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PROGRESS OR REGRESSION?\(^1\)

Adorno's notes for this lecture:

Refer to the special situation of this lecture course.\(^2\)

From a book on dialectics, i.e., to be treated as completed sections of a dialectical philosophy; that is to say, not as individual phenomena independent of the overall conception.

Legitimate in the sense that the two complexes to be treated have always been at the core of a dialectical philosophy.

Thus in *Kant* the relation of the realm of freedom to history is mediated by conflict *[Antagonismus]*.

While in *Hegel* history is regarded immediately as progress in the consciousness of freedom, such that consciousness for Hegel amounts to a realized freedom.\(^3\)

This doctrine is extremely precarious. Shall concentrate on its problematic nature, i.e., the actual historical relation of universal and particular.

Even with the greatest generosity and with the aid of a spiral theory,\(^4\) it is no longer possible to make the case for such progress *directly*:

*objectively*, because of the increasingly dense texture of society both in the East and in the West, the intensification of the process of concentration and of bureaucratization which has the effect of reducing people more and more to the status of functions. Freedom is limited to self-preservation. Even the most highly placed are merely functions of their function.
subjectively, because of ego-weakness, addiction to consumption, conformism. Nothing seems less plausible than the claim that there is progress in the consciousness of freedom, even allowing for the progressive democratization of formal political institutions, since these find themselves opposed by both the substance of social power and human apathy. Indifference to freedom. Neutralization of mind. Depoliticization of science.

After Auschwitz, a regression that has already taken place and is not merely expected à la Spengler, not only every positive doctrine of progress but also even every assertion that history has a meaning has become problematic and affirmative. There is here a transformation of quantity into quality. Even if the murder of millions could be described as an exception and not the expression of a trend (the atom bomb), any appeal to the idea of progress would seem absurd given the scale of the catastrophe."

[Interpolation] *Problem: what is the relation of progress to the individual - a question brushed aside by the philosophy of history.

Simply by asking what history is over and above the facts, the history of philosophy seems inexorably to end up in a theory of the meaning of history.

This applies even to so-called negative or pessimistic histories of philosophy such as Spengler's. Cultural morphology - overarching patterns = organic teleologies; cultures would then have at least as much purpose - 'meaning' - as the plants to which Spengler compares them; they would be living beings in their own right, a solace for individual subjects.

Incidentally, where Spengler attributes the unity of a cultural sphere to its soul, it would be more logical to ascribe it to the unity of its modes of production.

Even in Spengler, the anti-idealists, there is a latent idealism in his explanation of history as arising from within human beings.

Question: is the philosophy of history possible without such latent idealism, without the guarantee of meaning?

10 November 1964 [From Hilmar Tillack's notes] When one grows older and is forced to choose between one's duty as professor to give lectures and the desire to follow one's own philosophical bent, one develops a certain peasant cunning. In the case of this course of lectures, I shall focus on two complexes taken from a philosophical work in progress that I have been engaged on for years, two core themes, samples of dialectical philosophy, concerned, on the one hand, with the relation of world spirit to the history of nature, and on the other, with the doctrine of freedom.

In Kant's philosophy of history, the essence of which is distilled in the 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', the realm of freedom into which individuals might hope to enter is brought together with history. For his part admittedly, in his practical philosophy, Kant is inclined to think of this freedom as existing in the here and now. It is supposed to arise as a result of conflict [Antagonismus]. This resembles Hobbes's earlier view of a war of all against all, the savage conflicts in which mankind has nothing to gain and that result in the famous contracts founding the states. Objectively, Hegel takes over the idea of working one's way forward through conflict but, by adding the idea of the cunning of reason, he intensifies it into a metaphysics, a theory of progress in the consciousness of freedom. History becomes a radical movement in the direction of freedom. 'Consciousness of freedom' does not refer to individual, subjective consciousness, but to the spirit that objectively realizes itself through history, thus making freedom a reality. This theory of progress, as an advance in freedom, is highly vulnerable.

I do not propose to give you a general introduction to the philosophy of history of the kind you will find in writers such as Mehlis, Bernheim or Georg Simmel. Instead, my specific approach focuses on the relationship between freedom and the individual. This is in large part identical with the relation of the universal, the great objective trend, to the particular. This dialectical and logical approach is almost more important than the direct discussion of the structural problems of history. I may note, incidentally, that I agree with Liebrucks here that Hegel's authentic statement of this dialectical philosophy of history is to be found in his Logic and The Phenomenology of Spirit rather than elsewhere. Without wasting time on the overworked notion of a spiral development in history, it can be said that a direct progress towards freedom cannot be discerned. Objectively, such progress is impossible because of the increasingly dense texture of society in both East and West; the growing concentration of the economy, the executive and the bureaucracy has advanced to such an extent that people are reduced more and more to the status of functions. What freedom remains is superficial, part of the cherished private life, and lacks substance as far as people's ability to determine their own lives is concerned. In reality they are only given free rein in limited activities because they could not stand it otherwise, and all such licence is subject to cancellation. Even in the sphere of consumption - significantly, this term has displaced what used to
be called enjoyment – they have become appendages of the machinery. Goods are not produced for their sake and their consumption satisfies people’s own desires only very indirectly and to a very limited extent. Instead, they have to make do with what the production line spews out. Freedom becomes impoverished, jejune, and is reduced to satisfies people’s own desires only very indirectly and to a very limited extent. Instead, they have to make do with what the production line spews out. Freedom becomes impoverished, jejune, and is reduced to.

Where an optimum of freedom seems to have survived people cannot avail themselves of it. If you were to sit down, reflect, and make decisions, you would soon fall behind and become an eccentric, like the Savage in Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

Freedom is also a realm of subjective experience; that is to say, it is not just to be assessed by some objective standard. Where a subjective interest, a consciousness, is absent, there can be no freedom. Where objective conditions cease to favour a person or a category, or even obstruct and undermine them, there will be a corresponding loss of interest in them, and hence of the strength and the ability required to help them to prosper. Spengler says that Rousseau is starting to be a bore, and Marx even more so.

We need not discuss the truth of this claim here, but we can concede that the pathos of freedom in 1789 had its purely decorative side, one that continued to reverberate down to the middle of the nineteenth century. Nowadays, people are unable to get excited about it. They may fear losing the opportunities for consumption, but their interest in expanding freedom is absent. It is an illusion to imagine that freedom is a substantial value merely because words are long-lived. Freedom survives only in remote mountainous regions where there is still resistance to totalitarian tyranny. Elsewhere, it has long since acquired the odium of obsolescence. What is of significance for the internal structure of individuals today is a phenomenon identified by psychoanalysis. This is the phenomenon of ego weakness. David Riesman speaks of inward-directed and other-directed characters. By the latter, the predominant type today, he means the social character whose actions are guided by outside influences. In his case the discrepancy between the development of his ego and the power of the forces that bear down on him has the effect that his ego does not reach the point of a dialectic between his internal and external powers. In consequence he simply conforms. The chaining of people to consumption is an index of this. Political apathy has also become the universal rule in all countries now, as long as direct personal interests are not affected. It should be thought of in the same context. The progressive democratization of political institutions will do nothing to mitigate the loss of a sense of freedom, the growing indifference or the enfeeblement of the desire for freedom because the socio-economic reality of even the freest political institutions stands in the way of such a sense of freedom.

People are not as bound to authority as was supposed as recently as some thirty years ago because of their identification with their father imago. What we are witnessing is rather a neutralizing effect resulting from the pressure to conform. This leads to a closing off of the entire horizon of freedom and dependency. Where no freedom is experienced, there can no longer be any authority. The vanishing of this conceptual pair, freedom and authority, is more significant today than the growing apathy. This process of neutralization is what we must be concerned with. Resistance to the routinization of science is another task that still remains to philosophy.

This process of neutralization should not be thought of as harmless. The loss of a sense of freedom tends to flip over into immediate terror, as is all too evident in Auschwitz. The catastrophe there was not just a disaster predicted by Spengler, but an actual reality, one that makes all talk of progress towards freedom seem ludicrous. The concept of the autonomous human subject is refuted by reality. By the same token, if freedom and autonomy still had any substance, Auschwitz could not have happened. And by Auschwitz I mean of course the entire system. Confronted with the fact that Auschwitz was possible, that politics could merge directly with mass murder, the affirmative mentality becomes the mere assertion of a mind that is incapable of looking horror in the face and that thereby perpetuates it.

