon large organizational units for employment and welfare. The jargon's "blessings" conceal this objective context of unfreedom, and in the name of critical reflection the jargon joins hands with modern advertising in celebrating the meaningfulness of immediate experience.

Hence for Adorno, German existentialism and related genres, such as neoromantic lyric poetry (e.g. Rilke), come to a head in a mythic jargon that reduces the dialectical relationship of reflective critique to the objective content and context of subjectivity. The result is an ideology of the simple in which the primal sense of pure words is elevated in a futile attempt to overcome the "alienation" that remains linked to the political-economic framework of society.

Adorno's reconstruction of Heidegger's philosophy attempts to show that it becomes an ontology that retreats behind, rather than overcomes, the tradition of transcendental philosophy. In the universalization of transcendental subjectivity into Dasein, the empirical is totally lost and, as Adorno claims, an essence-mythology of Being emerges. This is exemplified in the claim that the primacy of Dasein is a realm beyond fact and essence and yet one which maintains itself as an identity. Where critical reason was able to show that maintenance of identity of consciousness presupposed a dialectic of subjective and objective reciprocity which was unified only in the constitutive activity of concrete subjectivity itself, Heidegger's notion of Dasein as both ontic and ontological stops the dialecticity of conscious existence in an idealistic elevation of the absolute subject. To quote Adorno:

whatever praises itself for reaching behind the concepts of reflection—subject and object—in order to grasp something substantial, does nothing but reify the irresolvability of the concepts of reflection. It reifies the *impossibility* of reducing one into the other; into the in-itself [italics added].¹⁰

Adorno's thesis is that Heidegger's notion of selfness remains a reified tributary of Husserl's concept of subject. This concept of subject, in attempting to overcome the pure possibility of the ontic, claims to be itself concrete. Hence, Heidegger dogmatically proclaims his concept of existence as something in opposition to identity—while at the same time he "continues the tradition of the doctrine of identity with his implicit definition of the self through its own preservation." Hence Adorno examines the notions of "Dasein," "authenticity," "death," "care," etc., and shows that the use evades the issue of historical determinateness by means of a primary and absolute creative subject—which is, by definition, supposedly untouched by reification.

Hence, the aura of authenticity in Heidegger is that it names "nothing;" the "I" remains formal and

yet pretends that the word contains content in-itself. For Adorno, Heidegger's existentialism is a new Platonism which implies that authenticity comes in the complete disposal of the person over himself—as if there were no determination emerging from the objectivity of history.

TRENT SCHROYER
February, 1973

- ¹ Paul Tillich, "Existentialist Philosophy," *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, V (Jan., 1944), 44–70.
- ² F. H. Heinemann, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (New York, 1958), p. 12.
- ³ The Frankfurt school is best known by its leading members, among whom are Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas. However, these are only the better known members of a tradition of critical theory that has now spanned two generations. An excellent intellectual history of this highly important and little understood community of radical scholars has been published by Martin Jay under the title of *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston, 1973).
- ⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York, 1963).
- ⁵ Some of these studies are available in English, such as M. Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972); Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (New York, 1972).
- ⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
- ⁷ Perhaps the earliest statement of this concern is Adorno's *Habilitationsarbeit* (1933), which was published as *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Aesthetischen* (Frankfurt, 1965). But the essay by Herbert Marcuse, "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* VII, no. 3 (March, 1948), is one of the most important critiques of existentialism in the Frankfurt tradition.
- ⁸ *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, VIII (1939), 413–29.
- ⁹ The methodological ideal of critical theory has been given a contemporary restatement in Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston, 1971), and *Theory and Practice* (Boston, 1973). The continuity of the tradition of critical theory has been argued by Trent Schroyer, *The Critique of Domination* (New York, 1973).
- ⁰ The mature statement of the notion of critical reason has been translated as *Negative Dialectik* (New York, 1973).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author conceived the *Jargon of Authenticity* as part of the *Negative Dialectic*. However, he finally excluded that text from the latter work not only because its size grew disproportionate to the other parts, but also because the elements of linguistic physiognomy and sociology no longer fitted properly with the rest of the plan. The resistance against intellectual division of labor requires that this division of labor should be reflected on and not merely ignored. Certainly in intention and in theme the *Jargon* is philosophical. As long as philosophy was in line with its own nature, it also had content. However, in retreating to the ideal of its pure nature, philosophy cancels itself out. This thought was only developed in the book which was then still unfinished, while the *Jargon* proceeds according to the insight without, however, grounding it fully. Thus it was published earlier, as a kind of propaedeutic.

Insofar as the author has paid homage to the division of labor, he has at the same time all the more rudely challenged this division. He might be accused of philosophical, sociological, and aesthetic seduction without employing the traditional manner of keeping the categories separate—or maybe even of discussing them distinct from each other. Yet he would have to answer that a demand of this kind projects onto objects the desire for order which marks a classifying science, and which thus proclaims that it is elevated by objects. The author, however, feels more inclined to give himself over to objects than to schematize like a schoolmaster—for the sake of an external standard: a standard which, questionably, has been brought to bear on the subject matter from the outside. This attitude determines itself by precisely the fact that the subject-matter elements of philosophy are intertwined. The common methodological ideal would break up this intimate unity. By means of such a unity of the subject matter, the unity of the author's own attempts should become all the more visible—for example, the unity of the author's philosophical essays with the essay, "Criticism of the Musician" from the *Dissonances*. What is aesthetically perceived in the bad form of language, and interpreted sociologically, is deduced from the untruth of the content which is posited with it: its implicit philosophy.

