

# The Historical Dimension of the Human Being

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*In the following pages I reproduce with some minor revisions the notes of a lecture I gave on January 31, 1974 at the Society of Studies and Publications in a course entitled "Three Dimensions of the Human Being: Individual, Social, and Historical." Most of the revisions are stylistic – they have to do with moving from an oral to a written style. But, in addition, the time constraint I faced at the time made me move with haste through certain parts, and, as a result, I was not able to adequately engage certain ideas which I still consider essential to the question at hand. I thought it would be best to treat these ideas here such as they appeared in my notes.*

## I. Introduction

In the previous lectures we dealt with two dimensions of the human being – that is of the *I*: namely, the individual and social dimensions.

In order to avoid misinterpretations I would like to restate – albeit laconically – the problem we are addressing here in these lectures. The course is entitled: "Three Dimensions of the Human Being: Individual, Social, and Historical." This, however, is not a course on individual, social, and historical realities. Our aim is much more limited: We are concerned here with the individual, the social, and the historical as dimensions of the human being.

Let us briefly summarize what we understand by reality, essence, and dimension.

a) The human being is a substantive reality, that is a closed and total system of psycho-organic constitutional notes. One of these notes is intelligence, that is the apprehension of everything and of oneself as reality. This is, as I see it, the formal essence of intelligence. Intelligence is formally and constitutively sentient: It primordially and radically apprehends the real by sensing the reality of the real. Due to this sentient intelligence the human being carries with all real things and with him/herself – not only because of what these are in themselves – but the human being carries with all things because they are real, and inasmuch as they are real: Indeed, the human being lives from reality. The human being is the *animal of realities*. Consequently, the human being's character of reality is a determining moment of his/her action: The human being really acts because s/he is his/her "own" reality. And from this "ownness" stems the mode of reality that is his/her own – namely being a person. As a form of reality, the animal of realities is a *personal animal*. Thus, one thing is clear: As its own, human reality is constituted as its own "vis-à-vis the totality of reality." And, in this sense, inasmuch as it is reality, human reality is "ab-solute," detached from all other reality qua reality. But this is so in a relative manner: the human being is relatively absolute.

b) Like all other reality human reality has what we call its being. Being, however, is not reality. Being rather is grounded in reality; and precisely for this reason we say that it is ulterior to reality: Indeed, being is a re-actualization of reality. Let me explain.

Being is first and foremost “actuality.” But actuality here is not the abstract of “act” in the Aristotelian sense, that is it is not an “act of” a potency, nor is it an act in the sense of being “fully” what one is. The abstract of *act* I call *actuity*. By contrast, *actuality* is the abstract, not of act, but of *actual*. When we say that something has actuality we are not using act as it is used by Aristotle; we are rather alluding to a certain physical presence of the real. Classical philosophy does not make this distinction. But, as I see it, this distinction is essential. I stated this in my first writings. Actuality is a moment of the real, but it is not a moment in the sense of being a physical note of the real. To acquire or lose actuality is not to acquire or lose real notes. Yet, actuality is nevertheless something that is “real” in the thing: it is the thing’s real becoming. The becoming of actuality is not the augmentation or loss of reality, it is not the becoming of actuity; but it is a real becoming. Actuality can at times be a merely extrinsic relation to the actual. Consider, for example, the actuality of a virus. The actuality of a virus is extrinsic to the viral reality, and as such it does not affect the virus but rather us for whom the virus has actuality. But reality can be an *intrinsic moment* of the real. This is precisely what we mean when we say that a human person “makes him-herself present.” Here actuality is not the actuality that a given person has for me, but it is rather a real moment of the person as such, it is something that concerns the person and not only me. Indeed, it is the person that from him/herself “makes him/herself” present. But let us go beyond the person; for this making him/herself present is not something a person has by virtue of being a person; it is something s/he has by virtue of being real. It would be more accurate to say that actuality is a making actual from itself – it is a being in actuality from itself. Actuality is thus something real. And it is precisely for this reason why I said that to acquire or lose intrinsic reality is not to acquire or lose real notes, but, nevertheless, it is a real becoming. It is a *sui generis*, but real becoming: It is the real that makes itself actual and acquires a being actual in itself and from itself. It is evident, moreover, that intrinsic reality can have distinct forms. But we are not going to address this question here. In short we could say that actuality is grounded in actuity, but it is not coextensive with actuity: Indeed, the same reality, that is the same actuity can have very distinct actualities. We are in need of a metaphysics of “actuality.” Such a metaphysics would be different than a metaphysics of the “act.”

The real is a “respective” actuity; and it is because of this that reality has its proper actuality. This respectivity has different aspects and dimensions. If we consider actuality according to these differences we can say that reality is “respectively actual.” But there is also a fundamental respectivity: The respectivity of the real “qua real.” This, as I see it, is precisely what constitutes the “world” as opposed to the “cosmos,” which is a respectivity of the real, not inasmuch as it is real, but inasmuch as it is this or that reality. According to this respectivity, the real is not only “respectively actual,” but it is actual in terms of the respectivity of reality as such. Indeed, the respectivity of the real is not “respectively actual” but actual *simpliciter*. Well then, the actuality of the real in the respectivity of the real as such – that is the reality of being in the world – is, as I see it, what constitutes what we call being. Being is that actuality *simpliciter* which consists in being in the world. And it is precisely for this reason that being is not only actuality but “re-actuality,” that is an actuality of what is already real and respectively actual. Being is

constitutively a “re” of actuality. Therefore, what is ultimate and most radical is reality and not being. Indeed, what we call being is always and only a secondary actuality of the real. Reality is not the primary and fundamental mode of being. As re-actuality, being reverts to the substantive reality and completely sustains it in its very substantivity: This actuality is thus substantive being. But substantive being is never primordial. Reality is always primordial. Substantive reality is always ulterior.

Well then, human reality also has its being; it also receives its actuality from the respectivity *simpliciter* of the real. But in the case of the human being this actuality has a special characteristic. When the human being acts fully as a person, that is when s/he acts with a sentient intelligence that takes charge of reality in order to be able to act, then, the personal act, I say, has a double aspect: On the one hand, it is an act that is determined by the particular object or situation in which the human being finds him/herself. But, on the other hand, this same act constitutes my way of being in the totality of reality, and it is for this reason that it is a personal act. Because my reality is absolute, this second aspect is a way of affirming myself as an absolute reality – as “my own” reality in the totality of the real. Affirmation here is thus not a judgment that announces the absolute character of reality; it is rather the “physical” exercise of this absolute character; it is not a judicative, but an actional, a “physical” affirmation. This aspect can be a special act, but it does not necessarily have to be. Normally, the affirmation of myself as an absolute reality is but a mere aspect of the numerically single and unique act that I happen to be executing: When, for example, I eat an apple for pleasure I am affirming myself as a reality that exists “satisfactorily” in the totality of reality. That is when I eat an apple I affirm myself as absolute. This, then, is no special act. We could say that, as an aspect, this affirmation undergirds every act: it is *attitude*. This affirmation is, obviously, not a freely chosen attitude, but it is *the personal attitude*, the proper attitude of every personal act, that is of every act that is executed whenever I take charge of reality in and through an act of sentient intelligence. Every act of taking charge of reality constitutes *eo ipso* a personal attitude, an attitude through which I affirm myself as absolute. The content of this attitude has its own character. Eating an apple adds something to my reality, but the attitude in and through which I affirm myself as absolute does not. By virtue of this attitude what I have acquired is actuality. The content of this affirmation is thus not act but actuality: It is the actuality of affirming myself in my absolute reality in the totality of reality – it is my being. This being has a precise name: *I*. The *I* is not my reality but the re-actuality of my reality as absolute. When I affirm myself as *I*, there is nothing but what I already was; there is only the affirmation of what I was already. For this reason this affirmation actualizes my proper substantive reality as “my own” – it is my substantive being. Therefore, against all classical idealism we should say that reality is not derived from the position of the *I*, but rather that the *I* is the position of my substantive reality in all the personal acts that this substantive reality realizes. Moreover, we should add that my substantive being is not derived from the position of the *I*. My substantive being does not consist in being *I*, but, on the contrary, the essence of the *I* consists in being the substantive being of an absolute reality. My substantive being is *I* precisely and fundamentally because it is the substantive being of an absolute reality.

Of course, it is evident that this physical affirmation of my substantive reality as absolute can have different forms: From the medial “I *myself* am eating” an apple, going through because this apple is *mine*, and up to it is *I* that is eating the apple: myself, mine, I – these are three forms of

affirming oneself as absolute, each one grounded in the anterior one. But in order to simplify matters I will *a potiori* call *I* all affirmation of my absolute being. Moreover, this being – this *I* –, as I have already stated, is not a numerically special act; it is but the absolute aspect of every personal act – the content of a personal attitude. For this reason, what the *I* constitutes in me is not act, but actuality. But, in order to simplify things, I will speak of the affirmation of the *I* as an “act of affirmation.” With these clarifications we should *a limine* avoid all confusion. Indeed, inasmuch as it executes personal acts, the being of the human person is the *I*.

(c) The human of our reality has a precise character – it is specific. Species is not the correlate of the definition of an essence; it is rather the character according to which each human being – in the very structure of his/her proper reality – formally and actually constitutes a scheme of genetic replication viable in other persons. In other words, the species is a *phylum*. To belong to a species is always and only to belong to a given *phylum* – in our case it is to belong to the *phylum* of the animal of realities. This scheme is a constitutive moment of my substantive reality. That is without such a scheme my proper substantivity could not have reality. My *constitutive* essence is thus a *quidditive* essence. These are not formally identical, for there are constitutive essences that are not replicable, and therefore are not quidditive essences. But, when they are identical, each aspect intrinsically belongs to the other. And this is the reason why I am from my very self – albeit only schematically – really turned toward others. This means that by virtue of this turning which constitutes me, the rest are in some way already constituting me. On account of this scheme others are refluxing over my own reality. This reflucence is, thus, a modulation of my reality; every human being is modulated by virtue of being turned toward the rest. From here why my person is determined as absolute vis-à-vis the totality of the real, but also turned toward other persons – turned toward other absolutes: My person is co-determined as absolute for other absolutes. Modulation is thus the codetermination of my mode of being absolute. And this codetermination is precisely what I call *dimension*: That is what measures, in relation to others, my mode of being absolute. Because this dimension of my substantive reality is affirmed in the act of being *I*, the dimension of my reality is *eo ipso* a dimension of the *I* – a dimension of the human being.

*Phylum* has three characteristics: It is before anything, pluralizing. The species is not the sum of equal individuals, but, on the contrary, it is a primordially prior unity that pluralizes in and through individuals. Second, the species is filially continuative. That is by virtue of the species individuals coexist. And finally, the species is prospective, it is a genetic prospectivity.

Thus, by virtue of specific multiplicity, the scheme refluxes over every human being, bestowing him/her with a dimension of individual diversity. By virtue of his/her genetic continuity, every engendered offspring has the reflucence of the species which constitutes social coexistence. As dimensions of the *I*, individual diversity determines that dimensions according to which the “*I*” is an “*I*” in relation to a “you,” in relation to a “him/her or they,” etc. The *I* has that dimension of being “*I*” which we call “being-each-one”: the “each-one-ness” of the *I*. As one of its dimensions coexistence determines the being of the *I*; social coexistence determines the *I* as “communal.” We addressed these two dimensions in the two previous lectures.