What we see here is the transformation of quantity into quality – monstrous though it is to try to operate with the concept of quality in order to grasp the murder of millions. In fact, even to attempt to withstand such events mentally, to shed light on them with the aid of concepts, is to fix them with concepts. To speak of genocide as if it were an institution is to institutionalize it. We thereby assume a second burden of guilt. The change from quantity to quality here has this meaning; in bygone days exceptional situations were exceptions to the main trend. Alternatively, we might treat men such as Tamburlaine and Genghis Khan as great natural calamities. Nowadays that has all changed. The horror of our day has arisen from the
intrinsic dynamics of our own history; it cannot be described as exceptional. And even if we do think of it as an exception and not the expression of a trend – although this latter is not implausible, given that the atom bomb and the gas chamber have certain catastrophic similarities – to do so is somehow absurd in the light of the scale of the disaster. What can it mean to say that the human race is making progress when millions are reduced to the level of objects?

Such things have a kind of retroactive force and demonstrate the extreme precariousness of the affirmative view of history. It raises the question whether the view of history as a continuous progression towards higher forms does not include the catastrophes that we are experiencing today; whether the predominance of the universal, the broad tendency, over the particular is not a delusion; whether the consolation of philosophy that the death of individuals is the price paid by the great movement of history was not always the swindle it is today; whether the sufferings of a single human being can be compensated for (aufgehoben) by the triumphal march of progress.

In so far as the philosophy of history sets out to show something more than the facts, it implicitly contains the search for meaning, formally at least – without the need for philosophy to explain it. In the same way, negative, cyclical theories of history also have this affirmative side despite themselves, even though they do not claim that history has a definite meaning but instead substitute nature for history. Spengler disastrously encouraged people to insert themselves into the machinery of history within the general framework of historical necessity at the same time as predicting the victory of that machinery. Frobenius's cultural morphology is an organic teleology that preaches the idea of an all-encompassing, coherent totality. This implies at least as much meaning or purpose within cultures as the plants to which Spengler compares them. This leaves the poor unfortunate individuals with the consolation that they are part of a higher living being, which has the benefit of conferring some meaning on their otherwise pointless existence. The fact that Spengler later developed a political point of view is not inconsistent with his cultural pessimism. This is connected with the affirmative element in his teaching. Where pessimism is a general proposition, where it has a totalizing view, it implies that everything is fundamentally flawed, as Schopenhauer believed. Paradoxically, this means that it tends to leap to the assistance of individual evil in the world. It does so by arguing that attempts to change the world as a whole are doomed. This is also implicit in a negative philosophy of history.

It would be more logical to attribute the unity of a cultural sphere to the unity of a mode of production than – as with Spengler – to purely internal factors. It is not easy to see how something internal could put its stamp on an external form, like the 'shape that has been impressed upon evolving life'. Spengler the anti-idealist becomes an idealist when he argues that the totality arises out of something internal to human beings, to the essence of humanity, without noticing that history is for the most part something that is done to people. He fails to realize that institutions have become so independent that individuals are scarcely in a position to impinge on them and are able to express their opinions about them only indirectly, through art, for example.

The question we must ask, therefore, is whether a theory of history is possible without a latent idealism; whether we can construct history without committing the cardinal sin of insinuating meaning where none exists.
Last time I talked to you about the philosophy of history. I should like to continue today by saying something about history as an academic discipline (Geschichtswissenschaft). In the course of this lecture I shall perhaps be able to go some way towards persuading you that — objectively — history is possible only as the philosophy of history, a view that is not wholly without foundation. Moreover, any history, historiography, that denies this is simply unaware of itself and its own requirements. Now what I have represented to you as a crisis in the idea of historical meaning can be seen in the postulates of historiography and, beyond that, in the majority of the humanities, which especially in Germany are predominantly historical in their methods and which resist every attempt to oppose that historical orientation. Let me remind you of the dominant positivist tradition in historiography which was first formulated in Ranke's dictum that the task of history, of historical research, was to 'tell how it really happened'. The effect of this tradition was that increasingly it involved the outlawing of every attempt to understand history from above, and this meant the elimination of every element of history, every objective historical tendency, which I claimed last time was not derivative or secondary, was not merely the weird invention of philosophers of history, but was in fact what people immediately experience when they find themselves caught up in a maelstrom of the so-called great historical epochs. If I am not mistaken, the tendency of historians is increasingly to call into question all large concepts such as that of universal history itself, and then likewise to cast doubt, first, on the idea of the great trends that are supposed to be at work throughout history and, finally, on narrower concepts such as those of the different epochs. I need only remind you of the fact, well known to the historians among you, that the concept of the Middle Ages has — with very good reason — been undermined in a variety of ways. One line of argument has been to maintain that the crisis in the Middle Ages should probably be dated much earlier than the official start to the Renaissance. Scholars began to talk about the discovery of a kind of proto-Renaissance as early as the age of High Gothic — a period traditionally assigned to the Middle Ages. By way of contrast, there are other trends that challenge the concept of historical facts as such, so that the undermining of historiography even extends to its own opposite pole, the concept of the individual historical event, the événement. In France above all critical historians have attacked événementism as an approach in which too much importance is attributed to major, particular events. You may well be familiar with this yourselves if you have ever wondered whether the great battles of Napoleon or the Great Elector really were as important historically as people said they were. This overweighting of the factual itself presupposes a theory that historical processes have some sort of meaning which then identifies its nodal points or crises in such événements. And the moment the idea of such a meaningful historical process is shaken, it begins to have an effect upon the counter-idea of the specific fact so that history begins to slide almost imperceptibly to a point where it becomes questionable whether we can say anything meaningful about it at all.

In these lectures I wish to deal only with one specific problem of history, namely the relation between the universal, the universal tendency, and the particular, that is, the individual. It is not my task here to enter into the detail of the way in which history is constructed. Even so, I believe that, if we are to treat certain fundamental questions of the philosophy of history, we cannot ignore such matters entirely; and I believe further that the knowledge of historical matters is in the first instance a question of distance. If we approach details too closely and fail to open them up to critical inspection, we will indeed find ourselves in the proverbial situation of not seeing the wood for the trees. On the other hand, if we distance ourselves too much, we shall be unable to grasp history because the categories we use themselves become excessively magnified to the point where they become problematic and fail to do justice to their material. I have in mind concepts such as the progress of freedom, about which I offered some critical comments last time. So I would say that we need to keep a certain distance. This will enable us both to dissociate...
ourselves from a total theory of history and equally to resist the cult of the facts which, as I have explained, have their own conceptual difficulties. We can illustrate this by saying, for example, that we cannot really speak of something like progress in general, as indeed I have already argued. Incidentally we shall take a closer look at this concept towards the end of the section in which we discuss the philosophy of history. But you should also be aware that there is always something dubious about the talk of individual examples of progress that have allegedly occurred in the course of history. This is because, in the society in which we live, every single progressive act is always brought about at the expense of individuals or groups who are thereby condemned to fall under the wheels. Thus because of their particularity, because they disregard the organization of society as a whole, each of these progressive events means that there are always groups who are their victims and who legitimately doubt their value. Nevertheless, we may say - and I believe that even the severest critic of history would not simply dismiss this view - that we can speak of something like progress from the slingshot to the atom bomb. It is not by chance that I am willing to apply the concept of progress to something as terrifying as the atom bomb, something that is so completely inimical to the progress of freedom, to the advance of the autonomy of the human species. There is a good reason for this, or rather it has a very bad and indeed catastrophic meaning. The fact is that particularity will be the mark of all historical movements as long as there is no such thing as what we might call a human race, that is to say, a society that is conscious of itself and has its fate in its own hands. As long as that remains true, all progress will be particular, not just in the sense that progress will always come about at the expense of groups who are not directly involved in it, and who have to bear the brunt of progressive changes, but in the sense that progress has a particular character by nature.

