

intention is the forgetting of oneself in light and a desire for things, in the abnegation of charity and sacrifice — we can discern the return of the *there is*. The hypostasis, in participating in the *there is*, finds itself again to be a solitude, in the definitiveness of the bond with which the ego is chained to its self. The world and knowledge are not events by which the upsurge of existence in an ego, which wills to be absolutely master of being, absolutely behind it, is blunted. The *I* draws back from its object and from itself, but this liberation from itself appears as an infinite task. The *I* always has one foot caught in its own existence. Outside in face of everything, it is inside of itself, tied to itself. It is forever bound to the existence which it has taken up. This impossibility for the ego to not be a self constitutes the underlying tragic element in the ego, the fact that it is riveted to its own being.

The freedom of consciousness is not without conditions. In other words, the freedom which is accomplished in cognition does not free the mind from every fate. This freedom itself is a moment of a deeper drama which does not play itself out between a subject and objects — things or events — but between the mind and the fact of the *there is*, which it takes up. It is enacted in our perpetual birth.

The freedom of knowledge and intention is negative; it is non-engagement. But what is the meaning of non-engagement within the ontological adventure? It is the refusal of the definitive. The world offers me a time in which I traverse different instants, and, thanks to the evolution open to me, I am not at any moment definitive. Yet I always carry along my past whose every instant is definitive. But then there remains for me, in this world of light, where all is given but where everything is distance, the power of not taking anything or of acting as though I had not taken anything. The world of intentions and desires is the possibility of just such a freedom. But this freedom does not save me from the definitive character of my very existence, from the fact that I am forever stuck with myself. And this definitive element is my solitude.

The world and light are solitude. These given objects, these clothed beings are something other than myself, but they are mine.

Illuminated by light, they have meaning, and thus are as though they came from me. In the understood universe I am alone, that is, closed up in an existence that is definitively *one*.

Solitude is accursed not of itself, but by reason of its ontological significance as something definitive. Reaching the other is not something justified of itself; it is not a matter of shaking me out of my boredom. It is, on the ontological level, the event of the most radical breakup of the very categories of the ego, for it is for me to be somewhere else than my self; it is to be pardoned, to not be a definite existence. The relationship with the other is not to be conceived as a bond with another ego, nor as a comprehension of the other which makes his alterity disappear, nor as a communion with him around some third term.

It is not possible to grasp the alterity of the other, which is to shatter the definitiveness of the ego, in terms of any of the relationship which characterize light. Let us anticipate a moment, and say that the plane of *eros* allows us to see that the other par excellence is the feminine, through which a world behind the scenes prolongs the world. In Plato, Love, a child of need, retains the features of destitution. Its negativity is the simple "less" of need, and not the very movement unto alterity. Eros, when separated from the Platonic interpretation which completely fails to recognize the role of the feminine, can be the theme of a philosophy which, detached from the solitude of light, and consequently from phenomenology properly speaking, will concern us elsewhere. Phenomenological description, which by definition cannot leave the sphere of light, that is, man alone shut up in his solitude, anxiety and death as an end, whatever analyses of the relationship with the other, it may contribute, will not suffice. Qua phenomenology it remains within the world of light, the world of the solitary ego which has no relationship with the other qua other, for whom the other is another me, an *alter ego* known by sympathy, that is, by a return to oneself.

3. ON THE WAY TO TIME

We think — and this is the fundamental theme of conception of time which runs through these investigations — that time does

not convey the insufficiency of the relationship with Being which is effected in the present, but that it is called for to provide a remedy for the excess of the definitive contact which the instant effects. Duration, on another plane than that of being, but without destroying being, resolves the tragic involved in being. But, if the development of this theme goes beyond the limits which the present study has set for itself, we cannot hold back from sketching out, if only in a very summary way, the perspective in which the themes concerning the "I" and the "present," which we have just laid out, have their place.