But the human being has a third dimension: The *phylum* – the species – is genetically prospective. And it is thus not only in the sense that every human being is able to have descendents (this is

something completely trivial), but in the sense that not the individual, but his/her *phylum* is formally prospective: Each human being is prospective because s/he belongs to a *phylum* that – qua *phylum* – is constitutively prospective. This radical and genetically constitutive influence is what we call *history*. We could not speak of history if the human being did not have a biological genesis. By virtue of their prospective, biological genesis not only are human beings diverse and not only do they coexist, but this diversity and coexistence have a historical character. As a moment of my reality, history thus determines a third dimension of the act through which reality determines itself as absolute – a third dimension of the *I*. This is precisely the topic of these reflections. Once again: We are not engaging history in all its reality, but rather history as a dimension of the reality and being of the human being.

## II. The Problem of History

In order to address the problem of history it is necessary that we sketch – at least in general terms – what history is from the point of view of the prospectivity of the species. Let us proceed successively.

1. As a moment of the prospectivity of the species history evidently has a temporal character. This is what is normally meant when it is said that *history is “movement.”* But, although in a certain sense this claim is true, it is, nevertheless, totally insufficient. What we need to know more specifically is what type of movement constitutes history; for not all movement is history.

At the very least, what can be said about the movement that constitutes history is that its moments do not simply “succeed” one another. History, in other words, is not a movement of pure succession. Each moment of history is formally “supported” by an anterior moment; and each moment supports a posterior one: To the extent that it is supported by its anterior moment, every moment of history “proceeds-from” another moment; and to the extent that it supports its posterior moment, every moment of history “proceeds-toward” another moment. “Proceeds-from” and “proceeds-toward,” these are the two constitutive moments of a process. Thus the movement that constitutes history is a procedural movement. Indeed, history is formally and constitutively a *procedural movement*. But a second question arises: What kind of process is history?

2. Given what we stated in the introduction the answer to this question should be evident: History is a process in and through which human characteristics are transmitted from progenitors to the engendered offspring. The process in question is thus constituted by genetic transmission. Indeed, history is a *process of genetic transmission*.

Such a process undoubtedly exists, for without it there would be no history. And it is necessary to undergird this point: History does not emerge from certain transcendental structures of the spirit. History exists due to – it emerges from – and it pours into a biogenetic structure. Yet history is not *formally* a process of genetic transmission. This is so for a crucial reason: What is genetically transmitted? When an animal from a given species engenders an offspring, it transmits to this offspring certain organic characteristics, and through these characteristics, it transmits a certain type of life. A reptile, for example, is engendered by a reptile (We leave aside the question of the evolution of reptiles into birds). And this offspring has – by virtue of these

characteristics – a certain type of life: A rodent does not live like an amphibian, and the like. However, although these different types of life are very important from the point of view of a systematic zoology, they are – from the point of view of the individuals that live them out – characteristics that are given once and for all together with the animal organism. This is why, by virtue of genetic transmission, each animal lives a constitutively classified life. Thus, for instance, the life of a rodent and the life of an amphibian are certainly not the same; and yet every rodent and every amphibian lives a life that is univocally determined by its organic characteristics. Indeed, precisely because it is genetically transmitted, the life of every animal begins with and from its own organism: That is, as an individual life, the life of every animal begins at zero.

Well, why then is this process of genetic transmission not history? This process is not history because it lacks a moment of reality. By this I do not mean to suggest that the offspring of an animal is not real – this would be absurd. The process we just elucidated lacks a moment of reality in another and very precise sense. And it is that the human animal is not only constituted by psycho-organic notes. The human being is the animal of realities; and due to this, genetic transmission does not suffice for installing the newly born human in life. The human being possesses a sentient intelligence with which s/he confronts all things and him/herself as reality. This sentient intelligence, however, is genetically transmitted. What happens is that sentient intelligence alone does not suffice for installing the newly born in his/her human life. With his/her sentient intelligence the human being is not able to respond to what the situation demands of him/her without taking charge of reality in an optative manner. The human being must opt in every instance for a free action (I leave aside the problem of liberty: Even though liberty did not exist the human being would still be able to in a certain sense opt). But, what exactly do we mean here by option? In every option something is always opted for. But this something – to put it in vulgar terms – is not only *that thing* for which I opt, but by opting for something, I have also opted for a certain form of being in reality – I have also opted for a figure of my reality. The human being exists *among* things and *with* things; but the human being *is* in reality. The human being lives from reality. To opt is to determine my figure of reality in and through the things for which I opt. If I am thirsty and I opt to drink a glass of water I not only opt for drinking a glass of water, but, in and through this opting, I also opt for, for example, being in reality in a physically satisfied fashion, as opposed to being in reality in another form, like for example, in an abstinent form, etc. The personal human life consists precisely in this: In possessing oneself in and through a form of being in reality – in and through a form of being in the totality of reality. Every personal act – even the most modest one – is a form of affirming oneself as being in the totality of reality: that is it is a way of affirming oneself and of being absolute. The human being, thus, has a life that is built upon opting; and therefore, together with his/her psycho-organic characteristics, the human being has a life open to distinct forms of being in reality. Hence, it is evident that these forms of being in reality are not *transmitted* genetically in and through psycho-organic characteristics. Rather, due to their very nature these forms of being in reality are not genetically *transmissible*. This is why to install him/herself in human life the human being cannot begin at zero. The human being's genetically transmitted psycho-organic characteristics do not suffice. His/Her progenitors (or others) must give him/her a mode of humanly being in reality. The human being begins his/her life by being supported by something other than his/her own psycho-organic substantivity. S/He begins his/her life with the form of being in reality which s/he has been given. This is what radically and formally

constitutes history: History is not simply the transmission of life, it is not simply heredity. History rather is the transmission of a life that can only be lived in and through distinct forms of being in reality.

Therefore, if history is not just any procedural movement, if history is not a mere genetic transmission – if history is also optative – then, we again and more urgently ask: The historical process consists in what?

3. Let us return to the idea I have just elucidated: The forms of being in reality are optative. Therefore, when the human being – the animal of realities – engenders another animal of realities, s/he does not just transmit his/her offspring a life, that is, s/he does not only transmit the offspring psycho-organic characteristics, but, in addition – inexorably and *velis nolis* – s/he installs his/her offspring in a certain mode of being in reality. The human being is not only *transmitted* psycho-organic characteristics, but s/he is also given – s/he is also *handed-over* – a mode of being in reality. Installation into human life is thus not only transmission, it is also handing-over. Handing-over is called *paradosis*, *tradio*, tradition. The historical process is concretely tradition, not in the sense of being traditional, but precisely because it is handing-over. Life is transmitted genetically, but the forms of being in reality are handed-over in and through tradition. And precisely because of this – precisely because it is tradition – human life does not begin at zero. Human life always begins grounded in a mode of being in reality which has been handed-over. As I have stated in the past, the human being is an open essence, and *in casu* the human being is open to the handing-over of forms of being in reality – the human being is open to tradition. Well then, this is formally the historical process: namely, the tradition of forms of being in reality. The prospective character of the species is history precisely because it affects an open essence which produces as descendents an animal of realities not only by genetic transmission, but – together with this transmission – by an inexorable *tradio* of forms of being in reality. Undoubtedly, without a genesis there would be no history: I vigorously stated this at the outset of the lecture. But genesis is not history: it is the intrinsic vector of history. Reciprocally, the forms of being in reality could not be handed-over if this handing-over was not inscribed in a transmission. For this reason history is neither pure transmission nor pure tradition: History is a traditive transmission.

I have insisted on this subject matter – it is a dialectical movement toward the concept of history. To some this subject matter might appear trivial. But it was necessary for me to develop this concept in order to confront two common misconceptions which have often falsified the character of history.

a) The concept of a *natural history*. Natural history does not exist – it is a round square. To the extent that it is natural it is not history, and to the extent that it is history it is not natural. Without getting into the philosophical problem of nature – the problem of *physis* – we could say that the system of psycho-organic characteristics that constitute the human substantive reality is “natural.” And yet the human being’s forms of being in reality are not natural. That is history is not, nor can it be “natural.” To the extent that the human being is “natural” s/he is not historical, and to the extent that s/he is “historical” s/he is not natural. The human being is both things: The forms of being in reality are steered by genetic transmission, but they are not formally genetic transmission. The reason why the genesis of the animal of realities is a genetic transmission is

not the same as the reason for why this genesis is history. Natural history does not exist. The Ancients referred to history as a kind of “narrative”; that is they understood history to be a mode of knowing. This is something else: We understand history to be a trait of reality itself. And this is not a trivial claim. For by protecting an expression that does not have much importance one obfuscates concepts that refer to reality itself. This is untenable: *Stricto sensu*, there does not exist a natural history.

b) But it is equally fallacious what one reads often ad nauseam: *History is the prolongation of evolution*. This is a contested idea; yet some – like Teilhard de Chardin – adopt it without discussion. The species, we are told, have emerged by evolution; and the human species too has emerged through evolution. This evolution is certainly not closed. But until there emerges an ulterior phase of evolution, the human being has a history: History is just another phase of evolution. The historical process would thus be the prolongation of the process of evolution. But this is, as I see it, absolutely chimerical. The formal structure of evolution is diametrically opposed to the formal structure of history. Evolution proceeds by way of *mutation* – whatever may be the origin and nature of this phenomenon. But the forms of being in reality proceed by way of *invention* – for one has to opt. The historical process is not the prolongation of the evolutionary process. Evolution is generated by genetic mutation; history is generated by optative invention. These are two different processes.

But evolution can undoubtedly play a role in history, it can undoubtedly be a factor in history – of this there is no doubt. The passage from the Hominid to the Arcanthropus, from the Arcanthropus to the Paleanthropus, and, finally, from the Paleanthropus to the Neanderthal is an evolutionary process. This process has generated not only varieties of humanity, but it has generated genuinely new types of humanity. But what has constituted history *per se* throughout this evolution is not the filial process described, but the distinct forms of being in reality – forms that have been very different within each evolutionary stage; and, moreover, forms that have been distinct because the type of human being in question have been distinct. This difference regarding the types of humanity is an essential factor, yet only “one” factor that intervenes in history; this factor is not what constitutes history itself. At times history can be the carrier of an evolutionary factor. If, say a group of human beings opt to live isolated, removed from other human beings, this, as an option, is a historical event, but one whose result can be evolutionary – at least in the broad sense: In other words, this isolation can produce varieties. But none of this suggests that the formal mechanism of evolution is distinct from the formal mechanism of history. Evolution – I repeat – is genetic mutation; history is optative invention. The possible influence of evolution in history or the possible influence of history in evolution are important phenomena of a single structure: traditive transmission, both in the individual as well as in the species.

Now that we have reached this point, the question regarding the constitution of history can be more thoroughly posed. Two questions thus emerge: First: How is tradition constitutive of history? Second and more directly germane to the problem at hand: In what sense, and to what extent does this character of being *traditum* reflux over reality and over the being of the human being?

These are two critical questions.



### III. What is history as Traditive Transmission?

In order to address this question with some precision let us examine three points:

- 1) What are the *structural moments* of this tradition?
- 2) What is the *subject* of this tradition?
- 3) And, above all, what constitutes the *formal character* of this tradition?

