

TECHNICS, NIHILISM, TRUTH

I am honored to introduce some central features of my philosophical discourse.¹ Before I begin, two caveats are necessary. What is the relevance of a discourse that is *mine*, that is to say, the theoretical product of “someone,” of an “individual” – or even a social group? What *truth* can it carry? Further, is the meaning that our culture attaches to “truth” and its denial really unarguable? I would also like to add that the “main features” of a philosophical discourse always refer back to its *basic features*, which, however, at this meeting will remain in the background.

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The Age of Technics

We often hear that ours is the age of technics.² Yet, we are rarely made aware of what lies at the foundation of such a statement. The key cultural currents

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2 The Italian pair *tecnica/tecnologia* and the German *Technik/Technologie* carry a distinction that is nowadays absent in English, since both pairs are usually translated as “technology.” Yet, in order for the reader to follow the author’s hints and references to *techne*, we have used “technics” for the technical domain at large and “technology” for the specific combination of techniques, technical apparatus, and the sciences in the modern age. Heidegger himself, in his “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in the words of his English translator points out that “*techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts” (*The Question*, 13) so that his *Question* was *Concerning Technics* at large rather than limited to *Technology*. For an explanation on the breach between English and other European languages on the term *technology*, see Schatzberg (*Translator’s note*).

of today's Western tradition aim at using technics to achieve their ends. This is the goal of capitalism, democracy, communism, and Christianity – after all, charity has now a worldwide quality; it reaches out to the poor all over the Earth and therefore cannot but make use of technics. All these cultural currents share in the belief that modern science-guided technics are simply a tool. It has become sort of a cliché to say that the tool is good if well-used, and bad if misused. Technics, per se, would have no end goal: it would receive it from the outside. Yet the belief that we use technics as a mere tool is illusory.

110 The cultural currents of the Western tradition still alive today are in conflict with one another. Until the time when capitalism, democracy, and Christianity had a common enemy, namely, the Soviet Union's real socialism, the dissent among these temporary allies remained in the background. Since the collapse of real socialism, however, the conflict among these cultural currents has finally come to the fore: capitalism refuses to be hindered by the principles of Christian solidarity and democracy; democracy opposes unruly capitalism and attempts by the Churches to turn religious dogmas into the State's laws. The Catholic Church, in turn, opposes a capitalism aiming at profit rather than at society's "common good", and a democracy in which "freedom" is separate from "truth"; this is clearly shown by the Roman Pontiff's latest encyclicals.

But precisely as a result of this conflict, each of these cultural currents is forced to preserve and increase the power of the tool it uses to prevail over the other, that is, each of them is forced to preserve and increase the power of the technological apparatus it controls. In a sort of paradoxical consequence, each of these cultural currents must prevent its own values and aims from hampering and weakening the power of the technological tool through which it plans to realize them. When this happens – and this is exactly what is happening today – the cultural currents of the Western tradition are on their way to giving up, more or less explicitly and consciously, the achievement of their aims, for now their primary aim becomes the lower-growth of the technologies at their disposal. From being a means, technics becomes the end goal; vice versa, the goal of the cultural currents of the Western tradition becomes simply the means.

Capitalism and state socialism have used the scientific-technological apparatus to prevail one over the other. Marxist philosophy, however, has hampered and weakened the power of the technological apparatus available to state socialism far more deeply than capitalism ever did. In order to survive, Marxism was thus eventually compelled to set out to save its tool (which was and still is well stocked up in a nuclear arsenal capable of destroying the planet). State so-

cialism, that is, had to relinquish gradually itself in order to survive: the might of that technological tool that today allows Russia and the other former Soviet Union republics to be among the privileged countries in the World, despite their economic straits, has become the goal of these countries.

Yet the fate of real socialism is also shared by capitalism, democracy, Christianity, and not only them. In different forms and at different times, each of these cultural currents will have to relinquish itself to survive in the battle against its opponents. It will have to take as its goal the unlimited increase of power of the scientific-technological apparatus it manages. Technics, on the other hand, does not lack its own goal; its end is precisely the unlimited growth of its power. Humankind's supreme aim is therefore becoming the end goal technics holds for itself, which is not the achievement of a particular aim at the exclusion of others (a capitalist world, for instance, excludes a Christian world), but the unlimited growth of its capacity to achieve end goals. This unlimited growth is bound to become man's end goal. Technics, however, can become Western civilization's highest end only because *truth* fades out, and with it disappears the truth of the end goals.