Cognition and the Ego as a Substance

In the flow of consciousness which constitutes our life in the world the ego maintains itself as something identical across the changing multiplicity of becoming. Whatever be the traces which life imprints upon us by modifying our habits and our character, in constantly changing all the contents that form our being, something invariable remains. **The "I" remains there to tie the multicolored threads of our existence to one another.**

What does this identity signify? We are inclined to take it as the identity of a substance. The "I" would be an indestructible point, from which acts and thought emanate, without affecting it by their variations and their multiplicity. But can the multiplicity of accidents not fail to affect the identity of the substance? The relationship of the substance with the accidents are themselves so many modifications of that substance, such that the idea of substance is going to enter in an infinite regression. It is there that the concept of knowing makes it possible to maintain the identity of substance under the variation of accidents. Knowing is a relation with what above all remains exterior, it is a relationship with what remains outside of all relationships, an action which maintains the agent outside of the events he brings about. The concept of knowing — a relationship and an action of a unique kind — makes it possible to fix the identity of the "I," to keep it enclosed in its secrecy. It maintains itself under the variations of the history which affects it as an object, without affecting it in its being. The "I" is then identical because it is consciousness. The substance par excellence is the subject. Know-

ledge is the secret of its freedom with respect to all that which happens to it. And its freedom guarantees its identity. It is thanks to the freedom of knowledge that the "I" can remain as a substance beneath the accidents of its history. The freedom of the "I" is its substantiality; it is but another word for the fact that a substance is not engaged in the variation of its accidents. Far from going beyond the substantialist conception of the ego, idealism promotes it in a radical form. **The I is not a substance endowed with thought; it is a substance because it is endowed with thought.**

The Ego as an Identification and as a Bond with Oneself

But the idealist interpretation of the identity of the "I" makes use of the logical idea of identity, detached from the ontological event of the identification of an existent. For identity is something that belongs not to the verb *to be*, but to that which is, to a noun which has detached itself from the anonymous rustling of the *there is*. Identification is in fact the very positing of an entity in the heart of the anonymous and all-invading being. One can then not define a subject by identity, since identity covers over the event of the identification of the subject.

This event is not brought about in thin air; we have shown that it is the work of taking position and the very function of the present, which in time (in terms of which it is habitually envisaged) is the negation or ignorance of time, a pure self-reference, a hypostasis. As a self-reference in a present, the identical subject is to be sure free with regard to the past and the future, but remains tributary of itself. The freedom of the present is not light like grace, but is a weight and a responsibility. It is articulated in a positive enchainment to one's self; the ego is irremissibly itself.

To take the relationship between the I and itself to constitute the fatality involved in a hypostasis is not to make a drama out of a tautology. Being me involves a bond with oneself, an impossibility of undoing oneself. To be sure, a subject creates a distance from itself, but this stepping back is not a liberation. It is as though one had given more slack rope to a prisoner without untying him.

The enchainment to oneself is the impossibility of getting rid of oneself. It is not only an enchainment to a character or to instincts, but a silent association with oneself in which a duality is discernible. To be an ego is not only to be for oneself; it is also to be with oneself. When Orestes says "Save me from myself each day!" or when Andromachus cries: "O captive, ever sad, wearisome to myself!" the relationship with oneself which these words speak of goes beyond metaphor. They do not express an opposition of two faculties in the soul, will and passion, or reason and feeling. Each of those faculties contains the ego completely. The whole theatre of Racine is in that. A character in Corneille is already master of himself and of the universe; he is a hero. His duality is overcome by the myth to which his character conforms: that of honor or virtue. The conflict is outside of him; he participates in it by the choice he will make. But in Racine the veil of myth is torn away, the hero is overwhelmed by himself. Therein lies what is tragic in him: a subject is on the basis of himself, and is already with or against himself. While being a freedom and a beginning, a subject is the bearer of a destiny which already dominates this very freedom. There will be nothing gratuitous in him. The solitude of a subject is more than the isolation of a being or the unity of an object. It is, as it were, a dual solitude: this other than me accompanies the ego like a shadow. It is the duality of boredom, which is something different from the social existence we know in the world, to which the ego turns in fleeing its boredom; it is also something different from the relationship with the other which detaches the ego from itself. This duality awakens the nostalgia for escape, but no unknown skies, no new land can satisfy it, for we bring ourselves along in our travels.