1. *The structural moments of tradition.* We repeat: Without tradition there is no history. But by this we do not mean to suggest that history consists in being traditional in the usual sense of the nomenclature, namely, traditional as conforming with this or that tradition. This would be absurd. This kind of traditionality is but one mode among other equally possible modes of coming to terms with tradition as such. The tradition we are referring to here consists in “handing-over” a form of being in reality. But this is not to suggest that the one who receives tradition cannot break with what was handed-over to him/her. It only suggests that nothing – not even this rupture – is possible without first having received what one decides to break with. For this reason, instead of traditionality, it would be more appropriate to employ another word such as “traditionity.” This having been clarified, I will employ, if need be, the nomenclature traditionality in the sense of traditionity.

Having stated this we say that tradition has a specific structure.

A) Tradition is, first and foremost, a process in and through which the nascent animal of realities is installed in a way of being in reality. Thus, before anything, tradition has a *constitutive moment*. This is its radical moment. The nascent human being is not just genetically transmitted certain determined notes; s/he is also installed in a form of being in reality. Even if the newly born child is abandoned, this abandonment is a mode of being in reality.

B) But tradition has another moment: For what is handed-over to the new offspring is done so by his/her progenitors (again, in the most broad and vague sense of the nomenclature). This way of being in reality – *inasmuch as it proceeds from progenitors* – is formally a continuation of what the progenitors wanted to hand-over to the offspring. Indeed, tradition has a *continuative moment*. And, evidently, inasmuch as it is continuative, tradition is grounded in its constitutive moment.

This continuative moment is crucial; and in fact it can be quite severe: For in and through the continuative moment the fate of tradition will be played out. I am not just referring to human life’s inexorable necessity for change. I am referring to something much more radical: What is handed-over is done so from and by the progenitors themselves; and yet it is received by the offspring according to his/her own reality. And, because in its totality this reality is different from the progenitors’ reality, the continuative character of tradition becomes problematic: What is the continuity of tradition? It is to be sure not mere mechanical reiteration if you will. For even when one “repeats” this mere fact of repeating endows what is received with a new

character, namely the character of being repetition. Continuity is the result of a positive act from the part of the recipient regarding what is handed-over: namely the act of receiving and reliving from his/her own self what is received. And because this act is realized by a living being that is not totally but only schematically identical to his/her progenitors, one can never be completely sure that one is repeating what has been received. At times one could be under the impression that s/he is repeating when in fact s/he is innovating. Moreover, it is often necessary to change something accidental in what has been received precisely in order to be able to maintain its continuity. It is a difficult problem indeed to determine what in tradition is essential and what is accidental. The continuity of tradition is not a problem of numerical identity, but a problem of the sameness “in life.” Tradition often takes on different forms not because it is the same, but in order to continue being the same.

C) And yet there is still a third moment: Grounded in tradition – grounded in what has been received – and supported by it, the human being lives opting for forms of reality. This is not something that is particular to tradition; it is a part of all vital human acts. The ability to opt is the formal character of the constitution of human life, at least in the stages where the living being has to take charge of reality. Among other things, the offspring takes charge of what s/he receives; and supported by what s/he receives the offspring has to continue opting: Indeed, tradition has a *progradient moment*. Not only is the living human being installed in a form of being in reality which has been turned-over to him/her; not only does s/he receive this way of being in reality in and through a more or less problematic continuity; but, in addition – grounded in what has been received and with its support – the new living human being exerts on the mode of being in reality that has been turned over to him/her operations that are similar to those realized by his/her progenitors; and by so doing s/he completely changes the possible content of what will be the tradition for his/her descendents. This progression is already present in the moment of continuity; for the moment of reliving what has been received is already inchoately a progression. Life is in fact not only *tradibile*, it is essentially *tradenda*. And this is so for a simple but decisive reason – It is so for genetic reasons. Every living being is the filial schema of the rest. The *phylum* itself constitutively has a prospective character. Steered by this filial genesis, the forms of being in reality are turned-over. And precisely for this reason tradition and the history that is grounded in it are progradient. The progress can be either positive or negative; this is another question.

Constitutive, continuative, and progradient, these three moments are but aspects of a single reality: the reality of tradition. The intrinsic unity of these three moments constitutes the essence of tradition.

What is the subject of this tradition?

2. *The subject of tradition.* One would think that individuals are the immediate subjects of tradition. This, as I see it, is problematic. The immediate subject of tradition is the species – the *phylum* as such. The *phylum* drives tradition. Tradition affects individuals, but only because individuals belong to a *phylum*: Tradition affects individuals in and through reflucence. Tradition – *paradosis* – like reflucence, has two aspects that, although different, are essentially connected. These two aspects are the two ways through which tradition affects human beings. Both are *traditio* in the sense I have just explained; but they are two distinct modes of *traditio*.

A) One mode is the mode by which tradition affects each individual inasmuch as it realizes in each individual's very mode of being in reality the operations I explained above. In this sense, tradition is a moment of the life of each human being – a moment of his/her *biography*. To live is to possess oneself as absolute in the totality of reality. Now then, human life has a proper characteristic to the extent that it is the life of an animal substantivity: indeed, human life is *decurrent*. Animality is the ground of “*decurrence*.” The human of this decurrence rests in the fact that it is precisely the form by which the human being possesses him/herself as absolute. And this decurrence – inasmuch as it is a mode of possessing oneself as absolute – is the essence of biography. As I have for many years repeatedly stated, every human being is always *him/herself* never being the *same self*. The way in which one is always him/herself without ever being the same self is the essence of biography.

Clearly then decurrence is biography only to the extent that it is a trait of something that is already personal life – only to the extent that it is a characteristic of the possession of oneself in the totality of reality. Biographical decurrence does not formally constitute human life; but rather it is life – which is already personal – that “biographically” constitutes its decurrence. Personal life is the intrinsic and formal presupposition of all possible biography. So that if we take *in and for itself* the unified decurrence of the acts of a personal life, we do not have biographical life, but only what for many years I have been calling the “argument of life.” We will soon see what constitutes being an argument. What is typically called biography is only the argument of a personal life – the argument of the mode of possessing oneself as absolute. Only personal life qua personal should be called biography.

Because each human being's mode of being absolute is codetermined by the rest – and this precisely and formally to the extent that each human being is a filial reality – what occurs is that to the mode of possessing oneself constitutively also belongs the capacity to filially possess oneself. That is the human being's biography has an indispensable moment of *traditio*. Evidently biography is not only tradition; but tradition is an essential moment of biography. From this point of view, tradition is the phyletic absorbed in the personal, the phyletic absorbed in the human person *qua person*.

B) Tradition affects individuals in yet another way. What is in question now is no longer personal biography but something else.

In order to thoroughly understand the mode in question let us begin by considering tradition to the extent that it affects the individual – and specifically to the extent that s/he coexists with the rest – that is to the extent that the individual lives in society. Here tradition does not constitute the individual's biography; rather it constitutes what is “typically” called history – the tradition of society. In order to delineate with greater precision what history is let us take as our point of departure the concept of history we have just elucidated. This concept will guide us toward a more precise formulation. For to say that history is the traditive transmission of the social brings forth a question that is decisive for the problem at hand. In fact, in the previous lesson I insisted that society – as distinct from personal communion – is something essentially impersonal, always keeping in mind, evidently, that the impersonal is a mode of being a person. If, thus, history is

social tradition, then this suggests that in one way or another society is essentially impersonal. But is this possible? This is the question we need to investigate.

At first glance, this is unacceptable; and, I myself for some time have thought thus. Can one deny the fact that, for example, Michelangelo was a personality that was completely determined in history? Or that Alexander was? This, of course, cannot be denied. But this is not the point. Let us reflect a bit on this question. The names of Michelangelo and Alexander are ambiguous, for the persons they designate have two aspects. If we do not distinguish these two aspects we run the risk of committing a serious error. Indeed, who for history is Alexander? He is undoubtedly the son of Philip, the man that did this and that: He conquered Asia, married Roxane, and the like. All this is certainly Alexander; but only in the sense that he was “the one that”...was this or that did this. The same should be said about Michelangelo. One can thus say that the person that did this is a completely determined person, such that he could not have been another person. And this is true. And yet not for this reason were Michelangelo and Alexander fully and formally persons. The uniqueness of a living human being is not identical with his/her personal character. Alexander was unique in Greek history, just as Michelangelo was unique for art history. The Alexander of history is “the one that” was the son of Philip, conquered Asia, fell in love and married Roxane, and the like. The Michelangelo of art history was “the one that” painted the Sistine Chapel, sculptured David, constructed the dome of Saint Peter’s Basilica, and the like. This is an undeniable truth: both are “the one that.” Well then, this which evidently designates a person is also what confers him/her with his/her given character – with his/her impersonal mode: “The one that” never tells us “who s/he was.” But let us not confuse here the what with the who. The one “who he was” refers to the persons of Alexander and Michelangelo as well as to their personal lives. But this was buried with them; it does not belong to history. The uniqueness of a human being is not synonymous with his/her personal character.

We could say that Alexander and Michelangelo were not only the “s/he who,” but that their very actions – the actions by which and with which they did what they did – in some way belong to history. This is true, and it is what takes us to the onus of the question: namely to find out specifically in what way actions themselves can belong to history. Or stated thematically: Human actions belong to history, but they do so only impersonally. What does this mean? This is the question. Let me explain.

Impersonal – let us keep in mind the previous lesson – is a *personal* mode of being and acting, but “reduced” to the being and acting *of the person*. As we have seen, these are two completely different points of view. On the one hand, action is a moment of the personal life, that is action is a moment of the self-possession of “my” physical reality in the totality of reality. For this reason it is a *personal* action. But, on the other hand, I can also consider action leaving aside the fact that it is a moment of my personal life. In this case it is no longer a personal action, but only an action *of the person*; that is, it is an action that arises in the person, but not as a moment of his/her life. This is the reduction of “being-personal” to “being-of-the-person.” Through this reduction action is impersonal; it continues to be “of-the-person,” but not in a personal form: Action is now the formal essence of impersonality. Impersonality, I repeat, does not consist in a suppression of being a person; it is rather a modality of this trait. It is because of this that animals, as I said, are not impersonal – they are apersonal.

This reduction can be realized in different ways; and consequently there can be different types of impersonality. One way is reduction by way of alterity – here one considers another person not qua person, but qua other. Indeed, s/he is a person, but s/he is “other.” According to this type of reduction it is impersonality that constitutes society in this strict sense as opposed to a personal community. But there exists another type of reduction: It consists in understanding action according strictly to what is accomplished by it, that is as something that occurs within the person. Now one considers only what is operated by the action. Then action leaves aside its personal character, not by way of alterity, but because it is considered only as a “proper quality” of the person, independently of what the action is as a personal moment of life. From the point of view of the action – as a personal moment of life – action is something which is personally executed. Action is an *opus operans* – this is action as an operation. Here the operated as a moment of the operation itself belongs to the given action. But I can also consider what is operated only as a proper quality *of the person*, that is I can consider what is operated independently of the very action, and thus independently of being a moment of the personal life. Under these conditions, the action is an *opus operatum*. Reduced to an *opus operatum* the action belongs only “to the individual” – it is impersonal. It is not action qua “his/her own,” but qua quality “of belonging to the person.” Action is thus now a mode of impersonalization. Here the reduction is not carried out by way of alterity, as in the case of society, but by way of the *operatum* as such. This *operatum* does not only refer to the external and public character of the actions such as, for example, the conquest of Asia or to the paintings of the Sistine Chapel, but also to the actions which we could also call “internal,” like for example, the love for Roxane. These actions – both as external or internal – considered as something “made, operated,” constitute an *opus operatum*. When they are considered as moments of the personal life which they themselves realize then they are an *opus operans*. The way of the *operatum*, then, generates a different type of impersonality than the way of alterity. By both ways action stops being personal and becomes reduced to belonging to the person. This difference between the personal and of the person is a modal difference. As I see it, it is an essential difference. And this difference can take on the form of mere alterity or the form of *operatum*.