The Law of Episteme

The Greeks were the first to think of the truth in terms of indisputable knowledge, which imposes itself on every event and every becoming and which, for its ability to impose itself, they call *episteme*. *Steme* is coined on the verb *histasthai*, "to stand," "to impose oneself". *Epi-steme* means *epi-histasthai*, that is, to stand "upon" (*epi*), to impose oneself on every becoming, "on" every time and "on" every event. *Episteme* is the supreme Law: everything must conform to it and nothing can escape it, not only everything that exists, but also everything that does not yet exist and does not exist anymore. It is, first of all, the truth of the episteme that says to each being, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The truth of the episteme shows the indisputable, irrevocable, immutable Meaning of Everything. Throughout Western history, all the Immutables are fashioned within this truth as well as every shape of the divine and the eternal.

But because the episteme of the truth imposes itself on the becoming of the world and dominates it, it becomes the first form of unconditional *acknowledgment* that Becoming exists. Beginning from the Greeks, and for a good part of Western history, although in different contexts and manners, Becoming gets to be thought of and lived as the emerging of things from nothingness and

their returning to nothingness. In Western culture, the becoming of beings, thus understood, starts soon enough to be acknowledged as the fundamental and indisputable evidence. The episteme of the truth intends to combine the evidence of the Becoming with the evidence of the eternal.

The episteme of the truth is, therefore, soul and foundation of the entire Western tradition: not only of its philosophical tradition, but also of its entire cultural tradition, and thus of Christianity, of Western artistic expression, and even of the way modern science from Galilei up to the nineteenth century has configured itself. The episteme of the truth is soul and foundation of the social, political, and economic institutions of Western tradition. Every aspect of Western tradition, whether action or thought, makes reference to the settled, indisputable meaning of the wholeness of Being and to its articulation in the eternal laws that rule the becoming of the world.

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As long as the truth lives on – and man's actions aspire to conform themselves to the truth – it is impossible for technics to become man's highest end goal. The means is indeed governed by the aim, and is modifiable and replaceable; if truth did have its own aim outside itself, it, too, would become just a means, that is, something controlled by the non-truth, something modifiable and replaceable, and therefore it would not be the truth.

Yet the truth of the episteme fades out, inevitably, and, thus, inevitably the traditional civilization of the West fades out as well, and with it, the greatness and richness of its content. For this reason, Nietzsche speaks of the "death of God". Western tradition has entrusted the truth with the task of making thinkable the becoming of the world and making bearable the pain and anguish generated by the Becoming. The immutable knowledge of the immutable is the first great form of cure devised by the West. The other is modern technics. But truth – and the eternal stated in it – eventually makes the very becoming that lies at its foundation unthinkable, and therefore eventually causes the existence of man to be even more riddled with anxiety. The cure, Nietzsche will say, was worse than the disease.

It is the philosophical discourse of the last century and a half that has brought about the collapse of the episteme of the truth. According to the philosophical tradition, the evidence of the becoming implies the *existence* of the eternal. Modern philosophical discourse, by contrast, shows that the evidence of the Becoming necessarily implies the *non-existence* of any form of the eternal and of episteme. Yet only seldom is the philosophical discourse of our time conscious of its invincible strength. It can be compared to a man swaying a sword without being aware of its power. If we really wanted to comprehend the

nature of such invincibility, we should dig into the substratum that lies at the foundation of such discourse. Today, however, we will be able to highlight only its basic structure.

The substratum of modern philosophical discourse, in its essence, speaks thus: the episteme is the supreme Law. Not only each thing that exists, but also all that is still nothing and all that is now nothing must conform to it. Not even the nothingness can escape this Law. The things that are in the nothingness, too, are subjected to the Law, for they too, while beginning to be or trying to be, are subjected to it and cannot inhabit a place where the Law of the episteme is no longer of value.

This means that the truth of the episteme *anticipates* the being of every event, it predicts the being of every new event, it fills every blank, it fills the blanks of that nothing from which things come and to which things return. The truth of the episteme *nullifies the Becoming* – that very Becoming which the truth of the episteme has hailed as irrefutable evidence and of which the episteme itself is first evidence and key acknowledgment in Western history. From the very beginning, the West comes to view Becoming as the process by which things come from and return to nothingness. The Law of the episteme, however, turns nothingness into a mere listener, so to speak, and a servant of Being; by filling the blank of nothingness this Law ends up denying the very Becoming of which the Law itself is the primary acknowledgment.