Time and the Concept of a Freedom

But for this burden and this weight to be possible as a burden, the present must also be the conception of a freedom — a conception, and not freedom itself. One cannot derive out of the experience of servitude the proof of its contrary, but the *thought* of freedom would suffice to account for it. Thought by itself lacks power over being — which shows how metaphorical the expression "act of thought" is. The concept or the hope of

freedom explains the despair which marks the engagement in existence in the present. It comes in the very scintillation of subjectivity which pulls back from its engagement without undoing it. And this is the concept of freedom, which is only a thought: a recourse to sleep, to unconsciousness, and not an escape, the illusory divorce of the *ego* from its *self* which will end in a resumption of existence in common. Here freedom does not presuppose a nothingness to which it casts itself; it is not, as in Heidegger, an event of *nihilation*; it is produced in the very "plenum" of being through the ontological situation of the subject. But as there is only a hope of freedom and not a freedom of engagement, this thought knocks on the closed doors of another dimension; it has a presentiment of a mode of existence where nothing is irrevocable, the contrary of the definitive subjectivity of the "I." And this is the order of time.

The distinction we have set up between liberation and the mere thought of liberation excludes any sort of dialectical deduction of time starting with the present. The hope for an order where the enchainment to oneself involved in the present would be broken still does not of itself have the force to effect what it hopes for. There is no dialectical exorcism contained in the fact that the "I" conceives of a freedom. It is not enough to conceive of hope to unleash a future.

The Time of Redemption and the Time of Justice

But in what sense does hope aim at time even though it cannot unleash it? As it is turned to the future, is it the expectation of fortunate events which can come to pass in the future? But the expectation of fortunate events is not of itself hope. An event can appear as possible by virtue of reasons positively perceivable in the present; in that case one expects an event with more or less certainty, and there is hope only to the extent that it is uncertain. What produces the thrust of hope is the gravity of the instant in which it occurs. The irreparable is its natural atmosphere. There is hope only when hope is no longer permissible. What is irreparable in the instant of hope is that that instant is a present. The future can bring consolation or compensation to a subject who suffers in the present, but the very suffering of the present

remains like a cry whose echo will resound forever in the eternity of spaces. At least it is so in the conception of time which fits our life in the world, and which we shall, for reasons we shall explain, call the time of economy.

For in the world time itself is given. The effort of the present lifts off the weight of the present. It bears in itself the echo of desire, and objects are given to it "for its trouble." They do not release the torsion of the instant upon itself; they compensate for it. The underlying exigencies of the trouble are nullified. The world is the possibility of wages. In the sincerity of intentions which excludes all equivocation, the ego is naive. It is disinterested in its definitive attachment to itself. **Time, in the world, dries all tears; it is the forgetting of the unforgiven instant and the pain for which nothing can compensate.** Everything caught up in the ego, all its anxieties for itself, the whole masquerade where its face never succeeds in stripping itself of its masks, lose their importance.

The alternation of effort with leisure, when we enjoy the fruit of efforts, makes up the time of the world. It is monotonous, for its instants are equivalent. It moves toward a Sunday, a pure leisure when the world is given. The Sunday does not sanctify the week, but compensates for it. The situation, or the engagement in existence, which is effort, is repressed, compensated for, and put to an end, instead of being repaired in its very present. Such is economic activity.

The economic world then includes not only our so-called material life, but also all the forms of our existence in which the exigency for salvation has been traded in, in which Esau has already sold his birthright. The world is the secular world, where the "I" accepts wages. Religious life itself, when it is understood in terms of the category of wages, is economic. Tools serve this yearning for objects as wages. They have nothing to do with ontology; they are subordinate to desire. They not only suppress disagreeable effort, but also the waiting time. In modern civilization they do not only extend the hand, so that it could get at what it does not get at of itself; they enable it to get at it more quickly, that is, they suppress in an action the time the action has to take on. Tools suppress the intermediary times; they contract duration.

Modern tools are machines, that is, systems, arrangements, fittings, coordinations: light fixtures, telephone lines, railroad and highway networks. The multiplicity of organs is the essential characteristic of machines. Machines sum up instants. They produce speed; they echo the impatience of desire.

But this compensating time is not enough for hope. For it is not enough that tears be wiped away or death avenged; no tear is to be lost, no death be without a resurrection. Hope then is not satisfied with a time composed of separate instants given to an ego that traverses them so as to gather in the following instant, as impersonal as the first one, the wages of its pain. The true object of hope is the Messiah, or salvation.