I believe that a thinker such as Max Weber displayed a very proper instinct for this when he reserved the concept of progress for rationality. Max Weber was of course a positivist thinker through and through (even though it was a German version of positivism, one that had passed through the sieve of critical philosophy). He postulated something like a universal structure of progressive rationality at least as a perspective for humanity as a whole. To be sure, he exercised great caution in so doing since he accepted that there were entire civilizations that were prevented by their traditionalist economies from sharing in this progressive rationality and its associated social dynamic. It will astonish you to hear me speaking of a progressive rationality immediately after talking about particularity in the evolution of the historical totality - since you might well imagine that, because reason is a pre-eminently universal category, for it to prevail would represent the polar opposite of any such particularity. However, I think it a mistake to conceive of this idea of a progressive rationality as something incompatible with particularity. I believe that if we are able to appreciate the particularity of the universal, in this instance of progressive rationality, we shall understand a little about the dialectics of the universal and the particular as a structure of history. This is because the universal principle contains a particular within it as a bad, negative element. And in the same way, the converse too holds good, as Hegel has shown with irresistible force, namely that the particular, the individual facts, embody the power of the universal in concentrated form. For from the very outset the rationality to which we commonly ascribe universality was a rationality of the domination of nature, the control of both external nature and man's inner nature. I should like to refer you here to the Dialectic of Enlightenment, by Horkheimer and myself, a book that at long last is due to appear again in the foreseeable future. This domination of nature was not self-reflective but asserted its control over its so-called materials by subsuming, classifying, subordinating and otherwise cutting them short. By materials here we include the materials of nature, the human beings that are to be dominated, and even the subjection of one's own inner nature to the process of rationality. And this contains an idea that I think you should bear in mind since I believe that it is of key importance for our argument. It is the idea that the principle I have called the universal principle, the principle of progressive rationality, contains an internal conflict. In other words, this kind of rationality exists only in so far as it can subjugate something different from and alien to itself. We can put it even more strongly: it can exist only by identifying everything that is caught up in its machinery, by levelling it and by defining it in its alterity as something that resists it and, we may even go so far as to say, something that is hostile to it. In other words, then, antagonism, conflict, is in fact postulated in this principle of dominant universality, of unreflecting rationality, in precisely the same way as antagonism to a subservient group is postulated in a system of rule. And the stage at which self-awareness might lead this rationality to bring about change - that stage has still not been reached.

I should like to say more about this proposition that will probably seem to many of you to be wildly speculative, a piece of pure Hegelian idealism. Perhaps I can turn it the right way up so that it may appear a bit more plausible to you. But before doing so, I should like to add something in honour of the concept of universal history, even though
I remain of the view that this concept too must be understood dialectically. By this I mean that we can say neither that there is such a thing as universal history, nor as is the general fashion today, that there is no such thing. Instead we shall have to say, and this is implicit in what I have already told you, that universal history exists precisely to the same degree as the principle of particularity, or, as I now prefer to call it, the principle of antagonism, persists and perpetuates itself. Ladies and gentlemen, I do not want to present you with such high-sounding declarations without linking them to materials that will help to illuminate them for you. This is particularly important, I believe, at the start of these lectures. At the same time, I do not wish to venture into the territory of what goes by the notion of 'examples', to clarify it, to the degree as the principle of particularity, persists and perpetuates itself. Instead we shall have to say, and this is implicit in what I have already told you, that universal history exists precisely to the same degree as the principle of particularity, or, as I now prefer to call it, the principle of antagonism, persists and perpetuates itself.

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The important point here is that you should not think of the spirit of Hegel himself - but this is by the way. The spirit of the Hegelian philosophy brings me to the main difficulty of every theory of history for the pre-critical consciousness which forms my starting-point. I may remind you that I have already formulated this - and would ask you to be aware that in our discussions we have indeed gained this insight - by saying that in this pre-critical consciousness the dominant, prevailing universality can no longer be equated with the meaning of history or indeed with any positive value. This is indeed the difficulty to which almost every form of consciousness, every naïve form of consciousness, finds itself exposed: the danger of regarding as justified the supremacy of an objective power over human beings who always believe that they are in full possession of themselves and, because of their certainty on this point, are highly reluctant to admit the degree to which they are merely the functions of some universal. For the moment they were to concede that they would in a sense cease to be in their own eyes what their whole tradition tells them they are. This is a great paradox and I should like to encourage you to reflect upon it. On the one hand, the fact is - and I believe that I said enough about this last time - that our most immediate experience is that we are all harnessed to an objective trend, and it is hard to disabuse us of this. We may think,
for example, of the situation of someone who is being persecuted, a
typical fate in our time, who is being discriminated against and pos-
sibly exposed to liquidation because he is said to possess some char-
acteristic or other that he doesn’t even need. Or we may think of the
much more harmless situation of someone who is looking for a job
and who, at the very moment he hopes to find one that meets his
own requirements and abilities, turns out to be biting on granite even
in this age of glorious full employment and ends up having to do
something that is not at all to his liking – such experiences I would
say are absolutely fundamental. If there is any immediate experience,
this is it. On the other hand, however, the moment you draw atten-
tion to this, the sciences, donning their full academic robes, so to
speak, ask you what actually gives you the right to assume the
existence of something universal; this universal is a metaphysical prin-
ciple, it exists only in your mind; in reality there is nothing but
spontaneous individual phenomena, the individual acts of individual
human beings; and this universal is no more than an idea you have
let others foist on you. Nowadays, there really is something like a
perversion of consciousness, a reversing of what is primary and what
secondary, which goes so far that, for purely epistemological reasons
that have by now become automatic, we let ourselves be talked out
of everything we experience at any given moment as the determining
forces in our lives, and we are taught to regard them instead as a
metaphysical sleight of hand. And in contrast to this, things that are
really questionable, such as the primary character of individual
human reactions, are treated by this so-called scientific mind as if
they were truly primary and an absolutely secure foundation of
knowledge, simply because they are supposed to be the basis of all
our judgements. I believe that we would do well to obtain some
clarity about this web of delusion if we are to have any hope at all
of, if not acquiring a firm basis for our understanding of history, at
least clearing a path towards it. And having seen through this web
of delusion, we shall perhaps find it easier to think of the concept of
universal as negativity, a concept I shall turn to next time.

Ladies and gentlemen, I learned today of the death of one of my
oldest and closest friends. I find it almost impossible to concentrate
my thoughts as much as I ought, both for your sake and my own.
However, I did not wish to cancel the lecture and so ask you for your
forbearance.

Last time, I talked about the difficulty of a theory of history that
presents itself to the naively scientific but philosophically pre-critical
mind. This difficulty is that of grasping that something objective has
primacy over human beings who nevertheless think of themselves as
the most certain reality. This fits in with the conception of history
and the philosophy of history based on it as an assemblage of facts
which then have to be interpreted in their indirect, derived context.
It is held to be legitimate to investigate this context even though it
really presupposes a larger framework that encompasses the individ-
ual subjects. Now, precisely because dialectics is necessarily and
permanently concerned with the critique of mere facticity, of mere
immediacy, I should wish not to ignore or neglect the element of truth
contained in facts. Everyone who, like me, had the experience of
having his house searched early in the National Socialist regime will
know full well that such an event has an immediate impact that is
greater than any attempt to seek out its causes, however convincingly
these may be explained in the newspapers – explanations, for example,
to the effect that the National Socialists have seized power, that the
police have been granted certain powers, and other statements of the
same sort. A fact like a house search in which you do not know whether you will be taken off somewhere or whether you will escape with your life has a greater immediacy for the knowing subject than any amount of political information, itself on the level of the facts, to say nothing of the so-called larger historical context to which only reflection and, ultimately, theory can give us access. At the same time, this immediate knowledge that we need to hold onto as one element, something that no theory of dialectics may ignore, is no more than immediate knowledge for us. In itself, the fact of such a house search, however unpleasant it may be and however horrifying the threats lurking within it, is no more, despite its immediate impact, than the expression of the change of government, the abolition of legal guards under the emergency laws made permanent by the Nazis, and similar factors. In the final analysis it is the product of the changing social structures that had led to the fascist dictatorship as a result of the special conditions obtaining in Germany between 1929 and 1933. In all probability, the concept of the fact can itself only be grasped as an element in an overall process; individual facts can only be spoken of as part of a context which then manifests itself in these individual facts. The very concept of 'fact' ensures that it cannot be insulated from its surrounding environment — just as I could probably not have really experienced that house search if I had not connected it in my mind with the political events of the winter and spring of 1933. If all that had happened was that two relatively harmless officials belonging to the old police force had turned up on my doorstep, and if I had had no knowledge of the complete change in the political system, my experience would have been quite different from what it was. And, in the same way, no one can appreciate the terrors of a totalitarian regime if he has not personally experienced that ominous knock at the door and opened it to find the police waiting outside.

I should like to take this opportunity of defending myself against an attack or a criticism to which dialectics is exposed when one simply takes it to mean what in fact it does mean in large stretches of Marx's writings: namely as something that is no more than a critique of the immediacy of the immediate, in other words, as the demonstration that what appears to be brute fact is in reality something that has become what it is, something conditioned and not an absolute. A further factor should not be overlooked, if the dialectic is not simply to degenerate into something like a superstition or a trivial pursuit. By referring something back to the conditions that prove immediacy to have been conditioned, you do indeed strike a blow against immediacy, but that immediacy survives nevertheless. For we can speak of mediation only if immediate reality, only if primary experience, survives. It would therefore be just as foolish to demand of history that it should concentrate solely on the so-called context, the larger conditioning factors, as it would be for historiography to confine itself to the depiction of mere facts. The construction of theoretical frameworks alone without confronting the facts really can lead to large-scale delusions. We may think here of attempts to explain the historical fate of mankind, the division into rich and poor and such matters in terms of racial origins, as was attempted as early as the nineteenth century by writers such as Gobineau. So the point about dialectics is not to negate the concept of fact in favour of mediation, or to exaggerate that of mediation; it is simply to say that immediacy is itself mediated but that the concept of the immediate must still be retained.