This makes for bad blood. Passages from Jaspers and idea blocks from Heidegger are treated on the same levels, and with that same linguistic attitude, which schoolmasters would probably reject with indignation. The text of the *Jargon*, however, contains enough evidence, from a truly inexhaustible wealth, to show that those men write in the same manner which they despise in their lesser followers as a justification of their own superiority. Their philosophemes show on what the jargon feeds, as well as its indirect suggestive force. The ambitious projects of German philosophy in the second half of the twenties concretized and articulated the direction into which the objective spirit of the time was drawn. This spirit remained what it was and thus speaks in the jargon even today. Only the criticism of these philosophical projects can objectively determine the mendacity which echoes in the vulgar jargon. The physiognomy of the vulgar jargon leads into what discloses itself in Heidegger.

It is nothing new to find that the sublime becomes the cover for something low. That is how

potential victims are kept in line. But the ideology of the sublime no longer acknowledges itself without being disregarded. To show this fact might help to prevent criticism from stagnating in a vague and noncommittal suspicion of ideology, a suspicion which has itself fallen into ideology. Contemporary German ideology is careful not to pronounce definite doctrines, such as liberal or even elitist ones. Ideology has shifted into language. Social and anthropological changes have brought about this shift, though without breaking the veil. The fact that such language is actually ideology, i.e. societally necessary *Schein*, "appearance," can be shown from within it. This becomes obvious in the contradiction between its "how" and its "what." In its objective impossibility the jargon reacts toward the imminent impossibility of language. Language gives itself over either to the market, to balderdash or to the predominating vulgarity. On the other hand language shoves its way toward the judge's bench, envelops itself in judicial garb, and in that way asserts its privilege. The jargon is the happy synthesis which makes it explode.

Showing this has practical consequences. As irresistible as the jargon appears in present-day Germany, it is actually weak and sickly. The fact that the jargon has become an ideology unto itself destroys this ideology as soon as this fact is recognized. If the jargon were finally to become silent in Germany, part of that would have been accomplished for which skepticism, itself prejudiced, is praised—prematurely and without justification. The interested parties who use the jargon as a means of power, or depend on their public image for the jargon's social-psychological effect, will never wear themselves from it. There are others who will be embarrassed by the jargon. Even followers who believe in authority will shy away from ridiculousness, as soon as they feel the fragile nature of the authority to which they look for support. The jargon is the historically appropriate form of untruth in the Germany of the last years. For this reason one can discover a truth in the determinate negation of the jargon, a truth which refuses to be formulated in positive terms. Parts of the first sections were originally published in the third issue of the *Neue Rundschau* in 1963, and have been incorporated into the text.

June, 1967

THE JARGON OF AUTHENTICITY

In the early twenties a number of people active in philosophy, sociology, and theology, planned a gathering. Most of them had shifted from one creed to another. Their common ground was an emphasis on a newly acquired religion, and not the religion itself. All of them were unsatisfied with the idealism which at that time still dominated the universities. Philosophy swayed them to choose through freedom and autonomy, a positive theology such as had already appeared in Kierkegaard. However, they were less interested in the specific doctrine, the truth content of revelation, than in conviction. To his slight annoyance, a friend, who was at that time attracted by this circle, was not invited. He was—they intimated—not authentic enough. For he hesitated before Kierkegaard's lead. He suspected that religion which is conjured up out of autonomous thinking would subordinate itself to the latter, and would negate itself as the absolute which, after all, in terms of its own conceptual nature, it wants to be. Those united together were anti-intellectual intellectuals. They confirmed their mutual understanding on a higher level by excluding one who did not pronounce the same credo that was repeated to one another. What they fought for on a spiritual and intellectual plane they marked down as their ethos, as if it elevated the inner rank of a person to follow the teaching of higher ideals; as though there were nothing written in the New Testament against the Pharisees. Even forty years later, a pensioned bishop walked out on the conference of a Protestant academy because a guest lecturer expressed doubt about the contemporary possibility of sacred music. He too had been warned against it and dispensed from, having dealings with people who do not toe the line; as though critical thought had no objective foundation but was a subjective deviation. People of his nature combine the tendency that Borchardt called a putting-themselves-in-the-right with the fear of reflecting their reflections—if they didn't completely believe in themselves. Today, as then, they sense the danger of losing again what they call the concrete—of losing it to that abstraction of which they are suspicious, an abstraction which cannot be eradicated from concepts. They consider concretion to be promised as a sacrifice, and first of all in intellectual sacrifice. Heretics baptized this circle “The Authentic Ones.”

This was long before the publication of *Sein und Zeit*. Throughout this work Heidegger employed “authenticity,” in the context of an existential ontology, as a specifically philosophical term. Thus in his philosophy he molded that which the authentics strive for less theoretically; and in that way he won over to his side all those who had some vague reaction to that philosophy. Through his philosophy denominational demands became dispensable. His book acquired its aura by describing the directions of the dark drives of the intelligentsia before 1933—directions which he described as full of insight and which he revealed to be solidly coercive. Of course in Heidegger, as in all those who followed him

language, a diminished theological resonance can be heard to this very day. The theological addiction of these years have seeped into the language, far beyond the circle of those who at that time set themselves up as the elite. Nevertheless, the sacred quality of the authentics' talk belongs to the cult of authenticity rather than to the Christian cult, even where—for temporary lack of any other available authority—its language resembles the Christian. Prior to any consideration of particular content, the language molds thought. As a consequence, that thought accommodates itself to the goal of subordination even where it aspires to resist that goal. The authority of the absolute is overthrown by absolutized authority. Fascism was not simply a conspiracy—although it was that—but it was something that came to life in the course of a powerful social development. Language provides it with a refuge. Within this refuge a smoldering evil expresses itself as though it were salvation.