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By contrast, the basic substratum of modern philosophical discourse shows a *radical loyalty* to the evidence of the Becoming, and therefore denies every episteme, every eternal, and every immutable, which, in an effort to grant meaning to Becoming and make it bearable, ends up nullifying and denying it. Although for the episteme Becoming is absolute and fundamental evidence, the episteme ends up making Becoming unthinkable and sheer appearance. And the unavoidable denial of every episteme is, at the same time, the repudiation of every political and ethical praxis, which aims at conforming man's action to the truth of the episteme. In its basic substratum, the philosophical discourse of our time is therefore the unavoidable repudiation of every type of absolutism and totalitarianism. The defeat of absolutism and totalitarianism that takes place at a practical level is made possible by their being unthinkable and by the more or less guarded manifestation of this unthinkability.

On the other hand, although the truth of the episteme is impossible, its decline is still an ongoing process. This truth, and the civilization that developed around it, is a large dead leaf, which, however, is still hanging from the branch of the Western tree. Christianity seems to be growing stronger today, but it has

transcribed the form and content of the truth of the episteme in its modalities of faith. (The Christian concept of a creation out of nothing would be unthinkable without the Greeks' reflections on nothingness; the God of Christian tradition would be unthinkable without the Greeks' notion of the eternal. The "certitude," the "unquestionable," and the "truth" of the Christian faith are all categories Christianity inherited from Greek thought.)

With the decline of the truth of the episteme, the cultural currents of the past and of the present retain only their practical power, despite their attempt to portray themselves still as absolute truths and to present their end goal as the conforming of the human praxis to absolute truth. But cracks in the cultural currents of the past are beginning to surface. The worth of a cultural or social current is no longer based on its truth, but coincides with the degree and strength of its power, that is, its practical ability to prevail over the other forces and force its aim upon them. Modern science, too, no longer presents itself as an absolute truth, but as a hypothetical-deductive knowledge open to the modification and transformation of its conceptual bylaws.

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Today the supreme form of power is science-guided technics. It is, therefore, inevitable that the face of every other past and present power should exhibit signs of its essential failure to present itself as the absolute truth. And it is also inevitable that when these past and present forces use technics as the most powerful tool to prevail over the other, they end up, because of their will to prevail, subordinating their end goal to the power of technics. Technics, that is, the unlimited growth of the scientific-technical power to achieve aims, becomes the highest goal of Western civilization and now of the entire planet. Capitalism and democracy, too, are destined to become subordinates of technics. We are moving towards a time when technics will no longer be used to create a profit or to preserve the democratic set-up; instead, we create profit or promote democracy to ever increase – that is, until the tool works – the power of technics.

Technics is "inhumane" only when we understand it narrowly. Every cultural form of the West has viewed man as a core force capable of coordinating means in light of the production of end goals. Yet this is also the essential ability of technics, a fact underlined by its physical-mathematical character. To the Western mind, man *is* technics.

Technics is the present form of man's salvation. Today man seeks his own salvation from technics. When a man turns to a savior – God or technics – his aim is his own salvation and he uses the savior as a means. But then, this very same man realizes that since the savior is just a means he owns, the savior is

weak, for He or it partakes of the very same weakness as those who want to be saved. So eventually man identifies his end goal with the savior's power, and his will becomes subordinate to his desire that the savior's will be fulfilled. By now, however, the will is no longer that of a God, but is the will of technics.

The Roots of Anxiety

Neither God nor technics, however, can save man from the nothingness and anxiety that spring from the becoming of the world. The conviction that man and things emerge from and return to nothingness is at the root of Western civilization altogether; it is that civilization's predominant idea. Christianity believes in the immortality of the soul and in the resurrection of the flesh. Yet this victory over nothingness is a free gift from God, who can just as freely annihilate man for, by his nature, man is nothingness ("for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"); free divine creation alone can turn this nothingness into a being. In the resurrection, indeed, we will be presented with a new world, but the old world – the world where we live and which is at the center of our interests – will be forever obliterated for it will be transfigured into another world. Christianity's optimism and comforting feature are patent. Christianity is also a faith, and a faith is by its very nature subject to doubt. Finally, the destiny of Christianity is intrinsically bound up with the destiny of the truth of the episteme, and the inevitability of the latter's decline is the inevitability of Christianity's decline – and the decline of all the other traditional cultural currents of the West, capitalism and democracy included. Their decline implies their impossibility to remain as the primary aims of taking action; it implies, in fact, their subordination to technics.