"Ladies and gentlemen, what I am saying to you here, and what probably sounds to you like a chapter from a dialectical or speculative book on logic, is of the most immediate importance for the subject of these lectures. For we have been concerned here with the relations between the universal and the particular, the course of history and the individual. And, needless to say, when confronted with the general trend, the encompassing process, the individual inevitably has something of the immediacy of individual human experience of which I have been speaking. And if, as will gradually emerge from these lectures, we insist on this concept of the particular as opposed to the universal, on the grounds that in its present form the universal is no true universal, then the justification for doing so is that, even if we accept that the individual is itself a manifestation, that individuality is itself a historical category, we must likewise accept that it is a historical category that cannot simply be set aside. It is rather the case that the immediacy of individuality, that is to say, of the individual being who is concerned to preserve his own existence, is just as truly an element of the dialectic as the predominant universality. But it is only an element and one that should no more be overemphasized abstractly than the universal. That is the reason why I wish to insist on this point.

However that may be, in the dominant view the larger, encompassing context, the context that is not to be immediately grasped in, let us say, factual accounts, is generally taken to be a form of theory, and is therefore consigned to philosophy and the realm of controversy in the spirit of the division of labour. It finds itself relegated by the general scientific consensus to the status of a kind of sauce or the final chapter in a historical narrative, one that does not need to be taken too seriously. One instance of this can be seen in Simmel's book on the history of philosophy which I have now referred to several
times. In this book every speculation about history, and indeed every attempt to conceptualize history, appears to be treated as a subjective stylization that may be unavoidable but one that is also exposed to all the risks of relativism. This is a view that seems to me to be worthy of criticism. It can also be found in an extreme form in Theodor Lessing’s book _Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen_ [History as giving meaning to the meaningless], a book that I nevertheless find remarkable in its own way and commend to you as an example of a negative philosophy of history. I should point out, however, that a chasm separates the so-called idealism of a semi-Kantian such as Simmel from Hegel’s absolute idealism, and that it is in their theory of history that they can be seen to be at their most antithetical. Paradoxically, Hegel’s theory of the objective nature of history has a far greater realism than Simmel’s in the sense that this objectivity has a far greater validity in actuality. I would make only one general point in criticism of Simmel. This is that the entire problem presented itself in a manner that was typical of grand philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It manifested itself in the concept of the constitutum, what was constituted, in other words, the way in which both objects and the truth were constituted was not explored in a radical fashion in this philosophy. Instead, thinking took place in an already constituted world, in which already constituted human beings behave in various ways towards already constituted objects of knowledge, and where these forms of behaviour are investigated in their turn. We may say that this procedure is roughly analogous to so-called subjective economics, marginal utility theory, in which exchange relations within an already constituted barter society are analysed without inquiring into the way in which the exchange relationship, its true objective meaning, has been constructed. At bottom, for all his subtlety, Simmel’s analysis is lacking in reflection; he is concerned with the way in which an existing mind relates to already existing facts.

I want to confine my criticism purely to the essential issue, simply to clarify its relevance to our own problem here. The point is that what is secondary according to his theory, namely what we owe to the knowing mind, the course of history, the historical trend, the dynamic of history that prevails despite the efforts of human beings—that secondary aspect is in reality the thing that constitutes objective reality. It is in fact the objective nature of history in which individual subjects have their being that has primacy over all the human subjects that according to him are supposed to give shape to history. Simmel’s entire philosophy, then, is marked by a methodological _hysteron proteron_, a putting of the cart before the horse. And I would say that this is one of the underlying experiences that have been engendered by the historical events of our own age. Simmel died in 1918 and so does not properly belong to our own period. He still tended to think of history in much the same way as the joke line in _Faust_ in which history takes place in faraway Turkey where ‘armies come to blows’. What in his lifetime could be shaped and inspected, like a collection of china in a glass case, has in the meantime come far too close for comfort. Confronted with this change, the very idea of the historian who can choose and shape events to his own taste and in accordance with his own interests has faded into myth, a myth which in the good old days Simmel could still mistake for the objective thrust of history itself. The fact is that we can only properly experience the objective nature of history, as opposed to its supposed subjective ‘shaping’, once we realize that we are its potential victims. And that has become possible for individuals only with the world wars and the emergence of totalitarian rulers. You can see from this how historical developments can influence our own attitudes to history. In a given situation a social system, and above all the dynamics intrinsic to such a system, has unconditional primacy over the human subjects who perceive them and who, according to Simmel, are the agents of primary historical categories. I would go even further and say that, just as in general historical events have retroactive effects, this also holds good in this instance. That primacy, in other words, also existed in Simmel’s own day and only failed to make its presence felt because of the distance of the observer from the events of history. If there is any truth in the epistemological claims of naive realism – as expounded by materialism in its vulgar phase – then we see it precisely at this point. This was what was uppermost in the minds of dialectical materialists when they insisted upon the reality of society as opposed to psychological subjectivism. For this had been their own experience. Their mistake was merely that they tried to express their insight in the language of epistemology. For that brought about a relapse into the dogmatic assertion of a history that existed in itself, without showing any awareness of the problems of constitution I have been describing to you. This is what I should like to stress to you by way of salvaging the reputation of those so-called vulgar writers – who in many respects really were crude and epistemologically naive and who admittedly look quite different in the light of the self-reflection and self-criticism of a traditional subjectivist epistemology. Even from a Hegelian point of view, the vulgar thesis, the no less vulgar thesis that history is purely subjective in constitution would be quite untenable.

Even the subject’s resistance to the pre-existing categories facing him is mediated by the categories in which he is enmeshed. In
consequence, even in the high-bourgeois phase in which the sovereign freedom of the perceiving human subject is at its greatest, his freedom is vastly more circumscribed than appeared to be the case. By way of illustration, I need only refer to Joseph de Maistre, the philosopher of the Restoration in France. De Maistre is in general a very remarkable figure and it is certainly worth taking the trouble to look at him more closely. At the time of the so-called Restoration in France, de Maistre attempted, with extraordinary assiduity, we must say, to develop a critique of democratic society. It can be shown, however, and I have to restrict myself here simply to a passing reference— that the highly rational and polished logic which de Maistre deploys in his attack on rational and liberal society presupposes the entire panoply of sophisticated ideas that had been produced by the process of emancipation. In the eighteenth century, or indeed in an age when the feudal system was secure in its own beliefs, thinking of the kind seen in de Maistre would have been inconceivable. In his defence of the ancien régime, he necessarily marshals all the rational arguments that had brought about its demise, and, if we may say so after the fact, he is helping to undermine the same conservative forces that he is defending. This is because the ideas he advances in their defence are of precisely the same kind as the necessarily egalitarian rationality whose substance he assails. That, incidentally, is a situation that I can only touch on here. I wish only to remind you of it since it is a situation of enormous importance and with widespread ramifications for historical theory. Resistance to speculation or the desire to restrict it epistemologically is merely derivative and secondary in the face of this priority of the course of history to which we have been harnessed.

I would go so far as to say that today the resistance to speculation, like the ideology of positivism in general, tends rather to become the ideology whose adversary it imagines itself to be. The less free people are in history and the more they feel themselves to be in the grip of the universal necessity that, thanks to the coherence of the social system of a given epoch, stamps its imprint on the dynamic of history, the historical age, the more desperately eager they are to assert that their own immediate experience is ultimate and absolute in nature. It follows, too, that they have an altogether greater interest in turning the situation upside down and misconstruing as a mere matter of speculation or arbitrary thought what in reality is the ens realissimum— except that we should take care not to confuse the ens realissimum with the sumnum bonum, the greatest good, a common error in the philosophical tradition. Pre-critical thought is aware of this and must not allow its experience to be devalued by this confusion of the logical ground [ratio cognoscendi] with the real one [ratio essendi].

I should like now, with your permission, to return to what I said at the beginning of this lecture, namely my experience when my house was searched. This was something that might have cost me my life, and in that event it would have been the thing with the greatest reality of all. Immediately, however, it was real only as the logical explanation of the horror that I felt quite drastically and directly, while of course its real cause [Realgrund] was not the fact that the doorbell had rung or that these particular policemen had appeared at my front door because they had received orders to do so, but in fact the nature of the system as a whole that had led them to act in that way. Hence when I object to false immediacy, to turning the immediate into an absolute, what I have in mind in the first instance is this confusion of the logical explanation or, rather, the immediate cause of an experience with the real cause, that is to say, with the total historical context and its direction, on which we are all dependent.