The caress of a consoler which softly comes in our pain does not promise the end of suffering, does not announce any compensation, and in its very contact, is not concerned with what is to come with *afterwards* in economic time; it concerns the very instant of physical pain, which is then no longer condemned to itself, is transported "elsewhere" by the movement of the caress, and is freed from the vice-grip of "oneself," finds "fresh air," a dimension and a future. Or rather, it announces more than a simple future, a future where the present will have the benefit of a recall. This effect of compassion, which we in fact all know, is usually posited as an initial datum of psychology, and other things are then explained from it. But in fact it is infinitely mysterious.

Pain cannot be redeemed. Just as the happiness of humanity does not justify the mystery of the individual, retribution in the future does not wipe away the pains of the present. There is no justice that could make reparations for it. One should have to return to that instant, or be able to resurrect it. To hope then is to hope for the reparation of the irreparable; it is to hope for the present. It is generally thought that this reparation is impossible in time, and that eternity alone, where instants distinct in time are indiscernable, is the locus of salvation. This recourse to eternity, which does not seem to us indispensable, does at any rate bear witness to the impossible exigency for salvation which must concern the very instant of pain, and not only compensate for it. Does not the essence of time consist in responding to that

exigency for salvation? Does not the analysis of economic time, exterior to the subject, cover over the essential structure of time by which the present is not only idemnified, but resurrected? Is not the future above all a resurrection of the present?

Time and the "I"

We believe that time is just that. What is called the "next instant" is an annulment of the unimpeachable commitment to existence made in the instant; it is the resurrection of the "I." We believe that the "I" does not enter identical and unforgiven — a mere avatar — into the following instant, where it would undergo a new experience whose newness will not free it from its bond with itself — but that its death in the empty interval will have been the condition for a new birth. The "elsewhere" which opens up to it will not only be a "change from its homeland" but an "elsewhere than in itself," which does not mean that it sank into the impersonal or the eternal. Time is not a succession of instants filing by before an I, but the response to the hope for the present, which in the present is the very expression of the "I," and is itself equivalent to the present. All the acuteness of hope in the midst of despair comes from the exigency that the very instant of despair be redeemed. To understand the mystery of the work of time, we should start with the hope for the present, taken as a primary fact. Hope hopes for the present itself. Its martyrdom does not slip into the past, leaving us with a right to wages. At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible.

There then is no question of denying the time of our concrete existence, constituted by a series of instants to which the "I" remains exterior. For such is the time of economic life, where the instants are equivalent, and the "I" circulates across them to link them up. There time is the renewal of the subject, but this renewal does not banish tedium; it does not free the ego from its shadow. We ask then whether the event of time cannot be lived more deeply as the resurrection of the irreplaceable instant. In place of the "I" that circulates in time, we posit the "I" as the very ferment of time in the present, the dynamism of time. This dynamism is not that of dialectical progression, nor that of ecstasy, nor that of duration, where the present encroaches upon

the future and consequently does not have between its being and its resurrection the indispensable interval of nothingness. The dynamism of the "I" resides in the very presence of the present, in the exigency which this presence implies. This exigency does not concern perseverance in being, nor, properly speaking, the impossible destruction of this presence, but the unravelling of the knot which is tied in it, the definitive, which its evanescence does not undo. It is an exigency for a recommencement of being, and a hope in each recommencement of its non-definitiveness. The "I" is not a being that, as a residue of a past instant, attempts a new instant. It is this exigency for the non-definitive. *The "personality" of a being is its very need for time as for a miraculous fecundity in the instant itself, by which it recommences as other.*

But it cannot endow itself with this alterity. The impossibility of constituting time dialectically is the impossibility of saving oneself by oneself and of saving oneself alone. The "I" is not independant of its present, cannot traverse time alone, and does not find its recompense in simply denying the present. *In situating what is tragic in the human in the definitiveness of the present, and in positing the function of the I as something inseparable from this tragic structure, we recognize that we are not going to find in the subject the means for its salvation. It can only come from elsewhere, while everything in the subject is here.*