Well then, the *opus operatum*, what is operated alone belongs to history; but not the *opus operans*, not the operation itself. The fact of being in love with Roxane belongs to history, but not love or lovability itself, which, by virtue of being a personal action is *opus operans*. Being in love with Roxane is an *opus operatum*. It is the impersonality of history.

This type of impersonality is not specific to history alone. It belongs to that which typically – though unduly – is called biography. As I have already suggested, what is usually referred to as biography is in fact the argument of life. Well, then, “argument” is precisely the elapse of the “personal” life reduced to being the elapse “of the person.” Strictly speaking, this is not biography, for biography is essentially personal in the sense of being a moment in the proper life of a person. What is typically called biography is essentially impersonal, no matter how closely one examines it. Biography – even when it is exhaustively understood in all its infinite details – could have been lived by someone else. Only when it is understood as the “reduction” of something that was previously a personal life, does biography acquire the character of something formal and non-transferable. And this is thus because the person is him/herself formal and non-transferable.

From here why what is typically called biography is – strictly speaking – *biographical history*. What typically are referred to as history and biography are in fact two types of history: namely the history I would call social and biographical history. This is the entire realm of the impersonal by way of the *operatum*. This reduction to the impersonal by way of the *operatum* is not formally identical to the reduction by way of alterity. These are two different modes of reducing the personal to being only of the person. By way of alterity, its result is society. By way of the *operatum*, its result is history, both as social and as biographical. These two modes – the mode of alterity and the mode of the *operatum* – are not incompatible. On the contrary: To the “others” – to society – one can hand-over all actions, but only as *opera operata*, that is as actions belonging to the person. History – both as social and as biographical – is essentially impersonal. Personal communion and personal biography are, by contrast, essentially personal. Reciprocally, the social and the historical can constitute – and always do so – a “moment” of the personal life, for the subject of history is the *phylum* as such; and the *phylum* intrinsically affects every individual constitutively, constituting both his/her social coexistence as well as his/her historical prospection (whether social or biographical)

This brief sketch of the subject of tradition – that is of the subject of history – has provided us with important concepts which can be summarized in following three points:

a) History is not only the social. I have already pointed this out: I began by establishing an equivalence between history and the social; but this was only a point of departure that intended to take us toward a more comprehensive concept: namely that history encompasses both social history and biographical history – and this is essential.

b) When history *is understood in this way* it can be distinguished from personal biography. This is not a distinction in terms of subjects, but a distinction in terms of the modes in which tradition affects persons. The subject in question is always the person, or the persons by virtue of belonging to a *phylum*; but the difference exists in the mode in which the traditive *phylum* affects them. There exists a way of affecting them that is “personal” – this is personal biography. There exists another way of affecting them that is “impersonal” (as the reduction of the personal to belonging to the person) – this is history both as social and as biographical. The essential difference is not among subjects, but rather it is a modal difference for every subject. This is a second essential concept.

c) It now becomes clear that the concept of history is double. Before anything there is a *modal concept of history*. This is what I just explained: namely history as a mode of impersonally affecting the person. Modally, history in this way opposes itself to personal biography. Personal biography is another modal concept. But these two modes – impersonal and personal – are the distinct modes by which tradition affects the subject. From here that they are situated within the same trajectory – a trajectory which, in a certain sense, is prior to the modal difference: namely, within the trajectory of tradition understood as a dimension of the very subject inasmuch as this subject is filially determined by tradition. We will soon develop with greater precision in what consists this dimensionality. It is *the dimensional concept of history*. It constitutes the entire realm of traditive prospectivity in all its modes and forms, both impersonal as well as personal. Modally, personal biography opposes itself to history, both social as well as biographical. Yet, dimensionally, personal biography is as much history as it is social and biographical history.

Reciprocally, personal biography and history are the two modes of the dimensional unity of tradition, that is the two modes of the dimensional essence of history.

Up to our analysis of the subject of tradition I had used the nomenclature history only in the dimensional sense. I will, in what follows, continue to use it strictly in this sense alone: The historical as dimension, that is, as the entire realm of traditive prospectivity. We now need to inquire about the formal essence of this prospectivity. This is the third point of the problem at hand.

3. *The formal essence of history.* Let us now move toward the formal concept of dimensional history by working through some theses: This will be a dialectical movement toward the conceptualization of history.

A) A *first thesis* which has been and is presupposed by many – though never formally mentioned – consists in the following: History refers to that series of vicissitudes that affect both individuals as well as societies. I am using “vicissitude” here not in the etymological sense but in its usual use: a vicissitude is something that “happens” to someone. Well then, our first thesis states that *history is essentially a vicissitude*. The human being, we think, is a reality that must face certain vicissitudes. These vicissitudes are his/her history. And given this, the human being aims to narrate history – to narrate the vicissitudes that take place.

But this thesis is not only imprecise, it is false. One does not only “narrate” history, one also “understands” history, and this precisely because history is not a mere vicissitude. Evidently, the human being experiences all kinds of vicissitudes which, although they in reality happened, they could have nevertheless not have happened. But although not every vicissitudes necessarily had to have happened, it is nevertheless inexorably necessary that the human being experiences vicissitudes. Why? Because of the human being’s very constitution. And this is why history is not a vicissitude, but a constitutive moment of human reality – a reality that is formally and constitutively handed-over and handing-over. Even without getting into the problem that not all that happens in history is strictly speaking a vicissitude, the point here is that the human being is not a substantive reality to which is added vicissitudes; rather the human being can be considered a substantive reality only if it already includes historicity, and this because it is not a substantive reality without being a prospective scheme, that is, without being in itself traditive transmission.

B) From here emerges a *second thesis*: History is not a series of vicissitudes, but rather it is necessarily grounded in something received in traditive continuity. Now, this continuity manifests itself in different ways – as monuments, as documents, through different types of works, and the like. That is, history is human reality inasmuch as it is witnessed in and through continuity. Giving the nomenclature a broad sense that captures all that is expressed in continuative tradition, we say that *history is testimony*: Something is history – something is tradition – by virtue of having been witnessed.

But this thesis cannot be sustained. In the first place, it is not universally true – How can it be? The majority of the things that are part of human history are not witnessed in the form of a testimony. Indeed, something can be a traditional reality and not be witnessed in testimonies that

express it. One thing is tradition; another thing is the knowledge of its content. The testimony is the *ratio cognoscendi*, but not the *ratio essendi* of tradition.

And in fact, second, even in cases where the testimony exists, this testimony does not constitute the tradition by virtue of being its expression, but by virtue of what through that expression takes place, namely, because in and with the expression the testimony *hands-over* something. This handing-over – and not the witnessing of what is handed-over – is what constitutes tradition. Tradition is not testimony; it is the handing-over of reality.

C) This is the *third thesis*. But is it the case? What is handed-over when one hands-over reality? We have distinguished, on the one hand, the modes of being in reality, and, on the other hand, the concrete psycho-organic characteristics that every animal of reality has. This means that human acts have two aspects: On the one hand, human acts are executed by natural faculties; and, on the other hand, these acts differ from one individual to another, not because of what they have as executed acts (for all human beings execute the same acts), but by virtue of the meaning, by virtue of the sense that the acts possess in the different circumstances of each individual life. That for which in opting one opts is for the meaning of what one is going to do. Then it seems that what is handed-over in tradition is the meaning of acts: *History is the transmission of meaning*.

But this appears untenable. For history is not the realm of meaning. This is not to suggest that in the transmission of tradition one does not transmit the meaning of acts; evidently meaning is one of the moments that is handed-over. But the handing-over of meaning is not what is primordial or radical to tradition. It is also true, as we have just seen, that vicissitudes and testimonies are part of history; but these are not what is most radical to history. Well, in like fashion, it is also true that in tradition one transmits meaning; but this is not what radically constitutes tradition. For what we call “meaning” has two aspects: On the one hand, there is the meaning that something has, the meaning that something contains. But, on the other hand, this “meaning” would not be of concern to us here were it not the meaning of human actions, which do not only have a “given” meaning, but by their very nature “must have” some meaning to be what they are – namely, human actions. Therefore, meaning is not the *given meaning that something has*, but the meaning that something must have – *having meaning*. From here why the meaning in question is not the meaning of something, but the *very reality of having meaning*. And this problem has not been addressed. For what is of concern to us here is not the meaning that is transmitted, but the transmission of that reality – human reality – that by its very nature necessarily has to have meaning. It is false to think that what distinguishes the “optative” from the “natural” is the moment of “meaning.” No. Opting does not depend on a given meaning, but on a mode of being in reality.

Consequently, the handing-over of reality which constitutes tradition is not the handing-over of the meaning of reality, but the handing-over of reality itself.

D) This is why, as I see it, a fourth thesis is necessary: *History is the handing-over of reality*. But this reality is not the constitutive psycho-organic notes of human substantivity. The human being of today is not different from the Cro-Magnon due to his/her psycho-organic notes; and yet s/he differs from the Cro-Magnon due to his/her very reality. What is this difference? What is



this moment of reality? Because this moment constitutes history, by inquiring about it we will also be inquiring about what constitutes the historical process as a real process. I apologize for the monotony, but it is inevitable when one is engaging in a dialectic of concepts.

Thus history hands-over reality. But this is equivocal. For what do we understand by handing-over of reality? We need to clarify this point.

a) This is a question about the handing-over of forms of reality. These forms are evidently real: They are the forms in and through which every human being finds him/herself really in reality. Then one would think that history consists formally in the handing-over of forms of being really in reality. History would thus be a process of production and destruction of forms of really being in reality. Or stated more concisely, history would be a process of production and destruction of reality. Indeed, history would be a process of effective realization.

But this, as I see it, is not the case. For history has a procedural character that has a temporal moment: in the past something “was” and it now no longer “is.” According to this idea, the “past” as reality “was,” but now it “is not”; and consequently, in history everything would be lost. By contrast, if one in some way wishes to salvage the past in and through the present, then one needs to make the past into something that persists, and therefore, something that did not just already happen. That is, in any case, the strictly procedural moment of history remains attenuated. The handing-over of reality, thus, cannot consist in the production and destruction of reality. Stated more rigorously: The forms of being in reality are not handed-over as forms in and through which one is going to be in reality, but in another way. In which way? The response to this question will give us the answer to the question at hand.

b) As I have already suggested, what tradition hands-over is a mode of being in reality that provides support to either accept, modify, or repudiate reality: This is the continuative and progradient moment of tradition. And this brings forth something essential. This support is, in effect, a human action according to which that which supports me – namely, the received mode of being in reality – serves the function of determining the mode according to which I will be in reality. I “can” accept or not accept this mode of being in reality – that is I exercise a “power.” Now, then, this is not something specific to tradition; it is present in all the actions of the personal animal. It is that, in fact, these actions are not executed simply by putting in play the traits, notes, or potentialities (the precise language here is not important). The moment when it is put in action, the sentient intelligence is opened toward the totality of reality. And this totality does not fix – this would be impossible – the adequate response, the one that ought to be given in the particular situation in which one has been placed. On the contrary, the human being must now opt. But what is to opt? To opt is always to opt for what I “can” do. That is, the power opens the human being up to a realm of different possibilities – feasible or not feasible (this is not important at this time). The human being must opt for these possibilities. The formal end of opting is, thus, “possibilities.” The set of possibilities which the human being opts for is what we call his/her “project.” Some of these possibilities are almost immediate; at other times one must excogitate or invent them. But it will always be the case that between his/her psycho-organic potentialities and actions, the human being inexorably interposes a set of possibilities. Because we will develop this idea in greater detail, let us say from the outset that there is an essential difference between potentialities and possibilities. Potentialities can be very constant.