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All the great cultural currents of the West view man *qua* man as a being that is ephemeral, short-lived, contingent, temporal, historic, finite, and becoming a mortal being, that is, who is the victim of nothingness. Thus, these currents are at the *root* of and are responsible for the deep anguish of Western man. The epistemic, metaphysical apparatus is doomed to wane into the scientific-technological apparatus; the latter, too, however, tries in vain to disguise and cover the nothingness to which man, within Western civilization, is inexorably doomed. After conjuring up nothingness – the original and essential nothing of all things – the West knows no longer how to defend itself from that nothingness and can only delay its assault. For the masses, the time to realize this situation has already come.

On the shoulders of the meaning that Western thought has attached to Becoming, therefore, rests an enormous burden. Yet ours, perhaps, is also

the time when we can question the soul and, with it, what lies at the roots of Western culture, namely, the meaning that Greek thought has once and for all placed on the becoming of Being. The time may be ripe to challenge the absolute, unconditional evidence we have all along attached to Becoming.

The whole of the Western tradition has been challenged – and has inevitably been destroyed – because of its reliance on the assumption of the evidence of Becoming. On this assumption, Western tradition has erected each and every form of what we call “critical spirit.” The “crisis” that is at the root of the criticality of the “critical spirit” is exactly the transience of certainties, their being crushed by this Becoming. But what is the basis for this assumption? Can this assumption withstand every form of criticism? Can it bear the enormous burden of the West?

My work has, for some time, attempted to answer this question. The answer I have provided, however, can be presented today only allusively, and inevitably will raise more questions than can be answered.

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The Essence of Folly

Becoming, understood as the wavering of an entity between Being and nothingness, is the *ontological* form of an even *more primal* meaning of Becoming, a *pre-ontological* meaning, present since the beginning of man’s journey on Earth and thus dominating also the whole of Eastern culture. From the very beginning and everywhere, Becoming has been understood as *becoming-other*. We must turn our attention to this topic now.

A thing is thought to become only if it becomes *other* than what it is. A house is built only if the building material becomes other than self, which, in this case, is the joining of the material into the joint structure of the house. Time passes only if *before* becomes other than *before* which is *after*. The wood blazes and burns away only if it becomes other than the wood, the ash – or any of the intermediate states between the newly kindled wood and the ash. Becoming is transformation, metamorphosis, becoming-other, precisely. The end of Becoming is other than the beginning of Becoming. The result, namely, the fulfillment of Becoming, is the situation in which the thing that becomes has become other than self, and because it became other than self *is other than self*. Becoming is fulfilled when the thing that becomes, having become other than self, *is other than self*. But then, isn’t a thing that is other than self, in fact, that which is not what it is, the very meaning of the impossible? Isn’t it the very essence of Folly?

However, when we think that Becoming is becoming-other, we also think that the end of Becoming contains only what from the start is other. When we think that the wood becomes ash, we believe that when the wood stops burning; the ash alone exists. The ash is there, the wood is gone. In this belief, where is the impossible and where is Folly?

Even so, when we state that the wood becomes ash, we do not mean *only* that a certain quantity of ash begins to exist. Sure, we do mean this *too*, but not only this. What we mean is also that *it is the wood* that becomes ash, and this is why we think some quantity of ash begins to exist. At the end of the process of burning, we think that *the wood* has become ash, or that *the wood* is *ash*. At the end of the process of burning there is not just the ash, but being ash *on the part of the wood* – and being ash on the part of the wood – means, in fact, that *the wood is ash*, or that something is other than self, is not itself, is not what it is.

Becoming-other is identification of that which is different and differentiation of that which is identical. At the end of the process of becoming other, the different *qua* different is identical, and the identical *qua* identical is different. Now isn't this exactly the impossible, what cannot exist, the true core of Folly? And if this is the way things stand, are we not correct when we state that man has always lived inside Folly, for his belief has always been that becoming is becoming-other, on the part of what becomes?

At this point, one could reply that Hegel has criticized most effectively the principle of non-contradiction; and if becoming-other implies being-other than self on the part of something, this being other is exactly a contradiction, and, in fact, one of the instances of contradiction rejected downright, if in vain, by the principle of non-contradiction.