Time and the Other

How indeed could time arises in a solitary subject? The *solitary subject cannot deny itself; it does not possess nothingness. If time is not the illusion of a movement, pawing the ground, then the absolute alterity of another instant cannot be found in the subject, who is definitively himself.* This alterity comes to me only from the other. Is not sociality something more than the source of our representation of time: is it not time itself? *If time is constituted by my relationship with the other, it is exterior to my instant, but it is also something else than an object given to contemplation.* The dialectic of time is the very dialectic of the relationship with the other, that is, a dialogue which in turn has to be studied in terms other than those of the dialectic of the solitary subject. The dialectic of the social relationship will

furnish us with a set of concepts of a new kind. And the nothingness necessary to time, which the subject cannot produce, comes from the social relationship.

Traditional philosophy, and Bergson and Heidegger too, remained with the conception of a time either taken to be purely exterior to the subject, a time-object, or taken to be entirely contained in the subject. But the subject in question was always a solitary subject. The ego all alone, the monad, already had a time. The renewal which time brings with it seemed to classical philosophy to be an event which it could account for by the monad, an event of negation. It is from the indetermination of nothingness, which the instant which negates itself at the approach of the new instant ends up in, that the subject was taken to draw its freedom. Classical philosophy left aside the freedom which consists not in negating oneself, but in having one's being pardoned by the very alterity of the other. It underestimated the alterity of the other in dialogue where the other frees us, because it believed there existed a silent dialogue of the soul with itself. In the end the problem of time is subordinate to the task of bringing out the specific terms with which dialogue has to be conceived.

With Another and Facing Another

The social relationship is not initially a relationship with what goes beyond the individual, something more than the sum of individuals, in the Durkheim's sense, higher than the individual. Neither the category of quantity nor even that of quality describes the alterity of the other, who does not simply have another quality than me, but as it were bears alterity as a quality. Still less does the social order consist in the imitation of the similar. In those two conceptions of sociability what one is looking for is an ideal of fusion. One thinks that my relationship with the other tends to identify me with him by immersing me in a collective representation, a common ideal or a common action. It is the collectivity which says "we" that feels the other to be alongside of oneself, and not facing one. And a collectivity is necessarily set up around a third term which serves as intermediary, which supplies what is common in the communion. Heidegger's *Mitein-*

andersein also remains a collectivity of the *with*, and it is *around* truth that its authentic form is found. It is a collectivity formed around something common. And like in all philosophies of communion, in Heidegger sociality is completely found in the solitary subject. The analysis of *Dasein*, in its authentic form, is carried out in terms of solitude.

To this collectivity of comrades we contrast the I-you collectivity which precedes it. It is not a participation in a third term — intermediate person, truth, dogma, work, profession, interest, dwelling, or meal; that is, it is not a communion. **It is the fearful face-to-face situation of a relationship without intermediary, without mediations.** Here the interpersonal situation is not the of itself indifferent and reciprocal relationship of two interchangeable terms. The other as other is not only an *alter ego*. He is what I am not: he is the weak one whereas I am the strong one; he is the poor one, "the widow and the orphan." There is no greater hypocrisy than that which invented well tempered charity. Or else the other is the stranger, the enemy and the powerful one. What is essential is that he has these qualities by virtue of his very alterity. Intersubjective space is initially asymmetrical. The exteriority of the other is not simply an effect of space, which keeps separate what conceptually is identical, nor is there some difference in the concepts which would manifest itself through spatial exteriority. It is precisely inasmuch as it is irreducible to these two notions of exteriority that social exteriority is an original form of exteriority and takes us beyond the categories of unity and multiplicity which are valid for things, that is, are valid in the world of an isolated subject, a solitary mind. Intersubjectivity is not simply the application of the category of multiplicity to the domain of the mind. It is brought about by Eros, where in the proximity of another the distance is wholly maintained, a distance whose pathos is made up of this proximity and this duality of beings. What is presented as the failure of communication in love in fact constitutes the positive character of the relationship; this absence of the other is precisely his presence qua other. The other is the neighbor — but proximity is not a degradation of, or a stage on the way to, fusion. In the reciprocity of relationships characteristics of civilization, the asymmetry of the intersubjective