In Germany a jargon of authenticity is spoken—even more so, written. Its language is a trademark of societalized chosenness, noble and homey at once—sublanguage as superior language. The jargon extends from philosophy and theology—not only of Protestant academies—to pedagogy, even in schools, and youth organizations, even to the elevated diction of the representatives of business and administration. While the jargon overflows with the pretense of deep human emotion, it is just as standardized as the world that it officially negates; the reason for this lies partly in its mass success and partly in the fact that it posits its message automatically, through its mere nature. Thus the jargon banishes the message from the experience which is to ensoul it. The jargon has at its disposal a modest number of words which are received as promptly as signals. “Authenticity” itself is not the most prominent of them. It is more an illumination of the ether in which the jargon flourishes, and the way of thinking which latently feeds it. For a beginning, terms like “existential,” “in the decision,” “commission,” “appeal,” “encounter,” “genuine dialogue,” “statement,” “concern,” will do for examples. Not a few nonterminological terms of similar cast could be added to this list. Some, like “concern,” a term still innocently used by Benjamin and verified in Grimm's dictionary, have only taken on such changed coloring since getting into this “field of tension”—a term that is also an appropriate example.

Thus the important thing is not the planning of an *Index Verborum Prohibitorum* of current noble nouns, but rather the examination of their linguistic function in the jargon. Certainly not all its words are noble nouns. At times it even picks up banal ones, holds them high and bronzes them in the fascist manner which wisely mixes plebeian with elitist elements. Neoromantic poets who drank their fill of the precious, like George Hofmannsthal, by no means wrote their prose in the jargon. However, many of their intermediaries—like Gundolf—did so. The words become terms of the jargon only through the constellation that they negate, through each one's gesture of uniqueness. The magic that the singular word has lost is procured for it by manipulations—of whatever kind. The transcendence of the single word is a secondary one, one that is delivered ready from the factory, a transcendence which is a changeling said to be the lost original. Elements of empirical language are manipulated in the rigidity, as if they were elements of a true and revealed language. The empirical usability of the sacred ceremonial words makes both the speaker and listener believe in their corporeal presence. The ether is mechanically sprayed, and atomistic words are dressed up without having been changed. Thus the words become more important than the jargon's so-called system. The jargon—objectively speaking, the system—uses disorganization as its principle of organization, the breakdown of language into words in themselves. Many of them, in another linguistic constellation, can be used without a glance at the jargon: “statement,” where it is used in its fullest sense, in epistemology, to designate the sense of predicative judgments; “authentic”—already to be used with caution—even in an adjectival sense, where the essential is distinguished from the accidental; “inauthentic,” where something broken is implied, an expression which is not immediately appropriate to what is expressed; “radio broadcast” of traditional music, music conceived in the categories of live performance, are grounded by the feeling of *as if*, of the inauthentic.”¹ “Inauthentic” in that way becomes a “critical” term, in defini-

negation of something merely phenomenal. However, the jargon extracts authenticity, or its opposite, from every such transparent context. Of course one would never criticize a firm for using the word *Auftrag* (commission), when it has been assigned a commission. But possibilities of that sort remain narrow and abstract. Whoever overstrains them is paying tribute to a blank nominalistic theory of language, in which words are interchangeable counters, untouched by history.

Yet history does intrude on every word and withholds each word from the recovery of some alleged original meaning, that meaning which the jargon is always trying to track down. What is or is not the jargon is determined by whether the word is written in an intonation which places it transcendently in opposition to its own meaning; by whether the individual words are loaded at the expense of the sentence, its propositional force, and the thought content. In that sense the character of the jargon would be quite formal: it sees to it that what it wants is on the whole felt and accepted through its mere delivery, without regard to the content of the words used. It takes under its own control the preconceptual, mimetic element in language—for the sake of effect connotations. “Statement” thus wants to make believe that the existence of the speaker has communicated itself simultaneously with his subject matter and has given the latter its dignity. The jargon makes it seem that without the surplus of the speaker the speech would already be inauthentic, that the pure attention of the expression to the subject matter would be a fall into sin. This formal element favors demagogic ends. Whoever is versed in the jargon does not have to say what he thinks, does not even have to think properly. The jargon takes over this task and devaluates thought. That the whole man should speak authentically, comes from the core. Thus something occurs which the jargon itself stylizes as “to occur.” Communication clicks and puts forth as truth what should instead be suspect by virtue of the promise of a collective agreement. The tone of the jargon has something in it of the seriousness of the augur, arbitrarily independent from their context or conceptual content, conspiring with whatever is sacred.

The fact that the words of the jargon sound as if they said something higher than what they mean suggests the term “aura.” It is hardly an accident that Benjamin introduced the term at the same moment when, according to his own theory, what he understood by “aura” became impossible to experience.³ As words that are sacred without sacred content, as frozen emanations, the terms of the jargon of authenticity are products of the disintegration of the aura. The latter pairs itself with an attitude of not being bound and thus becomes available in the midst of the demythified world; or, as it might be put in paramilitary modern German, it becomes *einsatzbereit*, mobilized. The perpetual charge against reification, a charge which the jargon represents, is itself reified. It falls under Richard Wagner's definition of a theatrical effect as the result of an action without agent, a definition which was directed against bad art. Those who have run out of holy spirit speak with mechanical tongue. The secret which is suggested, and from the beginning is not there, is a public one. First one can subtract the misused Dostoevski from the expressionist formula “each man is selected,” which can be found in a play by Paul Kornfeld—who was murdered by the Nazis. Then the formula is good only for the ideological self-satisfaction of a lower middle class which is threatened and humbled by societal development. The jargon derives its own blessing, that of primalness, from the fact that it has developed as little in actuality as in spirit. Nietzsche did not live long enough to grow sick at his stomach over the jargon of authenticity: in the twentieth century he is the German resentment phenomenon par excellence. Nietzsche's “something stinks” would find its first justification in the strange bathing ceremony of the hale life:

Sunday really begins on Saturday evening. When the tradesman straightens his shop, when the housewife has put the whole house into clean and shining condition, and has even swept the street in front of the house and freed it from all the dirt which it has collected during the week; when finally, even the children are bathed; then the adults wash off the week's dust, scrub themselves

thoroughly; and go to the fresh clothes which are lying ready for them: when all of that is arranged with rural lengthiness and care, then a deep warm feeling of resting settles down over the people.⁴