In Hegel we find that these ideas have at least been registered— in the shape of objective idealism. Because of its identification of all existence with spirit, objective idealism has as its object the freedom to concede to existence the actual power that existence has over us. In the final analysis, this is not the least of the reasons that enabled idealist dialectics to give birth to the materialist variety by virtue of a small adjustment. Just how small is something we can no longer imagine today. Feuerbach must have sensed it when he wrote his famous letter to Hegel, in which he attempted to demonstrate that Hegel was already an anthropological materialist. Unfortunately, Hegel's response to this letter has not been preserved. Now, what Hegel calls the world spirit is the spirit that asserts itself despite people's wishes, over their heads, as it were. It is the primacy of the flow of events in which they are caught up, and it impinges on them no less than do the facts. Only it does so less painfully, and is therefore the more easily repressed. What is important here is that you should not regard this idea of the spirit prevailing over people's heads as a kind of speculative prejudice and hence dismiss it all too readily.

It is important, I say, that you should realize that this is a process in which what prevails always passes not merely over people's heads, but through them. One of the most widespread misunderstandings of Hegel, in my opinion, is what I have recently termed "the priority of the subject." This is a misunderstanding that must be eliminated if we wish to gain a proper appreciation of the problem we are discussing. It is essential that where such things as spirit or reason are under discussion you should not imagine that we are faced with a secularization of, let us say, the divine plan that floats above mankind, but minus the person of God. There is no suggestion here that there
is such a thing as providence, but no provident Being, and that the
divine plan is somehow fulfilled independently of mankind. Matters
are not so simple. I believe that, if you want to understand what I
am saying and what I think of as the real task of these lectures, you
should not start thinking about such independent embodiments of
the spirit separate from human beings, but quite simply about such
things as what is meant by the spirit of the age. What I mean by this
is that if you travel around Franconia or elsewhere in southern
Germany or Austria you will be able to see how in the seventeenth
century all the surviving Romanesque and Gothic churches and
chapels were suddenly given a baroque facelift. It is as if they were all
under the same spell. Or think for a moment of the way in which
every little café suddenly becomes ashamed of its cosy atmosphere
and tries to update itself by installing neon lighting so as to give itself
a more functional look. If you think of the spirit of the age in these
terms, you will come closer to what I have in mind than if you think
of the influence of an objective spirit as something terribly meaningful
and theological - although, needless to say, I would not wish to
dispute that in its origins we undoubtedly are witnessing something
like the secularization of the theological divine plan of the world.
Nevertheless, Hegel and the dialectical view of history were far too
considered and far too critical not to notice that, if such a process of
secularization is to succeed, it cannot be achieved if the divine plan
or the new objective reality is allowed to retain the same predicates
that they once possessed in the theological scheme of things. In this
respect Hegel was a genuine philosopher of mediation and also an
Aristotelian in the sense that he attempted to define the spirit that
prevails over mankind as something that also prevails in them.

I believe that it is very important - in so far as such matters have
any importance at all, but since you have come here in such large
numbers, you and I both indulge in the fiction that we are talking
about very important matters, so that I can assume that this fiction
remains valid - with this reservation, then, I believe that it is very
important to remember that the objective course of history asserts
itself over human beings - in such a way that no single mind and no
single human will suffices truly and effectively to resist it. And, at
the same time, it asserts itself through human beings. By this I mean that
they appropriate and identify with what is expressed, slightly vaguely
perhaps, by the English term the 'trend'. And even this is to define it
far too superficially, for in reality - and this is where Hegel's philo-
sophy of history coincides with classical economic theory and also with
Marx - the fact that people pursue their own individual interests
makes them at the same time the exponents and executors of the
same historical objectivity that is ready to turn against their interests
at any moment and thus may assert itself over their heads. There is
a contradiction here since it is claimed that what asserts itself despite
people's own efforts does so by virtue of them, by virtue of their own
interests. But since the society in which we live is antagonistic, and
since the course of the world to which we are harnessed is antago-
nistic too, what we might term this logical contradiction should not
be thought of as merely a contradiction, merely the product of an
inadequate formulation. It is a contradiction that arises from the
situation. To put it in metaphysical terms, it states simply that the very
constraints that are imposed on people by the course of the world,
and that compel them to attend to their own interests and nothing
beyond them, is the very same force that turns against people and
asserts itself over their heads as a blind and almost unavoidable fate.
It is this structure of things that leads us to the point I have been
aiming at: namely, a conception of the philosophy of history that
permits us to comprehend history, that is to say, to go beyond its
bounds as mere existence [Dasein] and to understand it as something
meaningless. And this meaningless was itself nothing but the dread-
ful antagonistic state of affairs that I have been attempting to describe
to you. So the primacy of universal reason is not to be understood
as the primacy of some substantive rational force beyond human
beings that directs human actions - and this is something I should
like you to understand, since I regard it as of prime importance for
the theory of history. You can best understand it, perhaps, if you
think of various turns of phrase that you will have come across in
your own experience. I am thinking of such phrases as the logic of
events', or the phrase used by Franz von Sickingen that I have cited
in earlier lectures. As he lay on his deathbed having been mortally
wounded during a siege - something of a professional hazard for a
condottiere - he is said to have remarked, 'Nought without cause.'
The belief that all things are proper and above board, that events can
be understood step by step, that even the worst and most meaningless
suffering can be comprehended as the product of overall circum-
stances - this and this alone is what we are to understand as the
world spirit of which Hegel spoke. And I can add right away that we
should put a large question mark here about whether this world spirit
is truly a world spirit, or rather its exact opposite. At any rate, all
facts are transmitted by virtue of the primacy of this process in which
things happen over people's heads and through them. Or, more pre-
 cisely, what characterizes this primacy is that events assert themselves
over people's heads because they assert themselves in people's minds
themselves. And this primacy takes precedence over the facts; it is no
mere epiphenomenon. You can see this from the fact that it is mere chance whether someone who has his house searched in a totalitarian regime, as I did, escapes with his life or is killed. In contrast, the trend that ensures that people's houses are searched, that people live in constant fear and that they are unable to discover whether or not they will be caught up in such events, we might go so far as to say this random element, is not itself random. It is part of the objective tendency of which I have been speaking. It is this situation that we need to be able to penetrate, and to succeed in penetrating such mysteries is the truth of what is so frequently vilified as the metaphysics of history. At the same time, and this is something we need to bear in mind as well - I have already pointed this out, but would like to repeat it - such things are impenetrable because human beings are not, pace Hegel, at home with themselves [dabei]; because the meaning that history has as the logic of events is not the meaning of individual destinies. On the contrary, the meaning of history always comes across to the individual as something blind, heteronomous and potentially destructive. And this unity of the to-be-penetrated and the impenetrable, or, if I may express it differently, the unity of unity and discontinuity, is in fact the problem of the philosophy of history and how to theorize it.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will have noticed that the explanation I have given you of the nature of the history of philosophy has taken a somewhat paradoxical form - the paradox is that the kind of speculative thought of which positivism has accused the philosophy of history has become a kind of necessity. This is because the facts that have been advanced as a counterweight to mere illusion have themselves become a sort of cloak and so reinforce the impression of mere illusion. In the last lecture I gave you the necessary qualifications about this in my apologia for immediacy. But I should now like to give you a more detailed explanation of the view I put forward then so as to provide you with an immanent critique of positivism, that is to say, a critique of positivism on positivist assumptions. By this I mean the attempt to comprehend what is actually essential while rejecting or restricting the concept of the fact itself. Above all, I should like to make the concept of facts more concrete, for once you decide to reject the customary distinction between the so-called universal structures treated by philosophy and the concrete historical event, you commit yourself to an obligation to enter into the spirit of these events. Hegel honoured this obligation in exemplary fashion, and if I am unable to follow in his footsteps that is because I have to communicate certain fundamental ideas, not because I am lapsing into idealism as far as the form of thought is concerned, while disputing it in terms of its content. So the fact that facts become a mere cloak is itself a function of the growing power of the totality which imperceptibly reduces the facts to epiphenomena. By this I mean that
the more a true dialectic between the universal and the particular is reduced in the world we live in today, and the more the particular is defined as a mere object belonging to the universal without being able to affect it reciprocally, then the more the so-called facts become a mere cloak veiling what really exists. And by facts here I mean the individual both in his understanding of himself and in his effect on another mind. In this context, I may perhaps refer you to my essay ‘Titles’, in volume 2 of the Notes to Literature,¹ where I discuss this demotion of the concrete to mere illusion as compared with the universal. This will spare me the necessity of expounding the idea as fully as it doubtless deserves. And if you do look it up, it will leave me with the space to do rather more justice to the subject matter of these lectures if I need to mention only those matters that I have not discussed elsewhere and if I can refer you to already existing publications that can reinforce what I have to say here. This is the only reason I am doing it and not because I think it essential for you to have read every sentence I have written. Someone like Karl Kraus could justifiably make such a gance for me to do likewise. So what I think is that only speculation which can penetrate external reality, and show what really and truly lies behind the façade of facticity that is asserting itself, can be said to do justice to reality, to use a phrase originating in psychoanalysis. The only way to capture reality and the true experience of it is to go beyond the immediate givens of experience. In this sense we can say that speculation remains an aspect of experience.