relationship is forgotten. The reciprocity of civilization — the kingdom of ends where each one is both end and means, a person and personnel¹ — is a levelling of the idea of fraternity, which is an outcome and not a point of departure, and refers back to everything implicated in eros. For the intermediary of a father is required in order that we enter into fraternity, and in order that I be myself the poor one, the weak and pitiful. And in order to postulate a father, who is not simply a cause or a genus, the heterogeneity of the I and the other is required. This heterogeneity and this relationship between genders, on the basis of which society and time are to be understood, brings us to the material to which another work will be devoted. To the cosmos, the world of Plato, is opposed the world of the spirit, where the implications of eros are not reducible to the logic of genera, where the I is substituted for the *same* and the Other [*autrui*] for *the other*. The peculiar form of the contraries and contradictions of eros has escaped Heidegger, who in his lectures tends to present the difference between the sexes as a specification of a genus. It is in eros that transcendence can be conceived as something radical, which brings to the ego caught up in being, ineluctably returning to itself, something else than this return, can free it of its shadow. To simply say that the ego leaves itself is a contradiction, since, in quitting itself the ego carries itself along — if it does not sink into the impersonal. Asymmetrical intersubjectivity is the locus of transcendence in which the subject, while preserving its subject, has the possibility of not inevitably returning to itself, the possibility of being fecund and (to anticipate what we shall examine later) having a son.

¹ In Maurice Blanchot's *Aminadab*, the description of this situation of reciprocity is pushed to the point of the loss of personal identity.

CONCLUSION

To have a time and a history is to have a future and a past. We do not have a present; it slips between our fingers. Yet it is in the present that we are and can have a past and a future. This paradox of the present — all and nothing — is as old as human thought. Modern philosophy has tried to resolve it by asking if indeed it is in the present that we *are* — and in contesting this evidence. The original fact would be existence where past, present and future would be caught up at once, and where the present does not have the privilege of harboring this existence. The pure present would be an abstraction: the concrete present, pregnant with all its past, already leaps toward the future; it is before and after itself. **To take human existence as something having a date, placed in a present, would be to commit the gravest sin against the spirit, that of reification, and to cast it into the time of clocks made for the sun and for trains.**

The concern to avoid the reification of the spirit, to give it a place of its own in being independent of the categories that are valid for things, animates, all of modern philosophy from Descartes to Heidegger. But in this concern the present, with what it suggests of the static, was included in the dynamism of time, and defined by an interplay of past and future from which it could no longer be separated, so as to be examined apart. And yet human existence does contain a element of stability; it consists in being the *subject* of its own becoming. One can say that modern philosophy has been little by little led to sacrifice for the sake of the spirituality of the subject its very subjectivity, that is, its substantiality.

It is henceforth impossible to conceive of substance as the

persistance under the current of becoming of an invariable *substratum*. For then one could no longer understand the relationship between this *substratum* and becoming, a relationship which would affect its subsistence — unless that substance were situated outside of time, like a noumenon. But in that case time would cease to play an essential role in the economy of being.

How then are we to understand subjectivity without situating it outside of becoming? In returning to the fact that the instants of time do not take form out of an infinite series, in which they would appear, but that they can also be out of themselves. This way for an instant to be out of itself, to break with the past from which it comes, is the fact that it is present.

The present instant constitutes a subject which is posited both as the master of time and as involved in time. The present is the beginning of a *being*. The expressions which constantly recurred in this exposition, such as “the fact of . . .,” “the event of . . .,” “the effecting of . . .,” aim to convey this transmutation of a verb into a substantive, and to express beings at the instant of their hypostasis, in which while still in movement they are already substances. Such expressions are consonant with a general method of dealing with states as events. The true substantiality of a subject consists in its *substantivity*: in the fact that there is not only, anonymously, being in general, but there are beings capable of bearing names. An instant breaks the anonymity of being in general. It is the event in which, in the play of being which is enacted without players, there arise players in existence, existents having being as an attribute — an exceptional attribute, to be sure, but an attribute. In other words, the present is the very fact that there is an existent. The present introduces into existence the preeminence, the mastery and the very virility of the substantive. They are not what is suggested by the notion of freedom. Whatever be the obstacles existence presents to an existent and however powerless it may be, an existent is master of its existence, as a subject is master of its attribute. In an instant an existent dominates existence.