Expressions and situations, drawn from a no longer existent daily life, are forever being blown up as they were empowered and guaranteed by some absolute which is kept silent out of reverence. While those who know better hesitate to appeal to revelation, they arrange, in their addiction to authority, for the ascension of the word beyond the realm of the actual, conditioned, and contestable; while the same people, even in private, express the word as though a blessing from above were directly composed into that word. That supreme state which has to be thought, but which also refuses being thought, is mutilated by the jargon. The latter acts as if it had possessed this state “from the beginning of time,” as it might run in the jargon. What philosophy aims at, the peculiar character of philosophy which makes representation essential to it, causes all its words to say more than each single one. This characteristic is exploited by the jargon. The transcendence of truth beyond the meanings of individual words and propositional statements is attributed to the words by the jargon, as their immutable possession, whereas this “more” is formed only by the mediation of the constellation. According to this ideal, philosophical language goes beyond what it says by means of what it says in the development of a train of thought. Philosophical language transcends dialectically in that the contradiction between truth and thought becomes self-conscious and thus overcomes itself. The jargon takes over this transcendence destructively and consigns it to its own chatter. Whatever more of meaning there is in the words than what they say has been secured for them once and for all as expression. The dialectic is broken off: the dialectic between word and thing as well as the dialectic, within language, between the individual words and their relations. Without judgment, without having been thought, the word is left to leave its meaning behind. This is to institute the reality of the “more.” It is to scoff, without reason, at that mystical language speculation which the jargon, proud of its simplicity, is careful not to remember. The jargon obliterates the difference between this “more” for which language gropes, and the in-itself of this more. Hypocrisy thus becomes an a priori, and everyday language is spoken here and now as if it were the sacred one. A profane language could only approach the sacred one by distancing itself from the sound of the holy, instead of by trying to imitate it. The jargon transgresses this rule blasphemously. When it dresses empirical words with aura, it exaggerates general concepts and ideas of philosophy—as for instance the concept of being—so grossly that their conceptual essence, the mediation through the thinking subject, disappears completely under the varnish. These terms lure us on as if they were the most concrete terms. Transcendence and concretization scintillate. Ambiguity is the medium of an attitude toward language which is damned by its favorite philosophy.⁵

But the untruth indicts itself by becoming bombastic. After a long separation a certain person wrote that he was existentially secure; it took some reflection to realize that he meant he had been sufficiently taken care of in regard to his finances. A center intended for international discussions—whatever they may be good for—is called the House of Encounters; the visible house, “firmly grounded in the earth,” is turned into a sacred house through those gatherings—which are meant to be superior to discussions because they occur among existing and living individuals, although the individuals might just as well be engaged in discussion, for as long as they do not commit suicide they could hardly do anything other than exist. One's relation to his fellow man should be important prior to all content; for that purpose the jargon is satisfied with the shabby group-ethos of the youth movement, an indication that nothing is reaching either beyond the nose of the speaker, or beyond the capacity of the person who has only lately begun to be called his “partner.” The jargon channels engagement into firm institutions and, furthermore, strengthens the most subaltern speakers in their self-esteem; they are already something because someone speaks from within them, even when the

someone is nothing at all. The resonant directive of the jargon, that its thought should not be too strenuous, because otherwise it would offend the community, also becomes for these people the guarantee of a higher confirmation. This suppresses the fact that the language itself—through its generality and objectivity—already negates the whole man, the particular speaking individual subject. The first price exacted by language is the essence of the individual. But through the appearance that the whole man, and not thought, speaks, the jargon pretends that, as a close-at-hand manner of communication, it is invulnerable to dehumanized mass communication—which is precisely what recommends it to everyone's enthusiastic acceptance. Whoever stands behind his words, in the way in which these words pretend, is safe from any suspicion about what he is at that very moment about to do: speak for others in order to palm something off on them.

The word “statement” finally secures its alibi when “true” is connected to it. By means of its prestige it wants to endow the “for others” with the solidity of the in-itself. For glorified man, who himself not too long ago invented the term “death and glory squad,” is the ground of being for the jargon as well as the addressee of the statement; and it has become impossible to distinguish between the two. The attribute “valid” often sticks to “statement.” The reason for this obviously lies in the fact that the emphatic experience, which the word claims insistently, is no longer experienced by those who favor this word for the claim it makes. A loudspeaker becomes necessary. “Statement” wants to announce that something which was said has come from the depth of the speaking subject; it is removed from the curse of surface communication. But at the same time communicative disorder disguises itself in the statement. Someone speaks and, thanks to the elevated term “statement,” what he says is to be the sign of truth—as if men could not become caught up in untruth, as if they could not suffer martyrdom for plain nonsense. Prior to all content this shift indicts statement as soon as it wants to be such; it charges statement with being a lie. The listener is supposed to gain something from the statement because of its subjective reliability. This latter attribute, however, is borrowed from the world of wares. It is the claim of the consumer that even the spiritual should direct itself according to his will, against its own conceptual nature.

This admonition to the spirit silently dominates the whole climate of the jargon. The real and vain need for help is supposed to be satisfied by the pure spirit, merely by means of consolation and without action. The empty chatter about expression is the ideology complementary to that silencing which the status quo imposes on those who have no power over it, and whose claim is therefore hollow in advance. But whatever turns its back critically on the status quo has been discounted, by German in solid positions, as “without expressive value.” Not least of all, statement is used as the club with which to assail the new art. That art's recalcitrance against traditional communicable sense has been reproached—as though from a higher viewpoint—by those whose aesthetic consciousness is not up to it. If one adds to a statement that it is “valid,” then whatever at a given moment holds good, whatever is officially stamped, can be imputed to it as metaphysically authorized. The formula spares people the trouble of thinking about the metaphysics which it has dragged with it, or about the content of what has been stated.