I shall explain this to you as follows. If you have ever had to serve on committees on whom important decisions depend, or are thought to depend, you will see how the worst and the basest instincts prevail over the better, more humane ones. I should perhaps say that you will perceive this unless you completely identify with what is going on and subscribe to its principles. This is a basic experience, even though you will not see a simple confrontation between the ‘best’ and the ‘worst’, but rather an infinitely nuanced chain of individual decisions, proposals and processes that focus initially at least on topics that seem utterly remote from such global judgements. Nevertheless, in questions involving individuals there is an overwhelming tendency not so much for the worse speech to triumph over the better one, but for the worse man to be appointed to the position that should have gone to the better one – and this is a common experience that has to be faced up to as frankly as any other experience. And only a concept of experience that is restricted in advance will enable you to avert your gaze from such events by focusing on the immediate matters under discussion. Needless to say, it is not helpful to dwell on such experiences. We have to go beyond them and ask how we can persuade others and ourselves that such things really do happen and that you yourselves will have seen them happen once you have disabused yourselves of the illusions attendant upon such processes. And if you have not experienced such things already because you have had the good fortune not to serve on any committees, then I fear I shall have to disillusion you because I predict that one day you will all remember my words on this subject, unless you succeed in repressing them – something I should like very much to prevent.² To explain this further I should like to bring to your attention a number of concrete considerations. In the first place, the better course of action is in general the more productive one, the more innovative one, the course of action that does not fit in with established opinion, to say nothing of established group opinion. As such it is suspect from the outset, particularly where there are groups and a more or less settled consensus. The resistance of the better way to a conformist view is almost always compromised by the fact that it appears to contravene some pre-existing rule or other. Take the example of a young scholar whose promotion is up for discussion, as they say. If he is really able, if he has opinions of his own and is not simply a careerist, and if he retains his intellectual independence from whatever happens to him – then, when he comes to write reviews, he will not write that this or that book is a valuable contribution to a particular branch of learning, as is almost universally the case in the current critical anarchy. Instead, he will decline to mince his words when criticism is warranted and he will not shrink from saying that a dull, unintelligent book is dull and unintelligent. This will instantly expose him to the rebuke that his polemical tone is improper, that it is incompatible with the academic tradition and God knows what else. And in committees such objections will generally find a willing ear; anyone who behaves in such a deviant manner will have compromised himself by the mere form of his deviation. Those of you who are doing your teaching practice and take part in staff meetings will have plenty of stories of your own to confirm what I have been saying. A further factor is that, for reasons I cannot go into now, anyone who deviates from the consensus is not only in a superior position to what he opposes, but also in an inferior one in certain respects. This is partly because the support structures for a lone opponent are always more flimsy than for the compact majority. I have given a very circumstantial account of this in my Introduction to the Sociology of Music,³ where I analyse what is thought of as
official musical life, but I believe that what I am talking about is a very widespread phenomenon.

Perhaps I may insert here a few words about methodology. In formal terms, these remarks may remind you a little of what is generally thought of as formal sociology. You will find similar discussions in certain works by Georg Simmel, such as The Philosophy of Money or the so-called great Sociology. The only difference is that when I make such sociological points they only appear to be formal in nature. The social structures I am referring to are indeed phenomena with formal characteristics, but if one were to look a little deeper, certain social realities would come into view, such as the fact that ideas are being controlled by the socially dominant groups in power at any given time. Formal sociology and, by the same token, the formal structure of history are legitimate because they seem to operate with formal categories that remain constant and are continually encountered regardless of their social content. In reality, however, these formal categories are filled with a sedimented content that conceals the dominant relations and the dominance of the universal that forms the subject of our reflections on the philosophy of history.

To return to the question of nonconformists, people who want things that form the subject of our reflections on the philosophy of history. Are incredibly sensitive to this weakness in the advocates of change. The voices of the majority are no more than the echo of current opinion, and when they lean back in their chairs and give vent to what they imagine to be their own ideas, they merely reproduce the bleating of the many. I think that you cannot picture vividly enough just how sensitive such people are to any signs of difference - and that is what is such a matter of concern in what I am telling you. So here you have an example of the way in which the universal succeeds in getting its own way. The situation is that, when such touchy matters are at stake as those we are discussing at this moment, individuals may act unconsciously as zoom politikon, as social beings, as the organs of social control, but as the functionaries of universal opinion they will evince a degree of intelligence that I sometimes think is astronomically greater than anything the individual can muster. The consequence is that anyone who desires change is always in the wrong vis-à-vis the concentrated intelligence of the collective. I must emphasize that in this situation we are not talking about a lack of good will in those who resist improvements, or not necessarily so. Rather, we can really perceive here something of the objectivity on which Hegel insists so emphatically in opposition to the merely subjective mind. Subjectively, they almost always act with the best of intentions - ‘almost always’ may be a little optimistic. Perhaps I should say that subjectively they frequently act with the best of intentions, or they rationalize their intentions by arguing that they are acting only in the interests of the institution or the collective which they happen to represent at that moment. Intrigues then regularly put in an appearance, and that too seems to be an obligatory feature, but they can be thought of as an extra over and above the negative world spirit that is asserting itself. An example of this can be seen in the victory of fascism, which really was part of the objective trend in 1933, but which could be said to have been reinforced or promoted by a backstairs conspiracy in the house of a Cologne banker. It would be rewarding for such a formal philosophy of history or sociology, albeit of a slightly different kind than is to be found in the textbooks, to explore further this additional role of what might be called a specious individuation which appropriates the objective disaster for its own advantage and reinforces it. Circumstances like these cannot be reduced to the totality of their various mediations, and in that sense they can never be made fully transparent, as indeed I am suggesting to you. I believe that you can clarify them for yourselves to a certain extent by reflecting that groups of the kind I have been discussing are reflections of the totality, of the universe. This is a theme that my former pupil Mangold has argued very persuasively in his volume on group discussions. In other words, conflict situations inevitably lead to acquiescence in the opinions of the group, and in such committees or ‘restricted groups’ this acquiescence involves translating the general process of social adaptation into the specific situation. This is not to assert that these general processes of adaptation are no more than a symphony of such concrete group adaptations – that would be a far too innocent interpretation of the situation. In fact the reverse is the case. In reality the driving impetus, the thing that actually acts, is a far larger, more anonymous force. It consists of the dominant attitudes of society as a whole, attitudes that are difficult to grasp hold of but which unconsciously determine and give shape to group opinions and to which the group then adapts itself. These committees I have been speaking of are typical examples of such group opinions, but I could give you countless others. We may say, then, that global social relations reproduce themselves here at the micro-level, in the way in which deviants and nonconformists relate to the committees or groups with which they come into conflict. That is the situation, rather than the opposite scenario in which the totality of these groups are what comprise society as a whole. In the same way, the ideologies that are advocated in such groups and provide the basis for the phenomenon I have tried to explain to you are not confined to these groups. They are framed in such universal
terms and possess such an abstract generality in comparison to the plethora of group opinions that this fact alone makes it implausible that the universe of group opinion, or public opinion, should emerge as a synthesis of the concrete attitudes of the group.