Putting aside the human evolutionary process, and limiting ourselves to the Neoanthropus, it is clear that the present-day human being has the same psycho-organic potentials the Cro-Magnon had. And yet his/her system of possibilities is radically distinct: Today we have the possibility of flying, but the Cro-Magnon did not have such a possibility. From here why the execution of an action has two aspects. There is before anything an aspect according to which the action produces that which the human potentialities (let us call them thus) can produce – walking, thinking, moving, eating, etc. In this aspect action is a *fact*, that is, something that is done by the potentialities that can execute them. A fact is always an “act” – the act of certain potentialities. But the same action has a distinct aspect. It is not only the execution of a potentiality, but the realization of a project, that is, the “realization” of possibilities. To the extent that it is the realization of a project – the realization of possibilities – an action is not a mere fact, it is an *event*. An event is a fact to the extent that it is the realization of possibilities – to the extent that, by opting, I have determined the potentialities so as to execute their acts according to the possibilities for which I have opted. The realization of possibilities is opting, and, reciprocally, opting is the inchoate realization of possibilities. From here to realize possibilities is to “make them my own” – it is “appropriation.” Opting is never something that is merely intentional. If I opt for a bad action, my option is bad not only because the end toward which I have opted is bad, but also because it has made me bad in my own reality by having appropriated the possibility of the bad action. Every option has a “physical” moment of appropriation. This as we shall soon see is essential. As a result, between fact and event, there is a “physical” and not merely conceptual difference. Appropriation is what makes an action an event. Thus the realization of a project is “physically” different than the mere “act” of a potentiality. Undoubtedly, without an act – without a fact – there would be no event. But the reason according to which an action is an event is different in reality from the reason according to which it is a fact. For this reason, in terms of human actions, metaphysics cannot limit itself to the investigation of its *reason of being*; but it has to also provide a specific and irreducible *reason of event*.

Well then, the texture of history is not made of facts, but of events. Because there are no events without facts, reality also belongs to history (how is not going to), but as a principle of possibilities, that is as a principle of events. Tradition no doubt hands-over modes of being in reality; but if it were not more than this, then it would not be history. Tradition hands-over a mode of possibly being in reality. The progenitor hands-over to his/her descendents a *mode of being in reality, but as a principle of possibilities*, that is so that these descendents – supported by the mode they have received – can determine their mode of being in reality opting to accept, repudiate, modify it, etc. Tradition formally consists in this: A handing-over of modes of being in reality as a principle of an event, that is, as a principle of the possibilitation of being in reality in a certain way. No one is in reality opting in a vacuum of mere abstract possibilities. Everyone opts for a concrete set of possibilities that is made available by a mode of being in reality that has been received. For this reason, *history is the event of the modes of being in reality*. This is a first approximation of the essence of history. History is not simply a process of production and destruction of realities and of modes of being in reality; it is also a process of possibilitation of modes of being in reality. From here why temporally speaking the past as reality no longer is; and yet the possibilities that the past as reality has conferred “are.” In other words, the past does not continue as reality, for then it would no longer be the past; but it does continue as possibilitation. The continuity of tradition is a continuity of possibilitation. This continuity is, first, a process – for each moment not only comes after an anterior one – but it is

also supported by it; and, second, it is a process of possibilitation – a process in which each possibility is supported by the anterior one. Because the realization of possibilities is an event, history is – I reiterate as a first approximation – a process of events, not a process of facts.

Here lurks, as I see it, the series problem with August Comte’s definition of history as a dynamic sociology. Dynamic sociology studies the forms of being in reality and the forms of coexistence that correspond to these forms. These forms of being in reality can vary because of many different variables, one of which is history itself; and for this very reason it is a question of the production, modification, and destruction of realities. Indeed, dynamic sociology concerns itself with the dynamism of the social forms and of coexistence. But history is something completely different. One needs to take into consideration the dynamism of the real but inasmuch as every form of being in reality is a principle of possibility of other forms. To know an event is not only to know its causes; it is also to know the process by which a realized possibility is the principle of possibility of other possibilities. The dynamism of history is not a social dynamism; it is a dynamism of possibilitation.

And this is true for yet another more thorough reason. G.W.F. Hegel thought that history was a moment of the Objective Spirit. Prescinding from what we said about the Objective Spirit in the previous lesson (I will return to what was said there at the end of these reflections), there is in this claim made by Hegel an absolutely unjustifiable restriction regarding the real historicity of the human being; and this to the extent that historicity is limited to the social institutions, such as language, art, cultural forms, and the like. To history – we have already suggested this – there not only belongs that history which Hegel calls “objective,” and which I call “social,” but there also belongs “biographical” history. And not only this: For social history and biographical history are both “modal” history. In this sense, the realm of modal history is not the objective, but the impersonal; the impersonal besides being objective can also be a biographical history. But, over and above this modal concept of history there is the dimensional concept of history: namely, history as the dimension of human reality inasmuch as it is filially determined in prospective fashion. And in this ultimate and radical sense it is not correct to speak of Objective Spirit. To history dimensionally considered there belongs not only social and biographical history, but also personal biography. From this dimensional point of view history is – in a first approximation – a process of possibilitation in and through tradition. If this process is impersonal, then we have both social as well as biographical history. If the process is personal, then we have only personal biography.

We have seen the three moments of the structure of tradition: constitutive, continuative, and progradient. We have also examined the subject of history. And finally, we have attempted to conceptualize what formally constitutes the historical process: namely that it is a process of possibilitation. But, as I have repeatedly stated, this is the essence of history only as a first approximation. For, as a principle of possibilitation, history inexorably leads us to the individual person in and through which – and only in and through which – this process takes place: History reflexes over each individual. And independently of the way in which history reflexes, we need to inquire about what constitutes this reflucence, that is, we need inquire about what does history contribute to each individual by virtue of the fact that each individual belongs to history. This is precisely the problem of the historical individual. This problem will take us beyond our first approximation, toward the radical essence of history.

#### IV. The Historical Individual

Let us analyze history understood not modally, but dimensionally. The historical individual is the individual to the extent that s/he is dimensionally determined by history. Thus we must ask: In what consists the historical dimension of the human person?

The historical dimension of the person is a reflucence of the schematic prospectivity of my substantive reality over this same reality. This reflucence has two essential aspects: First and foremost, it is the dimensional reflucence of history over the individual reality qua reality. This is the problem of the historical individual as reality. This reality affirms itself as something absolute in the totality of reality: It is the being of the human being – his/her *I*. Because the reality that affirms itself is historical inasmuch as it is reality, what occurs is that the being of reality – the *I* – is absolute, but it is thus in a historical way. And from here we must inquire about this historical dimension of the being of the human being – of the *I*. We thus find ourselves facing two problems: The historical character of the reality of each human being and the historical character of his/her being – of his/her *I*. Let us now examine each of these.

1. *The individual, historical reality.* As I have just stated, this is the problem of the reflucence of the filial prospectivity over each individual constitution: What does history bring to the reality of each individual? This question has been answered in different ways.

A) A *first thesis* – one that is often alluded to – maintains that what the human being does in history is mature: *History is maturation*. History makes evident the fact that each individual member of the human species is a germ that matures. The human being is what s/he is and in addition s/he undergoes a series of germinal virtualities: The human being is a germinal reality. Indeed, according to this thesis, what history contributes to each individual is precisely germination, to the extent that it is related to the virtualities. In history the human being gives of him/herself all that s/he already virtually is: This is maturation.

This idea of the germinal character of human reality and of historical maturation is, I believe, untenable.

First and foremost, the idea of the germinal character of human reality is untenable. Human reality is germinal only in its psycho-organic morphogenetic stage. Upon being constituted, the human being already has germinated all of his/her notes and virtualities. For this reason, regarding itself, human substantive reality is not germinal. But in the second place – save when it is employed as a botanical metaphor – one cannot say that history is maturation. Certainly the Cro-Magnon could not perform many of the operations we perform today. But why? Did s/he lack maturity? Obviously not. The Cro-Magnon already had germinated all of his/her notes and virtualities; the same notes and virtualities that we today possess. The Cro-Magnon was not immature humanity. The human being that lived last century was not immature. We are not immature human beings. History “adds” something to human being – not maturity – but something else. What? From here emerges a second thesis.

B) This *second thesis* was developed at the end of last century and at the beginning of this one; it was very well received. It maintains that *history is an unveiling*. Indeed, the human being has the power to do many things; although we do not know what the realm of this power is. History reveals what the human being “can do.” History is the unveiling of a human power, an unveiling that takes place in and through a process of “unfolding.” There have been different versions of this unveiling. Hegel believed that what history unveils is the conceptual moments of being and non-being in the unity of becoming. This unity is the dialectical unfolding of *logical reason*. Logical reason for Hegel is not cognition; it is absolute reason: the reason – the logos – of being. And as such it is the essence of Absolute Spirit – it is essence as principle. The essence of history would thus be the absolute principle as dialectical principle of the constitution of Objective Spirit. Each phase of history would thus be the realization of an objective concept of the human spirit. Others, like Dilthey for example, understood history to be the unitary unfolding of the stages of the Spirit in its context of lived-experience. This is what Dilthey called historical reason. A reason that does not “explain” what occurs in life, but “understands” what occurs in and through an interpretation.

Whatever form it takes, this idea of history as unveiling seems to me untenable precisely because it does not adequately conceptualize what is to unveil – what is the human being as unveilable and unweiler. In the first place, what is meant by unveiling – bringing to light? Does it mean simply to make known? This would be absurd, because in this case the historical reality of what is prophesized would be an exhaustible prophecy, and this is impossible. It is a question, therefore, of unveiling as a real moment of the event itself, in the sense of developing a photographic plate: Indeed, it is a question of making manifest what the plate itself really is. For this reason, unveiling for the mind brings forth the problem of unveiling as a real moment of the event. We need, therefore, to know in what “historically” consists this unveiling. And regarding this nothing has been said. To know about this presupposes knowledge about the historical event as such. And this we are not told. In the end, the question has not been posed. And here, as I see it, lies the importance of the metaphysical difference between fact and event we discussed above.

In the second place, not only are we not told what historical unveiling is, we are not told something that is much more important for the problem at hand. And it is that what is unveiled – before being unveiled – was veiled in the human being. Thus we pose the question: How does what is unveiled exist veiled in each human being? One would say at most that what is unveiled is what the human being can do, and that, consequently, the historical is included in the human being as part of what we call his/her “power.” But then we ask: What is this power and what is this that is veiled in the human being? These questions have not been raised.

Indeed, this second thesis does not tell us anything about what history contributes to each individual. For, although it maintains that what history contributes is an unveiling, it does not address what is unveiling nor what is the nature of the “power” that in history is unveiled.

This is why, as I see it, it is necessary to bring forth another thesis:

C) *Third Thesis*. What is the problem with the two theses we have just examined? They labor under a false conception of what the human being “can” or cannot historically do. Undoubtedly

history is a process regarding what the human being can or cannot do. For this reason the problem requires that we clarify what this power formally is. Maturation and unveiling are two imprecise conceptualizations of this power: Power is neither germinality nor un-veiling. What is it then? Only by answering this question can we determine the nature of what history contributes to the human being.