The concept of statement appears in Heidegger as nothing less than the constituent of the *Dasein* existence.⁶ Behind this jargon is a determining doctrine of the I-thou relationship as the locale of truth—a doctrine that defames the objectivity of truth as thingly, and secretly warms up irrationalism. As such a relationship, communication turns into that transpsychological element which it can only be by virtue of the objectivity of what is communicated; in the end stupidity becomes the founder of metaphysics. Ever since Martin Buber split off Kierkegaard's view of the existential from Kierkegaard's Christology, and dressed it up as a universal posture, there has been a dominant inclination to conceive of metaphysical content as bound to the so-called relation of I and thou. The content is referred to the immediacy of life. Theology is tied to the determinations of immanence.

which in turn want to claim a larger meaning, by means of their suggestion of theology: they already virtually like the words of the jargon. In this process, nothing less is whisked away than the threshold between the natural and the supernatural. Lesser authentics raise their eyes reverently before death, but their spiritual attitude, infatuated with the living, disregards death. The thorn in theology without which salvation is unthinkable, is removed. According to the concept of theology, nothing natural has gone through death without metamorphosis. In the man-to-man relationship there can be no eternity now and here, and certainly not in the relationship of man to God, a relationship that seems to pat Him on the shoulder. Buber's style of existentialism draws its transcendence, in a reverse *analogia entis*, out of the fact that spontaneous relationships among persons cannot be reduced to objective poles. This existentialism remains the *Lebensphilosophie* out of which it came, without its philosophical history, and which it abnegated: it overelevates the dynamism of mortality into the sphere of immortality.

Thus in the jargon transcendence is finally brought closer to men: it is the Wurlitzer organ of the spirit. The sermon in Huxley's *Brave New World* must have been written in the jargon. It was taped in order to be played when needed: to bring to reason the rebellious masses—by deep programmed emotion—in case they should once more band together. For advertising purposes the Wurlitzer organ humanizes the vibrato, once a carrier of subjective expression, by mechanically superimposing it on the mechanically produced sound. The jargon likewise supplies men with patterns for being human, patterns which have been driven out of them by unfree labor, if ever in fact traces of free labor do exist. Heidegger instituted authenticity against the they and against small talk, without deluding himself that there could be a complete leap between the two types of existentials that he deals with, for he knew that they merge into each other precisely because of their own dynamism. But he did not foresee that what he named authentic, once become word, would grow toward the same exchange society anonymity against which *Sein und Zeit* rebelled. The jargon, which in Heidegger's phenomenology of small talk earned an honored position, marks the adept, in their own opinion, as untrivial and of higher sensibility; while at the same time that jargon calms the constantly festering suspicion of uprootedness.

In professional groups which, as they say, carry on intellectual work, but which are at the same time employed, dependent, or economically weak, the jargon is a professional illness. Among such groups a specific function is added to a general social one. Their culture and consciousness limp far behind the spirit which according to society's division of labor is their realm of activity. Through their jargon they aspire to remove this distance, to put themselves forward as sharers in higher culture (to them or hats still sound modern) as well as individuals with an essence of their own; the more innocent among them may quite frankly still call all that a *personal note*—using an expression from the era of handicrafts, from which the jargon in question has borrowed a lot. The stereotypes of the jargon support and reassure subjective movement. They seem to guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he is doing—bleating with the crowd—simply by virtue of his using those stereotypes to guarantee that one has achieved it all himself, as an unmistakably free person. The formal gesture of autonomy replaces the content of autonomy. Bombastically, it is called commitment, but it is heteronomous and borrowed. That which pseudo-individualizing attends to in the culture industry, the jargon attends to among those who have contempt for the culture industry. This is the German symptom of progressive half-culture. It seems to be invented for those who feel that they have been judged by history, or at least that they are falling, but who still strut in front of their peers as if they were an interior elite.

The importance of this jargon is not to be underestimated simply because a small group writes it. Innumerable real-life people speak it, from the student who in his exam lets himself go on about an authentic encounter, to the bishop's press secretary who asks: Do you believe that God addresses our reason? Their unmediated language they receive from a distributor. In the theologic

conversations of Dr. Faustus's students, in Auerbach's den of 1945, Thomas Mann intuited with precise irony most of the habits of modern German—though he no longer had much occasion to observe them. There certainly were appropriate models before 1933, but only after the war, when National Socialist language became unwanted, did the jargon gain omnipresence. Since then the most intimate interchange has taken place between the written and the spoken word. Thus one will be able to read printed jargon which unmistakably imitates radio voices that have themselves drawn on written works of authenticity. Mediated and immediate elements are mediated through each other in frightful ways. And since they are synthetically prepared, that which is mediated has become the caricature of what is natural. The jargon no longer knows primary and secondary communities, and like the same token it knows no parties. This development has a real basis. The institutional and psychological superstructure, which in 1930 Kracauer diagnosed as a culture of employees, deluded the celluloid-collar proletariat, who were then threatened by the immediacy of losing their jobs. It deluded them into believing that they were something special. Through this delusion the superstructure made them toe the bourgeois line, while in the meantime, thanks to a lasting market boom, that superstructure has become the universal ideology of a society which mistakes itself for a unified middle class. They let themselves be confirmed in this attitude by a uniform mode of speech which eagerly welcomes the jargon for purposes of collective narcissism. This applies not only to those who speak it but also to the objective spirit. The jargon affirms the reliability of the universal by means of the distinction of having a bourgeois origin, a distinction which is itself authorized by the universal. Its tone of approved selectivity seems to come from the person himself. The greatest advantage in all this is that of good references. It makes no difference what the voice that resonates in this way says; it is signing a social contract. Awe, in face of that existent which pretends to be more than it is, beats down all that is unruly. One is given to understand that that which occurs is so decided that language could not unhallow what has been said by saying it. Pure clean hands recoil from the thought of changing anything in the valid property-and-authority relationships; the very sound of it makes that idea contemptible, as the merely ontic is to Heidegger. One can trust anyone who babbles in this jargon; people wear it in their buttonholes, in place of the currently disreputable party badge. The pure tone drips with positivity, without needing to stoop too far—pleading for what is all too compromised; one escapes even the long-since-socialized suspicion of ideology. In the jargon the division between the destructive and the constructive, with which fascism had cut off critical thought comfortably hibernates. Simply to be there becomes the merit of a thing. It is guaranteed in the protection of the double sense of the positive: as something existent, given, and as something worthy of being affirmed. Positive and negative are reified prior to living experience, as though they were valid prior to all living experience of them; as though it was not thought that first of all determine what is positive or negative; and as though the course of such determination were not itself the course of negation.