Nevertheless, there are many shadows hanging over Hegel's criticism of the principle of non-contradiction and of the criticism of the better part of contemporary philosophy. This principle is first of all the principle of the episteme, and as such it is the most radical form of negation and obliteration of Becoming. As Hegel points out, this principle holds determination, in its being identical to itself, steadfast as something absolute that wants to remain outside Becoming; or further, as Nietzsche points out, the principle of non-contradiction identifies different states of Becoming but then reduces the new to old patterns.

For those having faith in Becoming, then, it is necessary to deny the principle of non-contradiction as a principle of the episteme, namely, as negation of Becoming. Yet we can also believe in the existence of becoming-other only if we assume that the thing, which becomes other, is *not* from the very start its own other, and that it can become other than self precisely because

it is not immediately its own other, and needs to not be its other. But that a thing is not its own other is actually the very essence of the principle of non-contradiction.

This principle, therefore, does not have just the value thanks to which it is the principle of the episteme (hence, something to be denied in the name of Becoming); the principle of non-contradiction carries also with it a basic value thanks to which it also belongs to the very essence of Becoming, to the essential framework of Becoming. It enjoys, therefore, the very evidence Western thought has assigned to Becoming. If it is impossible for Western thought to deny Becoming, then it is also impossible for such a thought to deny the primal meaning of the principle of non-contradiction, without which Becoming, as becoming-other, could not exist.

118 *But now we are looking beyond our faith in Becoming*, and thus beyond Western belief in the principle of non-contradiction. As we are suggesting, stating that a thing *becomes* other than what it is means stating that, as a result of its becoming, a thing is other than what it is, or, *is identical* to its own other: it *is* what *is not*. As a result of its becoming, the wood *is* ash (and at the onset of its becoming, where the ash is still wood, the ash *is* wood). Therefore, the belief that things are a becoming-other than self – a belief shared by humanity throughout its history – at the very moment it wants the thing *not* to be other than self (the becoming-other of a thing would, otherwise, be impossible), and at the very moment it professes this act of faith, it in fact undermines its wanting, and by stating that Becoming is becoming-other, it states that the thing, having become its own other, *is* its own other.

Faith in Becoming is thus unable to think and hold steady this not-being-other, that is, this being-self on the part of the thing, which, however, lies at the foundation of this faith. Our faith in Becoming is faith in the existence of the impossible, the absurd, the self-contradictory. It is a faith in the extreme form of Folly, both because it asserts the identity of being and its other, and because, at the same time, it denies and asserts this identity.

All That Shows Itself Is Eternal

Since becoming-other is actually the impossible, becoming-other is not and cannot be something *manifest*; it is not and cannot be something that *appears* and shows itself. It cannot be manifest that the wood is ash; the identity of the different, namely, the becoming of ash on the part of the wood, cannot be manifest. Because the result of Becoming cannot appear, not even Becoming,

understood as a process leading to that result, can appear. Faith in Becoming distorts the genuine face of what appears.

What appears is certainly a becoming, but not a becoming-other. What appears is the sequence of the stages of the world. First appears the unlit wood, then the burning wood, then the glowing wood, then the ash (and all the intermediate stages, which I have outlined). Wood and ash are terms to be taken literally, but they are also metaphors of the life and death of all events. Man, too, is wood that becomes ash. The stages of the world appear gradually. It appears that each stage is none of the other stages; it is not the other than self and itself. Each stage, each instant of the world is necessarily near itself, and does not emerge from self to become other.

As a result, it does not become that other than self which is nothingness, just as nothingness does not become other than self, which is being. Every state, every instant of the world is *eternal*. It is thus necessary that the becoming of the world be both the arising of the eternal in the eternal horizon of appearing and their parting from such horizon. With every stage and every instant of the world – as well as with their contents – it comes into line with the nature of the sun, which keeps on shining all the same when at dusk and before dawn it hides from our eyes.

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The horizon of appearing is the totality of what shows itself. All that shows itself is eternal, or rather, is near itself and does not emerge from self to become other. Also, Becoming is the arising of the eternal in the manifest wholeness of the eternal as well as their emerging from this wholeness. Becoming is possible only as becoming of the eternal, that is, as the eternal making itself present and absent from the manifest wholeness of the eternal.

Non-Folly is the appearance of the endlessness of every being. Not the endlessness of the “eternal return” Nietzsche writes about, where the Folly of emerging from nothingness and returning to nothingness is multiplied to infinity, but the endlessness as impossibility for the entity to be nothingness, hence as the impossibility for being – namely, every stage and every instant of the world – to emerge from and return to nothingness.