I take the word “power” here not in opposition to “cause” (as I have done so in other courses), but power in the more usual an innocuous sense of to have the power – the ability – to do something. By virtue of his/her sentient intelligence, the human being has to opt for a mode of being in reality. The power in question is thus a power to be in reality in one way more than another. So, I repeat: What is this power?

The nomenclature “power,” which is derived from what the Greeks called *dynamis*, is very nuanced. Unfortunately these aspects were not distinguished with metaphysical vigor and neither were they adequately conceptualized.

a) On the one hand, since Aristotle, *dynamis* – power – meant *potentiality*: namely that by which something can receive actions or can act upon something that is distinct from itself, and can also act upon itself to the extent that it is distinct from its proper actions. In this way potentiality – *dynamis* – opposes itself to act – *energeia*. By virtue of their substantive reality, all things have a system of active or passive potentialities.

b) On the other hand, the Latins translated the word *dynamis* for *potentia seu facultas* – potentiality or faculty. Now then, this equivalence, as I see it, cannot be accepted. Not every potentiality is *eo ipso* a faculty. Let us take, for example, the case of intelligence. Certainly, intelligence qua intellective potentiality is essentially irreducible to pure sensibility as such. No matter how complex is the potentiality of sense – that is, the biological liberation of the stimulus – we would never have the potentiality to “take charge of reality” – that is, we would never have an intellective potentiality. Indeed, there is no doubt that this is the case. But this intellective potentiality does not have by itself the “faculty” to produce its acts (I will not state here the reasons to support this claim; for I have already done this elsewhere). It can not produce its acts although it is intrinsically and formally “one” with the potentiality of sensing, and although it constitutes a metaphysical unity with this potentiality of sensing by virtue of which the intelligence takes on the character of “faculty”: it is sentient intelligence. The sentient intelligence is not a potentiality, but a faculty – a faculty that is “one,” though metaphysically composed of two potentialities: namely the potentiality of sensibility and the potentiality of intellection. Indeed, only because it is sentient can the intelligence be facilitated to produce its intellection. We need to therefore establish a metaphysical difference between power as potentiality and power as faculty. With their idea of *dynamis* the Greeks did not establish this difference; and neither did the Latins. It is not the same thing to have a potentiality and to have a faculty. Such is it the case that the intelligence as a faculty – that is the sentient intelligence – has a genetic origin, something that does not arise with the naked intellective potentiality. Upon the moment of its conception the germinal cell has all that it needs to become a human being. Because the intellective potentiality qua potentiality is not the result of an embryogenesis, what occurs is that immediately upon its conception, the germinal cell – in addition to its biochemical structure – has also an intellective potentiality, no matter what may be its origin, this is not

important here. The metaphysical-systematic unity of the germinal cell and of its radical “psychic” notes is what – despite the historical difficulties with the nomenclature – I have often called germinal plasma. But the intelligence qua potentiality does not produce nor can it produce intellectual action in the plasma – this is a mythical absurdity. The potentiality, then, is not yet a faculty. It can be considered a faculty only when, through the course of its psycho-organic morphogenesis, is produced the intrinsic unity of the intellectual potentiality and the potentiality of sensibility, that is, only when the sentient intelligence – the faculty – is engendered. Although it would be chimerical to pretend to genetically engender the intellectual potentiality with nucleic acids and the biological liberation of stimulus, nucleic acids are inexorable for the genetic production of the faculty of intellection. As a faculty, the sentient intelligence is strictly a morphogenetic product. Here is thus a second type of “power”: power as faculty. Potentiality and faculty, are these the only types “power”? I think not.

c) Let us return to the points we raised above. The Cro-Magnon lacked possibilities that we ourselves have. This idea of possibility takes us in the direction of a third type of power. This is what is expressed by the plural “possibilities.” To have or not have possibilities is not the same thing as to have or not have potentialities and faculties. With the same potentialities and faculties the human being – in the course of his/her own biography and throughout the entire course of history – can come to possess very different possibilities. And this is why when a faculty is not just facilitated for one determined object, but rather is an “open” faculty – open to all of reality to the extent that it is real as is the case with intelligence – then to be a faculty does not mean to be able to execute *hic et nunc* all of its possible acts vis-à-vis reality – that is, it does not mean that it is equally possibilitated for each of these. Every faculty, in addition to being a faculty – in order to be possibilitating – needs to be positively possibilitated. Not every faculty is possibilitated for all of the acts which belong to it qua faculty. This is the third sense of “power”: Together with power as potentiality and with power as faculty, we have power as possibilitating. From here the triple meaning of the word “possible.” Possible is always the end of a power. When the power is a potentiality, then the possible is “potential.” When the power is a faculty, then the possible is the “feasible” in the etymological sense of the nomenclature (one could say “facultative” not in the sense of being potestative, but in the sense of belonging to a faculty). When the power is the possibilitative, then the possible is “a possibility” – “a possible” among others. Strictly speaking, possibility is only the possible to the extent to that it is the end of a possibilitating power.

These three aspects are not independent. Nothing is feasible unless it is potential; nothing is possible unless it is grounded in the feasible. The potential and the feasible belong to the naked reality of something. This is not the case with the “possible.” The possibilitated as such does not – by virtue of having become thus – acquire any real notes that it does not already have inasmuch as it is potential and inasmuch as it is feasible. In fact, the only thing that it acquires is a “new actuality” – the actuality of being at “the reach” if you will of the potentialities and faculties. The possibilitated is thus not different to naked reality. But the reason why it is “possible” is not the same as the reason why it is “potential and feasible.” Indeed, the possibilitated – precisely because it is at the reach of the potential or of the faculty – begins by being naked reality – it is grounded in naked reality, it is “foundationally” in it. Therefore, naked reality is “foundationally” in the possibilitated. From here that possibilitated and naked reality are “adequately” extrinsic terms. First and foremost, because it is a question of “actuality.” The

becoming of actuality is not an enrichment of notes, and yet it is a real becoming. And this becoming as a “realized” character is not necessarily grounded in being at the reach of some potentiality and faculty. All that is at the reach of a faculty acquires with it a new actuality. But the reciprocal is not true: Metaphysically, a new actuality can be founded, not by being at the reach of a faculty, but by being at the reach of reality itself, which then becomes a principle of actuality. To be a new actuality is thus not something that is constitutively extrinsic. But even when the new actuality is founded in a principle that is other than possibilitation – that is, in finding itself at the reach of a faculty – even in this case, I say, actuality is not something that is totally extrinsic to reality. Its principle certainly is, but not the character of “actuality.” It would be something totally extrinsic if being at the reach of a faculty would have nothing to do with the reality which is itself at reach. But this is not the case. For possibility is this same reality, but only as a new actuality. Inasmuch as it is “grounded,” actuality does not add anything to reality; its principle is different to reality – it is in the faculty. But qua “actuality” it belongs to reality itself as one of its moments – it is its “real actuality.” The new actuality is in this way a *sui generis* enrichment of reality. It does not enrich reality by granting it another note, but by “realizing” what these notes are as “possible.” Enrichment is here the “realization” of the actualities that are intrinsically possible “from” and “in” naked reality. Reality is foundationally in the possible. Indeed, this unity is what constitutes the “possible”: The possible is “simultaneously” a moment of reality and a moment of my access to reality. The “foundation” of this unity between what grounds and what is grounded as such is the power of possibilitation.

What then is this power of possibilitation? This is the question. The power of possibilitation is not a power that is juxtaposed to potentialities and faculties, but rather it is these very potentialities and faculties inasmuch as they reach determined objects and acts. This is what we call *endowments*. Potentialities and faculties are no other than endowments. Indeed, endowments are the potentialities and faculties precisely and formally qua principle of possibilitation.

This is not a mere conceptual subtlety, but a distinction that has a “physical” character in my reality. Before anything, the human being can – according to his/her potentialities and faculties – have different endowments. Intelligence, will, and the like can be better or worse off endowed. The same intelligence can be better endowed for certain things than for others. Moreover, the endowments are not fixed or constant, but rather they can be acquired, modified, and even lost, despite having conserved the same potentialities and faculties. Potentialities and faculties are not the same thing qua principles of their acts and qua principles of possibilitation – that is qua endowments. From here arises a serious metaphysical problem: In what consists being a principle of possibilitation? Indeed, in what consists being an endowment?

In order to better orient ourselves let us begin by stating that not always – although generally – endowments are acquired. Why and how? In order to answer this question we first need to understand what is “possible” in the rigorous sense we have defined the term here. Possible is not only a *possible object*; it is also all that is possible for me to do with this or that object in my life – that is it is that which is going to bestow me with a form of being in reality. And precisely for this reason the possible is called the *possibilities*. All possibilities are grounded in the possible, and to be possible is strictly and formally an end of the endowments. Before being my possibilities – and precisely to be able to be mine – the possibilities are grounded in the possible



as such. Now then, among the distinct possibilities the human being has to opt. And to opt – we have already said it – is not a merely intentional phenomenon, but rather it formally and constitutively involves a “physical” moment: it involves appropriation. Once having been appropriated, every possibility is – in and through appropriation itself – incorporated to the potentialities and faculties, and, therefore, it naturalizes itself in them, not in the order of its naked reality, but in the order of being a principle of possibilitation. Due to this appropriation – due to this naturalization – the endowments vary. This variation, however, is not arbitrary, nor is fortuitous; for there are possibilities that emerge as possible only if they have first appropriated other possibilities. The acquisition of endowments is therefore a process that has a precise structure.

This naturalization can be of two types, and thus there are two types of endowments:

a’) In the first place, there is a naturalization that is grounded in the mere “use” of the potentialities and faculties. It is a naturalization that only concerns the exercise of these; it is a merely operative naturalization. The type of endowment that is constituted in this way I call “*disposition*.” I am not referring here to moral dispositions or something of the sort, but to the entire realm of dispositional causality vis-à-vis the use of the potentialities and the faculties. The dispositions are thus *operative endowments*.

b’) But there are endowments that are much more profound precisely because the naturalization of what is appropriated concerns not the mere exercise of potentialities and faculties, but the very quality of its reality qua principle of possibilitation. In this case the endowments – the result of this naturalization – are not operative endowments; they are rather the *constitutive endowments* of the potentialities and faculties qua principles of possibilitation. This is precisely what I call “*capacity*.” Capacity is the potentiality and the faculty qua a more or less abundant principle of possibilitation. Capacity is formally “*capacity of possibles*” (in the specific sense I have employed the nomenclature here). A capacity can be more or less abundant according to whether the realm of the possible it constitutes is greater or lesser.

Clearly one cannot trace a geometrically precise line between dispositions and capacities. But the distinction is in principle undeniable. Within the same capacity the constellation of dispositions vary through learning or other factors.

An act as execution of potentialities and faculties and as the execution of capacities is thus not the same thing. The same one and indivisible act has this double characteristic in its execution; but the reason why it is the execution of potentialities and faculties is not the same as the reason why it is the execution of capacities.

We have reached this conclusion by analyzing the process of acquisition of capacities – the naturalization of appropriated possibilities. As I have already suggested, these capacities are acquired, not fortuitously, but according to a precise structure: Only after having already by appropriation acquired determined capacities can others be acquired or previous ones be modified.