The jargon secularizes the German readiness to view men's positive relation to religion as something immediately positive, even when the religion has disintegrated and been exposed as something untrue. The undiminished irrationality of rational society encourages people to elevate religion into an end in itself, without regard to its content: to view religion as a mere attitude, as a quality of subjectivity. All this at the cost of religion itself. One needs only to be a believer—no matter what he believes in. Such irrationality has the same function as putty. The jargon of authenticity inherits it, in the childish manner of Latin primers which praise the love of the fatherland in-itself—which praise the *virī patriae amantes*, even when the fatherland in question covers up the most atrocious deeds. Sonnemann has described this phenomenon as not being able to get rid of a benevolent attitude which at all costs defends order, even an order in which all these things are not in order. What things? According to the logic of the sentence they ought only to be accidentals, but

instead they are strikingly essential: “poisonous exhaust emissions, pressing taboos, insincerity, resentments, hidden hysteria on all sides.” What remains then of the orderliness of the order? Obviously, it needs first to be created.⁷ Benevolence is identical with being predecided. What is affirmative and wholesome doubles the curse of evil. Through marriage offers, the jargon guides the *petit bourgeois* to a positive attitude toward life. It fastidiously prolongs the innumerable evenings which are to make attractive to men a life by which they otherwise would be disgusted—and which they would soon come to consider unbearable. That religion has shifted into the subject, has become religiosity, follows the trend of history. Dead cells of religiosity in the midst of the secular, however, become poisonous. The ancient force, which according to Nietzsche's insight nourishes everything, should enter completely into the profane; instead it preserves itself in an unreflected manner and elevates limitation, which abhors reflection, to the level of virtue.

All experts in the jargon, from Jaspers on down, unite in praise of positivity. Only the careful Heidegger avoids a too open-hearted affirmation for its own sake, and indirectly pays his dues. He is eager and genuine about it. But Jaspers writes, unashamedly: “Actually only that man can remain in the world who lives out from something which in every case he possesses only through commitment.”⁸ To which he adds: “Only the person who commits himself freely is proof against disillusioned revolt against himself.”⁹ It is true that his philosophy of existence has chosen, as its patron saint, Max Weber, who stood up proudly without illusions. Nevertheless, he is interested in religion, no matter of what kind. He is interested in it provided it is ready at hand, because it guarantees the required commitment; or simply because it exists, whether or not it fits with the notion of independent philosophy, which Jaspers reserves for himself as if it were a personal privilege:

Whoever is true to transcendence in the form of such a belief should never be attacked, so long as he does not become intolerant. For in the believing person only destruction can take place; he can perhaps remain open to philosophizing, and risk the corresponding burden of a doubting, which is inseparable from human existence; yet he has the positivity of an historical existence as his reference and measure, which bring him irreplaceably back to himself. About these possibilities we do not speak.¹⁰

When autonomous thought still had confidence in its humane realization, it behaved less humanely. In the meantime, the less philosophers are infected with philosophy the more innocently do they let the cat out of the bag; a bag which prominent ones weave like Norns. Sentences from O. F. Bollnow sound like this:

Therefore it seems especially meaningful that in poetry, above all in the lyric of the last years, after all the experiences of dread, a new feeling, of affirmation of being, is beginning to make its appearance, a joyful and thankful harmony with the very existence of man, as it is; a harmony with the world as it confronts man. Two of these poets in particular should receive special attention here: Rilke and Bergengruen. Bergengruen's last volume of poetry *Die Heile Welt* (Munich, 1950) p. 272, closes with the confession: “What came from pain was only transient. And my ear heard nothing but songs of praise.” In other words, it is a feeling of thankful agreement with existence. And Bergengruen certainly is not a poet who could be criticized for a cheap optimism. In this feeling of deep thankfulness he comes close to Rilke, who also, at the close of his way, is able to state: “Everything breathes and returns thanks. Oh you troubles of the night, how you sank without a trace.”¹¹

Bergengruen's volume is only a few years closer to us than the time when Jews who had not been