I hope now that I have been able to give you a more easily comprehensible idea of what I have called the prevailing universal. And I would add that my remarks do not just hold good for questions involving personnel, but are relevant to much more far-reaching decisions, economic decisions, for example, in the most influential controlling committees. I should now like to try and explain more concretely the complex issues involved in mediating between the universal and the particular, a question I have discussed up to now only on the level of the universal. Perhaps I can illustrate this with reference to a historical issue, since this might well seem appropriate in discussing a theory of history that sets out to comprehend history and not simply to chronicle it, while at the same time resisting the temptation to impute to history a positive meaning. This contradiction as I have now once again formulated it is actually—and I would like to remind you of this—what I intend to explore in these lectures, or at any rate in the first part of them, and to do so to the best of my ability. To illustrate what I mean I would like to say something about the French Revolution, the so-called Great French Revolution of 1789, and the problems it presents us with for an understanding of history. The first point to make is that in this revolution the political forms taken by the economic emancipation of the middle class were adapted to the principle of liberalism, by which I mean an uninhibited entrepreneurialism organized into nation-states. This revolution, then, was part of the great process of the emancipation of the middle class, and that in turn dates back, as you all know, to the emancipation of the city-states of the Renaissance. This process continued chiefly in England during the seventeenth century and in France in the eighteenth. I probably have no need to tell you about this process of emancipation, except for the slight reservation I have about the so-called rise of the middle class that is more or less automatically associated with it. The question whether the middle class did in fact rise as a consequence of its increasing power is one that cannot be answered unambiguously by a critical theory as it is by bourgeois ideology itself. At all events, at the time when the Great French Revolution broke out, the crucial economic levers were already in the hands of the middle class. This means that production was in the hands of the industrial middle class. At the same time, as was pointed out by Saint-Simon, the great sociologist of the day, the feudal class and the groups associated with it in the absolutist system had ceased almost entirely to have any influence over production in the sense of socially useful labour. This weakness of the absolutist system was the precondition for the outbreak of the revolution, and it will be difficult to deny, particularly in the light of more recent research, that what appeared in the self-glorying accounts of bourgeois historiography to be an indescribable act of liberation was in reality more like the confirmation of an already existing situation. Nietzsche’s dictum in Zarathustra that you should give a push to whatever is already falling is a classical bourgeois maxim. That is to say, it contains the idea that bourgeois actions are almost always of the kind that are covered by the dominant universal, by the universal historical principle that is in the process of asserting itself. And this is connected with the fact that, because all bourgeois revolutions merely make official or de jure something that already existed de facto, they all have an element of illusion, of ideology, about them. This is an insight developed very perceptively for our understanding of the bourgeois freedom movement by Horkheimer in his essay ‘Egoism and Freedom Movements’, which at long last is soon to be made available again.10

On the other hand, what I have called the great process which led to something like the takeover by the middle class in the French Revolution would not have been conceivable without notorious mismanagement by the absolutist rulers of France. I am thinking here of the intractable problems of the budget and the financial crises which physiocrat reformers such as Quesnay—who as you know was close to Turgot—strived in vain to resolve. Without this specific basis in fact, namely the evident inability of the absolutist regime to align its own understanding of the economy with the current state of the forces of production, things would never have reached the point of revolt, let alone the mass uprisings of the initial phase. During those first critical years the genuine sufferings of the quasi-proletarian urban masses of Paris were the precondition for the revolutionary movement. And to a certain degree these masses spontaneously sustained that movement and contributed to the increasing radicalization of what was essentially a middle-class phenomenon. That such a negative factor was a necessary precondition can also be seen from the contrast with other countries in the same period where bourgeois, liberal and national tendencies established themselves, but without provoking a revolutionary uprising. We may even say that comparable trends made their appearance in Germany during the following decades, despite its economic backwardness. Moreover, similar tendencies can be observed in our own day in the way in which the
non-totalitarian nations have come to adopt some of the structural forms of the administered world. I do not wish to sound pompous, but the vulgar distinction between the underlying cause \([\text{Ursache}]\) and the proximate cause \([\text{Anlässe}]\), a distinction which may be familiar to you from school, may, fatuous though it may seem, have something to do with the difference between the objective process and the specific condition that triggers it. An underlying cause is the element that is crystallized in the global social process that tends to take over everything else. This tendency to annex everything, even where the individual components seem to diverge or to have nothing in common with the overall process, is a phenomenon that can be observed even today — and that is a contribution that empirical sociology can make to the philosophy of history. It is quite certain that the bombing of German cities during the last war was in no sense intended to contribute to slum clearance, \([11]\) the 'Americanization' of the city or other sanitation measures. In its effects, however — no doubt because they were more inflammable the older, in part medieval town centres could be more easily destroyed — the bombing did result in that growing similarity of German towns to American ones. This is all the more striking because we cannot assume that this was part of any so-called historical trend. On the other hand, however, thanks to the economic ascendancy of the middle class with which it was in conflict, namely in terms of balance sheets. On the other hand, however, thanks to the economic ascendancy of the middle class that I have told you about, the expenditure system of feudal absolutism was somewhat retrograde even then.

It was behind the times when compared to the state of rationalization of the forces of production; when compared to that its mode of management was irrational and was therefore a function of the general trend. What I mean to say is that this particular factor which, like every immediacy, is an indispensable element in triggering the universal, as I explained to you in the last few lectures — this particular factor is itself mediated by the universal which would not exist without it. In this instance, it was mediated by the development of the forces of production in the hands of the middle classes. What this tells us about the theory of history, then, is that, taken in isolation, none of these factors would suffice to give even an approximate explanation of the course of history. In short you need to grasp the complexity of the pattern, by which I mean the overall process that asserts itself, the dependence of that global process on the specific situation, and then again the mediation of the specific situation by the overall process. Furthermore, in addition to understanding this conceptual pattern, you need to press forward to the concrete, historical analysis I have hinted at and that goes beyond the categories I have been discussing.

I should like to conclude for today by reminding you of that celebrated transition from philosophy to historiography that is implicit in Hegel's \textit{Logic} and is explicitly called for in a famous passage in
Marx. In all probability, the key to this transition lies in the fact that this particular configuration of categories, this dependence of the categories of historiography on actual history, is itself so much a question of categories, a conceptual process, that the traditional superficial distinction between essence and mere fact - 'worthless existence', as Hegel once termed it - becomes quite irrelevant. You may regard this also as a very concrete illustration of the thesis that the separation of philosophy from disciplines with a substantive subject matter cannot be sustained for reasons intrinsic to philosophy, for reasons connected with the nature and structure of categories. And this of course brings you onto the terrain of a philosophical turn which I believe will have far-reaching consequences.
definitions, but to end with them\textsuperscript{15} - we may say that an action is free if it is related transparently to the freedom of society as a whole. By way of conclusion, and in a desperate attempt to save time, I should like to read out to you one or two more sentences from something I have written.\textsuperscript{16} Human subjects are free, on the Kantian model, in so far as they are conscious of and identical with themselves; but then again, they are unfree in this identity in so far as it acts as a form of coercion to which they submit. Again: they are unfree as non-identical beings, as diffuse nature, and yet as such they are free, after all, because the impulses that overpower them - and that is what non-identity amounts to - rid them of the coercive character of identity. Personality is the caricature of freedom. The basis for the aporia is that truth beyond coercive identity would not be its absolute other, but would always pass through that coercive identity and be mediated by it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to an end.\textsuperscript{17} I am fully conscious, as I have already mentioned, of the fragmentary nature of what I have been saying, although I have at least made the attempt to pull the different threads together. The ideas I have tried to convey have not always been easy to grasp, but if you have followed me attentively I hope that you will have been able to understand some of the very difficult material that I have been attempting to communicate to you. It has surprised me and also given me great pleasure to see that you have persevered with this course and that so many of you have kept coming right to the end. I am very well aware that the questions that I have been exploring here are not capable of being readily converted into examination questions, and consequently that you have shown your interest with that disinterestedness that Kant praised so highly. I should like to express my sincere gratitude to you all for this. I wish you all a good vacation and hope that many of you will return next term, when I intend in a sense to offer a sort of continuation of this course by lecturing on a different aspect of my little work in progress.\textsuperscript{18} I am thinking here of my discussion of the concept of metaphysics. I shall try both to tell you about the concept of metaphysics and the problems arising from it and also to link this up with the metaphysical theses that I have been pondering for some time now.\textsuperscript{19}

Thank you all for having been such attentive listeners.

\textbf{NOTES}

**Lecture 1  Progress or Regression**

1. Four of the twenty-eight lectures given in the winter semester 1964/5 have no audiotape transcriptions, but only the notes made by Adorno as the basis of his lecture. No doubt the tape recorder failed to function in the case of the missing tapes - these were for lectures 1, 11, 13 and 20. At all events, the draft of the transcriptions (Theodor W. Adorno Archive, Vo 9735-10314) explicitly states that these lectures were 'missing'. While Adorno was still alive, the drafts of the first three missing lectures were augmented by the notes taken by Hilmar Tillack, who had attended Adorno's lectures over a number of years. The present volume prints both Adorno's own notes (Vo 10315ff.) and those of Tillack in full, whereas for lecture 20 only Adorno's own notes have survived. These have been supplemented by an extract from an early version of the chapter on freedom from \textit{Negative Dialectics}, to which the notes refer.