Obviously, not all capacities are acquired. There are capacities that originate from not appropriation, but from the psycho-organic morphogenesis of potentialities and faculties. But even in this case the characteristic of a capacity is not identical to the characteristic of a potentiality and a faculty. The potentialities and faculties are diversely capacitated in an innate fashion by their morphogenetic concretization. But that the possibilitating moment of the potentialities and faculties are at times innate does not modify in the very least the fact that to be possibilitating is a distinct moment of being a potentiality and a faculty. These capacities are very few. Nearly all of the capacities are acquired and are modified or lost by the naturalization of what is appropriated.

Whether it is innate or acquired, a capacity, as I see it, is formally a principle of possibilitation; that is a capacity is a capacity of possibilities. This is, therefore, not a psychological or pedagogical notion, but a strictly metaphysical one. The three dimensions – potentiality, faculty, and capacity – have a metaphysical character. This was unknown to classical philosophy. But as I see it is essential for a metaphysical conception of reality. The three are metaphysically distinct: it can arise that a potentiality is not facilitated; it can be the case that a faculty is not capacitated or it can be capacitated in a very deficient manner. Thus, potentiality, faculty, and capacity are three irreducible principles; they are three distinct modes of *arkhai*. They cannot simply be subsumed under the idea of mere power – of mere *dynamis*.

Well then, with this in hand we can now respond to the question about what is history as a determination of each individual: Dimensional history formally consists in being a *process of capacitation*. It is a metaphysical process. It is in the first place a process. I already stated this at the outset of this lecture; and now we can address it with more precision. Dimensional history is a process because, not only does each stage succeed an anterior one, but because each stage is supported by the anterior stage. And, as we have just seen, the endowments in general – and especially the constitutive endowments – emerge not fortuitously nor arbitrarily, but they emerge only if they are supported by other very determined capacities. For this reason actions do not determine us only because of what they are in themselves, but also because of the procedural moment in which they occur. There emerged excellent mathematics in India. But because of when it emerged – namely after Vedantism – the mathematics of India can not be compared to the mathematics that emerged in Greece during the pre-Socratic philosophy. Indeed, when we appropriate specific endowments, we have already determined the fate of other endowments. We will never know if with a given acquisition we have facilitated or undermined the possibility of other very determined notes. And this is the case not only for individuals, but for history as well. We have appropriated mathematics as the possibility of understanding nature. Its success leaves no doubt of the positive value of this appropriation. But we will never be sure that with this appropriation we have not obstructed the appropriation of other possibilities that would bring forth other aspects of nature that just might be very important. History is thus a very determined process. But second, it is a process of capacitation. In history the human being does not mature nor is s/he unveiled, and this because both of these modes simply put in play what the human being germinally or veilly “already was.” And this does not suffice. In history there is true production of something that really “was not yet.” But the production of what? Of capacities. As I stated, almost all of the capacities come from the historical process. And I am not referring here to modal history as distinct from personal biography. I am referring to dimensional history as refluent – be it biographical or historical – of the filial prospectivity over each individual.

This influence consists in constituting in each individual a distinct capacity in each case. What history dimensionally contributes to each individual is capacitation. In terms of personal biography, it is a influence that translates into personal experience; the individual acquires and loses capacities for his personal life, for his education, for his teaching, for his somatic, psychic, and social “treatment.” This is also evident at the level of history in the modal sense. The human being is not more mature today than what s/he was five hundred centuries ago. The human being of today is more able. Between the two there intervened the production of something that in reality did not yet exist. From where? Not simply from operative possibilities – from dispositions – but from something more radical – from capacities. And precisely due to these we today have possibilities that the Cro-Magnon lacked.

As I suggested pages back, history is formally a process of traditive possibilitation of modes of being in reality. But I warned that this is history in a first approximation; and this because traditive possibilitation is grounded in capacity. From here why in its full aspect – that is dimensionally considered – history is primarily, radically, and formally a process of traditive capacitation. It is a metaphysical and not only an anthropological (in the social-scientific sense of the nomenclature) process. Indeed, it is the capacitation for ways of being in reality.

With this concept in hand we can understand what history is as a first approximation.

a) As a process of capacitation history has a cyclical character: This is the cyclical implication of person and history. With his/her capacities a person attains certain possibilities. Once having been acquired, these possibilities naturalize as potentialities and faculties, and change the capacities. With the new capacities persons open themselves to a new realm of possibilities. This is the cycle of capacity, possibility, and capacitation: This is history as a process. As a process of possibilitation history is essentially constituted by a process of capacitation.

b) History is a “real” process of the human being. The historical is not precontained in the person in veiled-like fashion, nor germinally, nor virtually, nor implicitly, etc. It is precontained in a different way: namely, “historically.” Indeed, the historical is a distinct mode of real inclusion; it is the form of inclusion of an “actuality” in naked reality. Possibility is not in naked reality causally, but as “actualizable.” The reality of history consists in being procedural actualization of the possible actualities of naked reality: Indeed, history is a procedural reality of actualization. History is “real” because actuality is real and because it is the actualization of a possibility. It is “history” because this actualization is procedural. Historical inclusion is the inclusion of possible actuality in naked reality. To be historically “real” is to be an actualizable possibility of naked reality. To be real “historically” is to be a procedural actualization of possibilities. The procedural constitution of this “possibility” as such is capacitation. Its realization is an event. Thus we can now state: An event is the procedural actualization of the “possible.” The process of capacitation is in this way a process of possibilitation, and thus a process of historical realization of the possible as such: a process of events.

c) As a process of capacitation history is rooted in sentient intelligence. Because of his/her sentient intelligence the human being is an essence that is open to the totality of reality. And because it is thus sentiently his/her aperture is procedural. Now then, precisely because s/he is an open essence – we have already seen this – the human being is open to be capacitation. And

because this capacitation is the dimensional essence of history what occurs is that the human being – due to his/her proper essence – is metaphysically open to the historical process. This is the metaphysical root of history: a sentiently open essence. Reciprocally, history is aperture: It is a dimension of the metaphysical aperture of human substantivity vis-à-vis its own actuality for capacitation. Indeed, the aperture of history is double: It is the apertural dimension of the human being, and it is an open process qua process of actualization.

d) Open to his/her capacities by history – before s/he produces acts – the human being produces his/her proper capacities. This is why history is radical realization. It is the production of the very realm of the possible as the condition of the real: it is the making of a power. For this reason history is “quasi-creation.” It is only “quasi” because obviously it is not creation from nothing. But it is “creation” because it affects primarily and radically the constitutive principle of what is humanly “possible,” and not only the function of its potentialities and faculties. History is not “quasi-creation” because it is a process of possibilities. I myself once wrote that history was quasi-creation because it is a process of possibilities. But at the time I had not yet reflected upon the principle of these possibilities – I had not yet reflected upon the idea of capacitation. Being a process of possibilitation now appears to me only as a first approximation; and this because history is not something that moves on its own; it is something dimensional that emerges from the naked reality of persons and it affects them. As such history is capacitation. Indeed, only for this reason is history quasi-creation.

If this is thus then we must inevitably inquire about the *I* – we must inquire about that being of human reality that physically affirms itself as *I* with its capacities vis-à-vis the totality of reality, that is, it affirms itself as absolute form.

2. *The I, historical being.* Let us recall once more the problem at hand. The *I* is historical because it is the act according to which substantive reality affirms itself as absolute in the totality of reality; and the substantive human reality is specifically prospective – it is historical. And it is thus from its very self – it is constitutively prospective, it is “in-its-own-right” historical. This is the historical reflue of the rest in the constitution of the reality of each individual. From here why the *I* as act of my substantive reality is the *I* of a historical reality. The *I* – the human being – thus has also a historical character. It is the reflue of the historical not only over reality, but also over the being of this reality – over the *I*. But in what consists the historical character of the human being – of the *I*?

I have teased out the concepts which I consider to be essential for adequately addressing the question at hand. Having done this preparatory work the answer to our question can be brief and concise.

A) The person – we have repeatedly stated – affirms him/herself as *I* in absolute form in the totality of reality. But s/he affirms him/herself in his/her own way. The *I* of my person is a relatively absolute act of being. And here “relatively” means just this: That the *I* is absolute, but in its own way. My *I* is absolute, but it is so “thus,” in contradistinction to the *I* of the rest.

B) The “thus” has a very concrete character. “To be thus” means to be an act, not of my potentialities and faculties, but of my potentialities and capacitated faculties. “To be thus” means to be an act of my capacities. The *I* is thus only as act of the person realized with the other things with which s/he lives. (Things in the most vulgar sense of the nomenclature – material things, other people, and even my own “factual” reality.) And to live consists precisely in possessing oneself as reality in the totality of the real. From here why, although I live with *these* things that surround me in my situations, where I am in every act is *in* reality. The human being lives with things, but with these things s/he is in reality – s/he lives of reality. Reality is not a type of ocean in which real things are submerged; it is rather a character that is steered by each one of these things, but which “physically” surpasses them. From here that to affirm oneself in the totality of reality is an act that is brought about in and through the physical things that concretely surround me in every situation. But these things are precisely those things for which my potentialities and faculties are capacitated. This is why my *I* is in reality, but according to my capacities. The “thus” concretely means “according to my capacity.” Human substantive reality is not absolute in abstracto; it is a “capacity of being absolute.” The *I* is an act of my intrinsic “capacity for the absolute.”

This is why, as I see it, a corrective needs to be introduced into Aristotle’s metaphysics. For Aristotle all of reality is *energeia* – it is act. But – save the reality of *Theos* – all reality is for Aristotle the *energeia* – the act – of a *dynamis*, of a potentiality, that is, the act of what can potentially be. Well then, even if we leave aside the fact that Aristotle does not distinguish between being and reality, I believe that, in the case of the *I*, it is an act – it is an *energeia*, not of my own potentialities, but of my own capacities. It is for this reason that the *I* is not only “thus,” but it can be so only according to a “thus.” Precisely because history is a process of capacitation it confers the *I* the capacitation to be absolute.

C) This act – this *energeia* – is procedurally determined. History is a metaphysical process of capacitation. That is, every moment of my capacitation does not only come after the anterior one, but it is grounded in, it is founded in the anterior one. And it is grounded not only as an antecedent stage, but as an internally qualified stage. By appropriation of possibilities, my capacity is in every instance intrinsically determined as a capacity for possibilities that I have previously appropriated. That is, the previous stage in some way marks the type of stage that follows. Capacity is therefore not an abstraction; it is procedurally determined and concrete. Every stage of capacitation has, thus, a “place” if you will – a very determined position in the process of capacitation. This is what I call “*procedural stature*.” This is a characteristic of historical “reality.” To the extent that this characteristic determines a mode of “being” – a mode of the *I* – the procedural stature constitutes the “*stature of the times*.” This phrase is ancient, but I believe it is necessary to develop this idea with some rigor. The stature of the times is the temporal characteristic of the *I* determined by the procedural stature of human reality. Because this stature is a point that is very rigorously determined in “position,” it occurs that the same action executed in the V century and today can have different characteristics – for the stature of the times has changed. The time of the human being is a mode of the *I*. The time as event, duration, and projection belongs to human “reality.” But the time of the human “being” – the time of the *I* – is not event nor duration nor projection; event, duration, and projection determine in and through the act of being *I* a figure which I call the “temporal figure” of the *I*. They do not produce it. Production is proper to “reality.” But reality does not produce “being,” it only

“determines” it. Well then, time does not only elapse (as event, duration, and projection) in “reality,” but it is also “figure”: This is time as a mode of “being.” The time of the *I* is a procedural configuration that is intrinsically qualified in each instance of the elapse. It is not that time produces a figure of my *I*; but rather it is that time itself “is” a figure – a figure of the *I*. This figure is the metaphysical determination of my being as “determined” by the procedural stature of the historical of my reality. The historical of my being is the stature of the times, that is, the characteristic of the temporal figure of my *I*. The *I* is absolute “thus,” according to this temporal figure that confers to it the procedural stature of the historical of my reality. The capacity of the absolute is, in each instance, capacity according to a certain temporal figure.