completely killed by the gas were thrown living into the fire, where they regained consciousness and screamed. The poet, who can certainly not be criticized for cheap optimism, and the philosophical minded pedagogue who evaluates him, heard nothing but songs of praise. In a preliminary definition we call this inner state of man an attitude of trustful reliance. Thus the task is set: to examine the nature of this state of the soul in order to find its possibilities.¹² Bollnow found the best of all possible names for this task, which in the face of horror can no longer even appease us by virtue of its ridiculousness—he called it *Seinsgläubigkeit*, faith unto Being.¹³ The fact that the term reminds us of *Deutschgläubigkeit*, faith unto German nationality, is certainly accidental. Once faith unto Being is achieved, there is no stopping before we reach a “positive relation to the world and life”¹⁴ and “constructive work toward the overcoming of existentialism.”¹⁵ What remains after the removal of existential bombast are religious customs cut off from their religious content. There is no recognition of the fact that cult forms, the subject matter of folklore, like empty shells, outlive their mystery. The state of affairs is in fact defended with the aid of the jargon. All of this is an insult not only to thought but also to religion, which was once man's promise of eternal bliss, while now authenticity content itself resignedly with an “ultimately hale world.”¹⁶ “In the following we can distinguish these two forms—for the sake of a convenient terminology—as hope which has a determined content and hope which has an undetermined content; or, briefly, as relative and absolute hope.”¹⁷ This pitiful concept of splitting applies itself to the question of “existence welfare.” It makes no difference to a follower what he attaches himself at a given moment. He praises this as his capacity for enthusiasm. Whether such a man ranks himself as lowbrow, middlebrow, or highbrow, he can consider that “hale” refers to the haleness of the soul, or right living, or social enclaves not yet taken over by industrialism, or simply places where Nietzsche and the Enlightenment have not yet been heard of; or chaste conditions in which girls hold their maidenhood intact until they get married. We should not oppose to the catchword of “shelteredness,” the equally worn-out idea of the dangerous life; who wouldn't want to live without anxiety in this world of terrors? But shelteredness, as an existential value, turns from something longed for and denied into a presence which is now and here, and which is independent of what prevents it from being. It leaves its trace in the violation of the word: the reminiscence of what hedged-in and safely bordered remains joined to that element of short-sighted particularity which of itself renews the evil against which no one is sheltered. Home will only come to be when it has freed itself from such particularity, when home has negated itself as universal. The feeling of shelteredness makes itself at home with itself, and offers a holiday resort in place of life. A landscape becomes uglier when an admirer disrupts it with the words “how beautiful.” The same happens with customs, habits, institutions which barter themselves away by stressing their own naïveté instead of changing it. All talk of shelteredness is indicted by Kogon's report that the worst atrocities in the concentration camps were committed by the younger sons of farmers. The general situation in the country, which is the model for the feeling of shelteredness, pushes disinherited sons into barbarousness. The logic of the jargon constantly smuggles in what is limited, finally even situations of material want, under the guise of positivity; and presses for their being eternally instituted at just that moment when, thanks to the state of human achievements, such a limitation no longer needs reality to exist. A spirit which makes this limitation its cause hires itself out as the lackey of what is evil.

In the higher ranks of the hierarchy of authenticity, however, negativities are also served. Heidegger even requisitions the concept of destruction which is tabooed in the lower ranks, together with the blackness of fear, sorrow, and death. Jaspers occasionally blares out the opposite of Bollnow's *Geborgenheit*, shelteredness: “Today philosophy is the only possibility for one who is conscious of being unsheltered.”¹⁸ But the positive, like a tumbler doll, cannot be kept down. Danger, hazard, riskin

one's life, and the whole characteristic shudder, are not taken all that seriously. One of the U authentic ones in her time remarked that in the innermost core of Dostoyevsky's hell the light of salvation shone again. She had to swallow the reply that hell was then an awfully short railroad tunnel. Some prominent authentic ones—a little reluctantly—put it like the parish preacher; they say they would rather harvest on burned earth. They are no less clever than social psychology, which has observed that negative judgments, of no matter what content, give a better chance of being affirmed than do positive judgments.¹⁹ Nihilism turns into farce, into mere method, as has already happened with Cartesian doubt. The question—a favorite prerequisite of the jargon—must sound all the more radical the more loyally it directs itself to the kind of answer which can be everything except radical. Here is an elementary example from Jaspers:

Existential philosophy would be lost immediately, if it once again believed that it knows what man is. It would again give us sketches of how to investigate human and animal life in its typical forms; it would again become anthropology, psychology, sociology. Its meaning is only possible when it remains groundless in its concreteness. It awakens what it does not know; it lightens and moves but it does not fix and hold. For the man who is underway, this philosophy is the expression through which he maintains himself in his direction; the means toward preserving his highest moments—so that he can make them real through his life.... Insight into existence, because it remains without an object, leads to no conclusion.²⁰

Exactly. A concerned tone is ominously struck up: no answer would be serious enough; even an answer, no matter of what content, would be dismissed as a limiting concretization. But the effect of this remorseless intransigence is friendly; the man never pins himself down: the world is all too dynamic. The old Protestant theme of absurd belief, grounding itself in the subject, converted itself from Lessing to Kierkegaard into the pathos of existence. This pathos existed in opposition to its result, the reified world seen as coagulated and alien to the subject. That old theme allies itself strategically with the critique of positive science—science from which, as Kierkegaard's thesis ran, the subject has disappeared. At the cost of any possible answer, the radical question becomes what is substantial unto itself. Risk without hazard. Know-how and range of income are the only factors which determine whether one appears on the scene sheltered or has to start out without security. Even those who are not sheltered are safe as long as they join the chorus. This is what makes possible passages like the one from Heinz Schwitzke's *Three Fundamental Theses for Television*:

This is totally different in the sermon. Here a clerical speaker professed his credo for more than ten minutes, out of his own depths, in the existential manner; a single, never-changing close-up. Thanks to the noble humane power of conviction that radiated out from him, not only did his words, which were testified to by his pictorial presence, become completely credible, but the listener totally forgot the mediating apparatus. In front of the television screen, as if in the house of God, there formed itself a sort of parish among the accidental viewers, who felt as if they were being confronted with the immediate presence of the speaker, and through him felt committed to the subject matter of his sermon, God's word. There is no other explanation for this surprising occurrence than the supreme importance of the speaking person, the person who has enough courage and ethos to place himself in the breach, and to serve nothing but the subject matter which he stands for and the listeners to whom he knows he can relate.²¹

This is authenticity's funky commercial. The “word” of the preacher, as if his and God's were one without question, is testified to not by his “pictorial presence,” but at best by behavior who

trustworthiness supports the credibility of his statements.