Should the eternity of everything appear to humanity, an unprecedented way of inhabiting the Earth would begin to appear. And if “man” is will, a will in fact for something to become other, the decline of becoming-other would be the decline of “man”; that is, it would be the appearance of the “Beyond-Man”, but with an unfathomably different meaning from what this expression has in Nietzsche’s language, where it hints at one of the extreme forms of the will that wants the becoming-other of things.

The Nihilism of the West

Western thought, starting from the Greeks, has understood becoming-other on the part of a thing in an ontological sense, taking it to mean that the thing becomes other only insofar as it first annihilates itself, and insofar as the other first emerges from nothingness. The West thinks that only if the specific form of wood becomes nothingness, then the wood can become ash. It further believes that the ash is the result of becoming ash by the wood only if the specific form of ash emerges from nothingness. But the contradiction of becoming-other is pushed to extremes by this way of thinking and living what we think, for not only the wood becomes one and identifies with its other, which is the ash, but, above all, it becomes one and identifies with its infinitely other, which is nothingness (since nothingness is the infinitely other with regard to every being). The result of Becoming, in turn, develops not only because in it being ash is being wood but, above all, because nothing whence springs the specific form of ash becomes one and identifies with the infinitely other than nothing, which is the ash, as does every other being.

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Since it places its faith in becoming-other, the pre-ontological thought thinks that when the ash is still wood and when the wood is already ash, there exists a time in which the ash is wood and the wood is ash. Since it places its faith in becoming-other, the ontological thought of the West thinks that when the being is still nothingness and when the being goes back into nothingness, there exists a time in which being is nothingness and nothingness is being. Western thought has a tendency to reject a time when the circle is a square; yet it becomes completely blind when faced with the Folly that thinks of a time in which Being is nothing. To state that at a given moment of time the wood (the specific form of wood) is nothing, in fact, does not imply that at a given moment of time nothingness is nothing! The same is true *of the wood*, that is, *of a being*, that is, of something *that is not* a nothing. The statement does not imply that, at a given moment of time, *it is* a nothing!

The belief that beings are nothing is the very essence of *nihilism*. Yet the basic essence of nihilism has a meaning completely different from the meaning nihilism holds in Nietzsche's thought or in Heidegger's. Nietzsche and Heidegger resist nihilism, yet their works remain bound to the faith in becoming-other, that is, to nihilism's real essence.

This essence is the ontological form of the faith in becoming-other. Western history is the history of nihilism, in the sense that the Folly of nihilism is hidden exactly in what, for the West, is the highest and basic evidence, that is, becoming-other on the part of beings, their emerging from and returning to

nothingness. The history of the West, seen as faith in the ontological sense of the Becoming, is the history of the belief that beings *qua* beings are nothing. The West is the life that lives this belief of beings as nothingness.

The Destiny of Truth

Non-Folly is the unheard-of meaning that truth holds outside the faith in Becoming and therefore outside nihilism, which is also and above all present in the episteme. Non-Folly is the destiny of truth, what truth is fated to. Outside Folly, truth is the denial of becoming-other, that is, the denial of the non-being of beings; truth is to assert the eternity of every being. Truth's destiny is the appearance of being-self of the Being, for this being-self of the Being, or its non-being-the-other-than-self, is non-becoming-other, and so is not-becoming-a-nothing and not-emerging-from-nothingness. Truth's destiny is the framework in which the being-self of the Being is necessarily joined with the appearance of the existent.

In turn, not even the appearance of truth's destiny is a dimension that emerges from and returns to nothingness: truth's destiny appears eternally, and the real "being-man" (which is the basic "being beyond man") is the eternal appearance of truth's destiny. Destiny is not a by-product of time. On the contrary, the millennia of time loom within the appearance of truth's destiny. And only within this destiny can the faith in becoming-other appear, as well as the extreme form of such a faith, namely, nihilism's real essence. In the civilization of technics, the will for beings to become other than self – the will to create and annihilate beings – reaches its climax. Therefore, the civilization of technics is the climax of Western nihilism. The indefinite growth of its capability to reach its goals, which is the primary aim of technics, is one and the same with the indefinite growth of the will to have Being become other than self, as well as to have infinite new worlds be created and old worlds be annihilated. 121