D) As a quality of human reality, the procedural stature is what constitutes its *age*. Age is not maturity; it is procedural stature. Or better yet, it is the reflucence of the position in the procedural stature over human reality – position as a quality of substantive reality. It is in this sense that there is a rigorously historic age. It is not organic age, and neither is it mental age; both are ages in the sense I have just elucidated: they are reflucences of the procedural stature according to its biological or mental characteristics. But historical age is distinct – and yet it is rigorously an age. It is an age by virtue of being the determination of the living being according to the procedural stature. And it is historical by virtue of being the process of a traditioning determination of the person. History is a “physical” determinant. There is, then, a historical age. And because this is a process is of capacitation, what occurs is that all capacity is determinately for a historical age. It is an age of the reality of each individual.

This age is affirmed in and through the act of being – in and through the act of being *I* as its intrinsic moment. And the *I*, I have already stated, has its own temporal figure. That which the age of reality modulates in the human being – in the *I* – is precisely this figure. But then age is not only a “quality” of human “reality,” it is also a “characteristic” of the human “being” – a characteristic of the *I* that is determined by the age of my reality. As a mode of the *I*, age is nothing more than the figure of the *I* inasmuch as it is determined by the age of my reality. It is not the age of the figure, but figure of the age. In order to better understand this let us consider that human beings from the same temporal stature are coetaneous. Individuals can be coetaneous without being contemporaries. Contemporaneity is an extrinsic characteristic, it is a mere synchrony within the temporal scheme traced by science. The Eskimos of the II century and the inhabitants of what was left of Babylon were synchronous; but they were not coetaneous. In order to have been coetaneous they would have to have belonged, not only to the same point within an extrinsic scheme, but also to the same procedural stature, and, therefore, they would have to have belonged to the same traditive process of capacitation, that is, to the same history. And this was not the case. In history there have been plural times in the sense of age. Only today – in the degree to which humanity acquires a unique mass of alterity – it also forms part of a process that is each time more singular and unique. And, therefore, we can now begin to speak of not only universal corporality, but also of universal coetaneity. By virtue of the historical age of their reality, human beings affirm themselves as coetaneous in their being – in their *I*. If I could introduce a certain neologism I would propose to remove the prefix “co” from the word coetaneity; what would remain is *etaneity*. Well then, each human being – by virtue of his/her “historical reality” has an *age*; by contrast, the human being – the *I* – as determined by age, is *etaneous*. Etaneity in the sense that I am giving here to the nomenclature is not age. There is no age of the *I*; but there is an etaneity of the *I*. Etaneity is the radical historical dimension of the *I*.

Etaneity is an intrinsic moment of the temporal figure of the *I* – it is the last historical concretization of the *I*. The *I* – the human being – like every being, is actuality. Well then, the concrete form of the actuality of the *I* is etaneous. The *I* is relatively absolute, for being “thus,” that is according to my capacity of being absolute, and according to this capacity I am absolute in an etaneously determined temporal figure. As the modal figure of being, time is – in the case of the human being – his/her etaneity. From here we say reciprocally: The etaneous actuality of the *I* is my mode of being absolute.

These various aspects of age – as procedural stature and as temporal figure – are already in a certain way pointing to the etymology and history of the nomenclature itself. The word age – *aetas* – has the same root as the Greek *aion*. From the root *\*aiw-*, *Aion* means the plenitude of the vital force. From here this root has given us on the one hand, *aion* – the temporal plenitude of life, that is its total duration – and, on the other hand, *iuvenis* – s/he who has the full vital force. Eventually *aion* came to mean, not the total duration of life, but a more or less important piece of life. Here it meets up with the nomenclature *helikia* which signifies age as a lapse of time. Using the same root *\*aiw-*, Latin formed, on the one hand, *aevum* – duration of life as opposed to a point of life – and, on the other hand, in an adverbial form *\*aiwi-*, it formed both *aeviternus*, everlasting and *aeternus* – that which endures throughout the totality of life as well as *aevitas* and *aetas* – age. In Latin, then, the nomenclature *aetas* in the end takes on both the meaning of *aion* and *helikia*. I employ *helikia* for the age of reality, and *aion* for the etaneous configuration of my being – of my *I*. But these linguistic considerations, which are well known, are not of fundamental importance for the problem at hand. Here they serve no other function than to be the material of philosophical interpretation: Age as the procedural stature of my reality and etaneity as the temporal figure of my being.

All human beings, then, affirm the absolute character of their reality in this actuality that is there being – their *I*. And because reality has an age, the *I* affirms it in a strictly and formally etaneous mode. This etaneity is the metaphysical being of history – the historical actuality of the human being. It is what history brings to the being of each and every human being implicated in it: its etaneous actuality.

E) Etaneity is not a metaphysical “property” of the *I*, and less so is its “formal structure.”

a) In the first place, etaneity is not a “property” of the *I*. It is only that which historically measures the mode in which the *I* is absolute: The *I* is etaneitly absolute. In its character, etaneity is not a “property”: it is a *di-mension*. The characteristics of the *I* are dimensionally etaneous.

In the second place, etaneity is not the formal structure of the *I*. Hegel thought that history consisted in being a dialectical objective stage of the Spirit that goes from the subjective, individual spirit to Absolute Spirit. This implied for Hegel two ideas. Before anything, because they are dialectical stages, each surpasses the anterior. Once it is put in march, history is driven only by the general-objective. The individual conserves him/herself only as a mere memory of something preterit. But this Objective Spirit is a dialectical phase toward the Absolute Spirit. The mode of being of the Absolute Spirit is eternity. Here Hegel repeats Plato: Time (history in

this case) is the mobile image (procedural in this case) of eternity. For Hegel the essence of history is eternity.

But both of these ideas are untenable.

aa) Let us begin by pointing out that individuals do not “form part” of history, but rather “are engaged” in it, which is something distinct. And this engagement has the opposite meaning than the one Hegel gave it. History *emerges*, not from the absolute spirit, but from the personal individual as a constitutive moment of his substantive reality: of his/her filial prospect. History *advances*, but not over itself in a dialectical process. History advances as a process of traditive possibilization, the result of optional appropriations excogitated by individual persons. Even when it is considered modally, it is not the general that moves history, but the “personal,” reduced to the impersonal, by being only “of the person,” which is something different. History inasmuch as it is its modally own process, is nothing more than “reduction.” Modal history is not generality but impersonality. Modal history is not above the individuals as their generality, but below them as the result of a depersonalization: Modal history is impersonal. It is not a potentiation of the Spirit. And this is why history does not go toward the Absolute Spirit, but inversely, it dimensionally forms persons as capacitation so that they can become absolute. From here why dimensionally it is not history that remembers the individual, but rather it is the individual person that remembers history. And the person remembers history in a specific way: as the dimension of the mode of the person being absolute. Dimensionally, history is dimensional prospective refluent. The person does not exist for history, but rather history exists for the person. History is what is absorbed in and for the person; it is not the person that is absorbed by history.

bb) History is not that stage between time and eternity. It is not the elapsing image of eternity, because history is not elapse, but dimensional being: it is temporal figure. The quiescence which history submits to is not the *tota simul et perfecta possessio*, with which the Medievals – followed by Hegel – defined eternity, but the unelapsability of the temporal figure of possessing oneself as absolute *I* – the etaneity. Etaneity is not the formal structure of the *I*; it is only its historical dimension. The personal reality of the human being varies in life; the human being’s *aetas* varies; and this variation determines the human being’s figure of being – the figure of the *I*. But the *I* itself is not etaneity; etaneity is only its historical dimension. For this reason, the *I* itself is somehow beyond etaneity. I will come right back to this point.

Definitely against Hegel I believe it is necessary to affirm that:

1. As modally in contradistinction to personal biography, history is not objective nor objectivated, but impersonal – that is, history is the reduction of the personal to being only of the person.
2. The essence of history does not consist in being modally distinct to personal biography. History is before anything “dimensional” and not “modal.” This is an enormous limitation, not only of Hegel, but of the history of philosophy as such. Dimensional history is traditive possibilization; it is both modal history as well as biography. And dimensional history qua personal biography is not impersonal, but essentially personal.



3. Dimensionally, history is a process of capacitation.

4. History is a dimension, not only of human reality, but also of the human being – of the *I*. And in this sense dimensional history is not a process of the becoming of properties, but a process of the becoming of actualities – it is the concrete figure of the *I*.

5. As being, dimensional history is not what formally constitutes the absolute *I*; it is only the dimensional character of its absolute prospection: it is etaneity. History is the mode of being absolute according to its capacities, that is the mode of being etaneously absolute.

## V. Conclusion

We began by examining the theme of these reflections: namely, the dimensions of the human being. We looked at reality, the human being – the *I* – and dimension.

We then examined the different dimensions. There are three: First, the dimension according to which the *I* is “each-one-ly” an *I*. Second, the dimension according to which the *I* is a communal *I* – a communal being. And third, the dimension according to which the *I* is an etaneous *I*.

We should now go back to the first part and examine with some thoroughness the dimensional unity of the human being – of the *I*. But here we can only briefly go over what has already been said.

The being of the human being – the *I* – is “I, communal and etaneous,” because it is the act of a substantive reality which is constitutively and not additively a reality of schematic character – that is, specific. Due to this the others are already refluxing over the reality of every distinct person determining his/her being as being “I” – as being “each-one” Moreover, they reflux giving it a body of alterity which determines the *I* as “communal.” Finally they reflux over the person capacitating and determining in him/her his/her “etaneous” being.

1. None of these three dimensions has privilege over the others. We had to begin the exposition somewhere: I began with the individual dimension, but I could have very well concluded with it. This has no intrinsic meaning. The three dimensions are independent among themselves. They are implicated not among themselves, but in and through the *I* of which they are dimensions.

2. These dimensions are cogendered, radical, and essentially belong to the *I* as such, because the *I* is the act of my substantive reality, which, from itself – in-its-own-right – is cogenderedly pluralizing, continuative, and prospective.

3. These dimensions belong to the *I* in a very concrete fashion: They are what measure the mode of being absolute of the *I* in the totality of reality. The *I* is a relative absolute; and a radical aspect of this relativity is its dimensionality. This dimensionality is the way in which the absolute *I* is codetermined to be thus by the other absolutes.

4. From here that the *I* – as the absolute affirmation in the totality of the real – is something that is beyond its individual, social, and historical dimensions. This because individuality, sociality,

and historicity are but dimensions of the *I*; and therefore something that presupposes that there is an *I*. For this reason, when referring to the personal *I*, one should avoid the embarrassing error of identifying it with the individual *I*. The “*I*” of “each-one” is only one dimension of the personal *I*. “My *I*” is not the same thing as the “individual *I*, the *I*-of-each-one.” The *I* is *my I*, and it is essentially and formally “mine” before being an individual *I* – before being “each-one-ly *I*,” and precisely in order to be so. The suchness of the *I* is beyond its individual “each-one-ness.” To be *I* is to be “my” *I* beyond the individual, the social, and the historical: it is to affirm oneself as absolute, although this affirmation is dimensioned. The dimensions do not constitute my *I*; it is rather my *I* – my being – that makes possible that the individual, the social, and the historical are dimensions of the *I*.