But the present is neither the point of departure nor the point of arrival of philosophical meditation. It is not the point of

arrival; it does not express an encounter between time and the absolute, but rather the constitution of an existent, the taking up of a position by a subject. It is capable of bearing a further dialectic which time would bring about, and it calls for that dialectic. For the engagement in being on the basis of the present, which breaks, and then ties back, the thread of infinity, contains a tension and a contracting. It is an event. The evanescence of an instant which makes it able to be a pure present, to not receive its being from a past, is not the gratuitous evanescence of a game or a dream. A subject is not free like the wind, but already has a destiny which it does not get from a past or a future, but from its present. If commitment in being thereby escapes the weight of the past (the only weight that was seen in existence), it involves a weight of its own which its evanescence does not lighten, and against which a solitary subject, who is constituted by the instant, is powerless. Time and the other are necessary for the liberation from it.

And the present is not the point of departure. This tension, this event of a position, this *stance* of an instant is not equivalent to the abstract position of the idealist ego, nor to the engagement in the world of Heidegger's *Dasein*, which always goes beyond the *hic et nunc*. It is the fact of putting oneself on the ground, in that inalienable *here* which is a base. It makes it possible to account for both the substantiality and the spirituality of a subject. In position, in the relationship which it effects with a place, in the *here*, we will find the event by which existence in general, anonymous and inexorable, opens to leave room for a private domain, an inwardness, the unconscious, sleep and oblivion, which consciousness, always wakefulness, recall and reflection, is back to back with. The event of an instant, substantivity, involves the possibility of existing at the threshold of a door behind which one can retire, and which modern thought has caught sight of behind consciousness. Consciousness is not just incomplete without its background of the unconscious, sleep and mystery. The very event of its being conscious consists in *being* by arranging for itself an escape hatch, in already drawing back as it were into those interstices in being where the Epicuran gods lurked, and in thus extracting itself from the fatality of anonymous existence. It

is a scintillating light, whose very flash consists in extinguishing itself, a light which at the same time is and is not.

In insisting on the notion of taking position, we are not opposing to the *cogito*, which is essentially a thought and a cognition, some will, feeling, or care which would be more fundamental than thought. On the contrary, we believe that the phenomena of light and clarity, and of freedom which is at one with them, dominate will and feeling. We think that feelings are constituted according to the "inside-outside" model and could be, to a degree rightly, taken by Descartes and Malebranche as "obscure thoughts," as "information" about the exterior which affects our body; and we think that the will in movement from the inside to the outside already presupposes the world and light. Feelings and will come after the *cogito*. It is in the perspective of the *cogito* that will and feeling have been considered from Descartes to Heidegger. One always looked for their object, the *cogitatum*; they were analyzed as acts of apprehension.

But behind the *cogito*, or rather in the fact that the *cogito* leads back to "a thinking thing," we discern a situation which precedes the scission of being into an "inside" and a "outside." Transcendence is not the fundamental movement of the ontological adventure; it is founded in the non-transcendence of position. The "obscurity" of feelings, far from being a mere negation of clarity, attests to that antecedent event.

The affirmation of the ego as a subject has led us to conceive of existence according to a different model from that of ecstasy. To take up existence is not to enter into the world. The question "what is it to exist?" truly distinguished from the question "how is the object which exists constituted?" — the ontological problem — arises before the scission of being into an inside and an outside. Inscription in being is not an inscription in the world. The way that leads from the subject to the object, from the ego to the world, from one instant to the next, does not pass through the position in which a being is placed in existence, and which is revealed in the disquietude which his own existence awakens in man, the strangeness of the hitherto so familiar fact that he is there, the so ineluctable, so habitual, but suddenly so incomprehensible necessity of taking up that existence. There lies the

true problem of man's destiny, which eludes all science and even all eschatology or theodicy. It does not consist in asking what are the "complications" which could happen to man, nor what are the acts conformable to his nature, nor even what is his place in reality. All these questions are already formulated in terms of the given cosmos of Greek rationalism, in the theater of the world, where there are places already to receive existents. The event which we have been inquiring after is antecedent to that placing. It concerns the meaning of the very fact that in Being there are beings.