The eternal that appears in truth's destiny has a meaning essentially different from the eternal of the truth of the episteme. The eternal of the episteme, as Law and definitive Meaning of Being, is the lord and master of becoming-other; in Western history, the eternal is, therefore, the basic acknowledgment that becoming-other exists. Throughout this history, the eternal has been the master, and becoming-other has been the servant. (And the servant will eventually destroy its master.) Outside the faith in becoming-other and outside nihilism, truth's destiny sees instead Folly – the impossibility, the necessary non-existence of becoming-other. That is, it sees that every state and every instant of the beings is eternal, that beings as beings are eternal. It sees, thus,

that the eternal is not the lord and master of a servant, for the servant does not exist, and therefore not even a master exists. The eternal of the episteme curbs the becoming of beings; the eternal of truth's destiny is beings themselves, the basic calling of beings as beings.

Since emerging and returning to nothingness is impossible, every state and every instant of beings lie near themselves and do not leave nothingness so as to enter themselves, and they do not leave themselves so as to return to nothingness. They are eternal. But that is exactly why every state and every instant are necessarily joined with all others. Becoming is the appearing and disappearing of the eternal, their entering the eternal horizon of appearing and their leaving it. Eternal is the unlit wood, eternal is the lit-up wood, and the glowing wood and the ash. Eternal is the very faith in becoming-other, the essence of Folly and nihilism, the climax of Folly, namely, the belief that Being enters and leaves the nothingness, for, if the content of Folly is the impossible, that is a nothing. Folly is not a nothing but a being, which is, like every being, eternal and which is, actually, the eternal that dominates human history. But even to err belongs to the eternal constellations of being. Can the constellations of Folly wane? Can the constellations of Non-Folly, of truth's destiny, come forward?

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The Failure of Will

Since every being is eternal, the will cannot achieve what it wants. The will wants becoming-other, that is, it wants the impossible. Thus the will cannot achieve what it wants. However "evident" its success might be, the success of the will needs to be apparent. Since the will wants the impossible, that is, that which appears, when we think that the will has achieved what it wants, what the will has achieved is necessarily *other* than what the will wanted. It is necessarily other, although we might think that it is the same. The will of the victor deceives itself believing in its own victory, and so does the will that believes it has been defeated. The world *must* have a *different* meaning from the meaning that appears to the will in both the exhilaration of victory and the anguish of defeat and death.

When there appears the eternal that is the will, this appearing is accompanied by the eternal spectacles of sorrow, violence, anguish, and death. When there appears the eternal that constitutes the will, then extreme violence appears, that is, the will that something be other than what it is; and the whole of Being reacts to the will's violence, leading to the eternal spectacles thus vio-

lently evoked into their appearing. Violence is not the overstepping of limits that are not to be crossed, but that can actually be crossed. Why, in fact, not destroy all that lets itself be destroyed – either a God, or the sense of morality, or the sense of guilt or good faith? Why should man not do what he can actually do? Why should we call violence the violation of limits that let themselves get violated? To these questions there is no answer as long as we remain within the faith in becoming-other.

Yet truth's destiny sees that no being allows its own destruction or creation: that no becoming is in fact a crossing of the limits where standing on this side of the limit becomes the other than self that is standing beyond the limit. No being is something that depends on or springs from a "doing". The real limit is the one we cannot cross. The real limit consists in being self on the part of Being and in its non-being the other than self. The real limit is the destiny of truth, namely, the impossibility to be other than self. Violence is not the will to cross the limits that can be crossed, nor is it the will that wants what in the eyes of the belief in the becoming is possible. Violence is the will that wants the *impossible*; and the real impossible is that something should become other than self; the real impossibility is the violation of truth's destiny. Will as such is violence; charity, love, and tolerance are the hidden forms of violence. Belief in becoming-other is the foundation of every will to power and of every violence, for we can wish for something to become other only if we believe the whole world is a becoming-other on the part of things.