If, thanks to the appearance of the preacher, one forgets the mediating equipment, then the jargon of authenticity, which takes pleasure in this situation, is committing itself to the philosophy of As I am through stage-setting, the now and here of a cult action is simulated, an action which through its omnipresence is annulled on television. But, by the existential manner in which the preacher makes public profession of himself, from out of himself, "in a never changing close-up," we need only understand the self-evident fact that the preacher, who after all had no other choice, was projected as an empirical person onto the screen and in this way, perhaps, had a sympathetic effect on many people. That he formed a community cannot be proven. The notion that he had to throw himself into the breach, with his whole substance and existence, is imported from the sphere of risk. Still, for the preacher who details on television why the church is too narrow for him there is no risk at all: neither of contradiction from outside nor of inner necessity. If in fact, hemmed in between microphone and floodlight, he had to suffer through moments of temptation, the jargon would have been right there waiting with additional praise for his existentiality. The benefit of the negative is transferred to the positive, as though by a single stroke of the pen: positive negativeness to warm the heart. These daily words are numinous, just like Boll-now's whitewashed Sunday words—as close to rejoicing as the dreadful trumpet has always been. Just as the jargon uses the double sense of the word "positive," it uses the ambiguity of the term "metaphysics," according to whether at a given moment one prefers nothingness or being. On the one hand metaphysics means involvement with metaphysical themes even if the metaphysical content is contested; on the other hand it means the affirmative doctrine of the transcendent world, in the Platonic model. In this shifting metaphysical need, that state of the spirit which long ago made itself known in Novalis' *On Christendom or Europe*, or which the young Lukács called transcendental homelessness, has come down to culturally defined knowledge. The theological freeing of the numinous from ossified dogma has, ever since Kierkegaard, involuntarily come to mean its partial secularization. In mystical heresy, the unsatisfiable purification of the divine from myth, which loves to tremble in the gesture of deeply involved questioning, hands the divine over to whoever relates to it in any way. Liberal theology is suddenly reborn, since content is to be found only in a relation, the other pole of which removes itself from all definition as the "absolute indifferent," and marks all definition with the blemish of reification. Complete demythologization totally reduces transcendence to an abstraction, to a concept. Enlightenment, which the *viri obscuri* accuse, triumphs in their thought. In the same movement of the spirit, however, the positing power of the subject, veiled unto itself, again conjures up the myth inherent in all dialectical theology. The subjective power's highest value, as absolutely different, is blind. Under compulsion the *viri obscuri* praise commitments instead of jumping into speculation which alone could justify their own commitments to their radical questioners. Their relationship to speculation is confused. One needs it because one wants to be deep, yet one shies away from it because of its intellectual nature. One would prefer to reserve it for the gurus. The others still confess their groundlessness, in order to give character to the paths of offered salvation, which are reputed to be successful in extreme even in imaginary danger. However, they find nothing but groundless thinking as soon as thinking refuses through its attitude, to support from the outset those commitments which are as unavoidable in authenticity as is the happy ending in movies. If the happy ending is lacking, then among the existential authentics existentialism itself has nothing to laugh at.

Only against this background does the whole greatness of the existential ethic reveal itself. It once again actualizes, on the ground of modern historical relativism, a decidedly moral stance. But precisely that sense a danger is given; that danger which comes to expression in the possibility of an existential adventurism. Having become fully unconditioned in regard to content, and witho

any of that constancy which resides in fidelity, the adventurer enjoys the risk of his engagement : a last and most sublime pleasure. Precisely in the unconditioned state of any given momenta engagement, the existentialist is especially exposed to the temptation of inconstancy and faithlessness.²³

All of these words draw from language, from which they are stolen, the aroma of the bodily unmetaphorical; but in the jargon they become quietly spiritualized. In that way they avoid the dangers of which they are constantly palavering. The more earnestly the jargon sanctifies its everyday world, as though in a mockery of Kierkegaard's insistence on the unity of the sublime and the pedestrian, the more sadly does the jargon mix up the literal with the figurative:

Heidegger's final remark aims at this fundamental meaning of residing for all human existence and in this remark he focuses on the "need for residences" as one of the great difficulties of our time: "The true need for residence," he says here, "consists not first of all in the absence of residences," although this need should by no means be taken lightly; but behind this need a deeper one is hidden, that man has lost his own nature and so cannot come to rest. "The true need for residence consists in the fact that mortals must first learn to reside." But to learn to reside means to grasp this necessity, that, in the face of what is threatening, man should make for himself a sheltering space and should settle into it with a trustful reliance. But, then, inversely, the possibility of this settling down is again connected in a menacing way with the availability of residences.²⁴

The Being of the sheltering space of shelteredness is simply derived from the necessity that man should "make for himself" such a space. The linguistic carelessness, in the unresisting mechanism of the jargon, admittedly lays shelteredness bare, as if out of compulsion; lays it bare as something that is merely posited. However, that which announces itself, in the game about the need for residences, is more serious than the pose of existential seriousness. It is the fear of unemployment, lurking in the hearts of citizens of countries of high capitalism. This is a fear which is administratively fought off, and therefore nailed to the platonic firmament of stars, a fear that remains even in the glorious times of full employment. Everyone knows that he could become expendable as technology develops, as long as production is only carried on for production's sake; so everyone senses that his job is a disguise for unemployment. It is a support that has arbitrarily and revocably pinched off something from the total societal product, for the purpose of maintaining the status quo.²⁵ He who has not been given a life ticket could in principle be sent away tomorrow. That migration of people could continue which the dictators already once before set in motion and channeled into Auschwitz. Angst, busily distinguished from innerworldly, empirical fear, need by no means be an existential value. Since it is historical, it appears in fact that those who are yoked into a society which is societalized, but contradictory to their deepest core, constantly feel threatened by what sustains them. They feel threatened without even being able in specific instances to concretize this threat from the whole of society. But in shelteredness the declassed person has his clumsy triumph—the declassed man who knows what he can get away with. On the one hand he has nothing to lose; on the other hand, the over-administrated world of today still respects the compromise structure of bourgeois society, to the extent that the society—in its own interest—stops short before the ultimate, the liquidation of its members, stops short because, in the massive plans of its industry, it has the means of delay at its disposal. So Jasper's "existence welfare" and social welfare—administrated grace—come into contact. On the social ground of the jargon's reinterpretation of complete negativity into what is positive, we suspect the coercive self-confidence of the uneasy consciousness. Even our cheap suffering from the loss

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