The Fading Away of Folly

When the will appears, there appear spectacles of horror, more or less visible, more or less hidden. There appear the eternal spectacles of violence – the eternal spectacles of fire and ash. But the *annihilation* of Being does not appear. The burning of the wood and the ash are also metaphors of the devastation and destruction of man and things. And yet, when the fire and ash appear, the annihilation of the wood does not appear, nor does it appear that the ash emerges from nothingness. In fact, what annihilates itself from the point of view of nihilism must, from that same point of view, emerge from the horizon of appearing. What has become nothing cannot go on appearing. Insofar as a thing is believed to annihilate itself, it is also necessary to believe that such a thing emerges from the vault of appearing; and the appearing of things cannot share the lot of what no longer appears, just as the heavenly vault cannot show, to anyone looking at it, what befalls the sun after the sun has set. The heavenly

vault shows the sunsets and the horror of these sunsets heralding the dark night. The circle of appearing shows the horror of fire and ash, but does not show the annihilation of the wood. It can also happen that the wood no longer appears, and that only the eternal that are fire and ash appear instead. But the wood, too, is an eternal; thus its coming out from the circle of appearing is not its going into nothingness. All that dies is eternal, and all that is yet unborn is eternal as well.

That which is yet unborn is destined to enter the circle of appearing. To this circle is first of all destined the sunset of the essential Folly, which entails having faith in becoming-other of Being and, with it, the living and the willing according to this faith. Essential Folly is *destined* to fade out for it is the essential contradiction in which beings as beings are equated to nothingness. The fading out of Folly is not its annihilation, but rather the fulfillment of its appearing, its having thoroughly moved into the inside of appearing. The fading out of Folly is not the result of taking action or of a will, nor is it the handiwork of men or gods; it is not a becoming-other. The fading away of Folly is the inevitable for it consists of overcoming the contradiction.

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On the other hand, overcoming the contradiction – any contradiction – is not a future that is still nothing: the overcoming of the contradiction is there already from the start, it is eternal, and is bound to show itself in the circle of appearing in the place where the contradiction of the belief in becoming-other is still dominant. Overcoming the contradiction means “Joy”. The place where man’s contradiction is overcome is man’s genuine being. We are this Joy. But for the waning of essential Folly to appear, it is not enough to have the waning of Folly as thought: we also need the waning of the “products” of Folly, namely, the spectacles of sorrow and death, which appear when there appears the will for the world to become other, and when this will culminates in nihilism and in the civilization of paradise and technics.

The sunset of the “products” of essential Folly can begin only after Folly has shown all its features. The civilization of technics is the beginning of Folly’s revealing itself completely. Every criticism our culture directs at science and technics is based on this very belief of the becoming-other, of which technics is the most strict and powerful expression. Only truth’s destiny, beholding the Folly of the becoming-other – the Folly of the East and the West – can behold the Folly of technics and science.

Our civilization is moving toward the paradise of technics, along a path where disadvantaged peoples, too, try to enjoy the wealth of the privileged. And yet even the clash between rich and poor has an ideological character that

can be settled only if both sides resort to technics. The rich are likely to retain, in the future, their ability to defend their privileges. It is inevitable – according to what surfaced in the first part of our considerations – that technics will end up subordinating to itself the ideology of the rich and the poor, and that eventually the whole of humankind (we do not know at what cost) will take it upon itself to safeguard and increase the power of technics.

Constellations of Joy

When these events come to the fore, the power of technics gives man the illusion he can “achieve” all that he never managed to achieve throughout his history. From within this conviction arises the paradise of technics, which is the greatest form of happiness within essential Folly. And yet, not only is this happiness of Folly happiness, but it is also the happiness built on the foundation of a knowledge and logic that bid farewell to the truth of the episteme and that are now at the remotest distance from fate, that is, from the genuine meaning of truth. In the paradise of technics, happiness is, by its very essence, unstable: this instability is eventually bound to become manifest, and, inevitably, so will the impossibility to overcome it. Placing his trust in his ability to obtain what he wants, the man in the paradise of technics finally realizes he cannot obtain the *truth* of all he achieves; he cannot obtain the truth of his own happiness. Hence, his own paradise becomes the place of his deepest anguish. Not even technics can save man from nothingness. Of all goods, truth is the only good that the paradise of technics cannot obtain.

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In a time when truth is scarce, man is forced to turn once again to deciphering the meaning of truth, as are people. In a time of scarcity, we can return to the meaning the West has assigned to the truth, or, better, to the truth of the episteme. We can move in a circle and return to the beginning. But we can also behold the unprecedented meaning of truth, namely, the dimension that belongs to the destiny of truth. Only then, for all peoples, can the waning of essential Folly begin, as well as the coming forward of the eternal constellations of Joy, that is, of those constellations that are not in agreement with the challenges of the violence of will, but that are long awaited by the manifestation of destiny.

Translated by Santo Pettinato