2. Between 1964 and 1966 Adorno discussed in three successive lecture courses topics that would figure centrally in his book \textit{Negative Dialectics}. That book, which appeared first in 1966, is the 'book on dialectics' to which he refers in the next sentence in his notes. The present lecture course addresses the questions concerning morality and the philosophy of history that would form the subject of the chapters on Kant and Hegel in \textit{Negative Dialectics}. This was the 'special situation' to which he refers, and he does so because as a rule his lectures and his research interests ran on parallel lines without intersecting. He commented on the 'special' factors that led him to proceed differently in the case of \textit{Negative Dialectics} at the beginning of the lectures on that very subject.
in the winter semester 1965/6. What he had to say on this subject sheds light on the climate in which he had to teach in the university:

You are aware that the traditional definition of a university calls for the unity of teaching and research. You will also know how problematic this idea has become even though people still cling to the idea. My own work has suffered considerably in this situation, since the increase in both teaching and administrative duties that have fallen to me bit by bit makes it almost impossible for me to carry out my research obligations in term time – if indeed we can speak of research in connection with philosophy as conscientiously as is called for objectively, and above all as would correspond to my own inclination and disposition. In such a situation, and under such pressures and compulsion, one tends to develop certain qualities that might best be described as peasant cunning. I am therefore attempting to do the situation justice by... taking much of the material for my lectures from the extensive and really quite burdensome book I have been working on for the past six years and that will bear the title of Negative Dialectics. I am fully aware that this procedure might well be objected to, in particular by those with a positivist cast of mind. Such critics might well argue that as an academic teacher I should present you only with secure knowledge that is genuinely cast-iron and watertight. I have no wish to make a virtue of necessity, but my own view is that such ideas do not quite fit philosophy. Philosophy consists of ideas in a permanent state of flux, and, as Hegel, the great proponent of dialectics, has argued, in philosophy the process is as important as the results; process and result are... really the same thing. Moreover, I believe that what characterizes philosophical thought is its tentative, experimental, inconclusive nature and it is this that distinguishes philosophy from the positive sciences. In consequence, the arguments I shall present to you here will bear the marks of their experimental nature since they have not yet achieved the linguistic polish, the definitive shape that I would like to give them as far as it is in my power to do so. And I can... really only encourage you to think along with what I say and develop your own ideas rather than to imagine that I am providing you with established knowledge that you can take home with you in black and white. (Quoted from NaS, vol. 14, p. 296f. Cf. Metaphysics, p. 192f.)

As early as 1960/1 the three lecture courses of 1964 to 1966 had been preceded by a course entitled 'Ontology and Dialectics', and it was this that planted the seed from which the book that would later be called Negative Dialectics would be born. It is not without significance that all four lecture courses were given before the parallel passages in the book had received their definitive shape. The lecture courses were all, as Adorno liked to say, part of a 'work in progress', or, rather, each marked a particular stage in the composition of the book.

3 Adorno treats Kant's theory of social conflict above all in lecture 6, see p. 49ff. above; Hegel's doctrine of progress in the consciousness of freedom is discussed in lecture 12, p. 105ff. above. The fact that in Kant the aporias of freedom are located not in the noumenal but in the phenomenal realm, in other words, in the conflicts of bourgeois society is a line of thought Adorno developed in the section on 'Ontic and idealist aspects' in the chapter on freedom in Negative Dialectics (pp. 255–60). This chapter had first been entitled 'Determinism: Paraphrases of Kant' and its definitive title was 'Freedom: On the Metacrítica of Practical Reason'. Its first two versions, that is to say, Adorno's first dictated version of the first typed version with his handwritten corrections, were produced between 3 December 1964 and 20 January 1965, in other words, they are practically contemporaneous with the present lecture course, which ran from 10 November 1964 to 25 February of the following year. Adorno's critique of Hegel's definition of history should be compared to the chapter 'World Spirit and Natural History' in Negative Dialectics (p. 300ff.), which originally bore the title 'Objective Spirit' and had been written immediately before the chapter on freedom; the first corrected version of this chapter was finished on 15 November 1964.

4 What Adorno meant by 'a spiral theory' was probably the theory of history contained in Arnold Toynbee's A Study of History (1934–61). In Toynbee's conception civilizations of the most various kinds rise and fall in a comparable cyclical movement. At the same time, however, particularly in the later volumes of his magnum opus, he takes a gradual upward development for granted that is essentially determined by religion. In this sense, Toynbee's view of history occupies an intermediate position between linear, progressive theories and cyclical ones. For his explicit critique of cyclical theories, see Der Gang der Welgeschichte: Aufstieg und Verfall der Kulturen, trans. Jürgen von Kempski, Stuttgart, 1954, p. 248ff. No less a person than Goethe frequently invoked the image of a spiral when discussing the history of mankind, and it is Goethe on whom all subsequent cultural morphologies are based (see notes 5 and 6 below): 'The orbit pursued by mankind is specific enough and, notwithstanding the great stasis imposed by barbarism, it has already run this course more than once. Even if we wish to ascribe a spiral movement to this journey, mankind nevertheless finds itself again and again in regions it has already once inhabited. It is in this way that all true ideas and all errors are constantly repeated.' J. W. von Goethe, Sämtliche Werke, Jubiläums-Ausgabe, vol. 40: Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft, Part 2, ed. Max Morris, Stuttgart and Berlin, 1907, p. 120f.


6 Like Spengler, Toynbee and Frobenius (see note 19 below) are commonly regarded as the exponents of cultural morphology, a doctrine that maintains that cultures are subject to organic change, analogously...
to the development of individuals from childhood through youth and adulthood to old age. According to Spengler, every culture ends up in a state of decadence; civilizations are a conclusion, the thing-becoming succeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone age, petrifying world city following Mother Earth and the spiritual childhood of Doric and Gothic. They are an end, irrevocable, yet by inward necessity reached again and again,' Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939 [1926], p. 31.

7 The dates in the text are those introduced by Adorno himself. He inserted them at the point he had reached in his perorations so as to indicate where he wished to take up the thread in the following hour.

8 The printer's copy of Tillack's notes can be found in the *Theodor W. Adorno Archive, Vo 9735-9739*.

9 Adorno used the English phrase.

10 Hobbes maintained 'that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man against every man.' Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 185. He developed this idea in chapter 13 of *Leviathan* in the context of the hypothetical nature of his idea of the social contract. Cf. Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2: *Philosophische Frühschriften* 1922-1932, Frankfurt am Main, 1987, p. 213ff., and also Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 317-356.

11 Georg Mehlis (1878-1942) was a philosopher in Freiburg, a follower of Rickert and co-editor of the journal *Logos*; cf. his *Lehrbuch der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Berlin, 1915.

12 Ernst Bernheim (1850-1942) was a historian in Greifswald; cf. his *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 6th edn, Leipzig, 1908.

13 For Georg Simmel, see lecture 3, notes 3 and 4 below.

14 Bruno Liebrucks (1911-85) was a philosopher in Frankfurt; in his *magnum opus*, *Sprache und Bewusstsein* (8 vols, Frankfurt am Main, 1964-74), he devotes vol. 5 to a discussion of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

15 On Huxley's novel, which first appeared in London in 1922, see Adorno's essay 'Aldous Huxley and Utopia', in *Prisms*, p. 95ff.

16 Cf. *GS*, vol. 10.1, where Adorno cites this passage from Spengler: the great universal concepts, freedom, justice, humanity, progress... all these abstract ideals possess a power that scarcely extends beyond two centuries - the centuries of party politics. In the final analysis they are not refuted, but simply become a bore. Rousseau has long been one, and Marx will soon join him.' Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, vol. 2, Munich, 1922, p. 568. [This quotation is missing from the translation of the essay on Spengler in *Prisms*, p. 60. (Trans.)]

17 Riesman defines the other-directed personality as follows: 'The type of character I shall describe as other-directed seems to be emerging in very recent years in the upper middle class of our larger cities ... What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual - either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media. This source is of course "internalized" in the sense that dependence on it for guidance in life is implanted early. The goals towards which the other-directed person strives shift with that guidance: it is only the process of striving itself and the process of paying close attention to the signals from others that remain unaltered throughout life. This mode of keeping in touch with others permits a close behavioural conformity, not through drill in behaviour itself, as in the tradition-directed character, but rather through an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others.' David Riesman with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, abridged edn with a new foreword, New Haven, CT, 1961, pp. 19 and 21ff.

18 In his notes to the lecture course on 'An Introduction to the Philosophy of History' which he gave in the summer semester of 1957 - a preliminary draft of the current lectures, one which survives only in Adorno's own notes and the written-out shorthand record - Adorno begins his comments on cyclical theories of history on Georg Mehlis's *Lehrbuch der Geschichtsphilosophie*: 'Thesis: no Greek philosophy of history (349) despite Heraclitus's cyclical theory, which then recurs in the Stoics. (350) NB cyclical theory is an inauthentic philosophy of history. The cyclical is the mythical. To this extent history always implies freedom.' (Vo 2306). The shorthand record of the 1957 lectures refers to Vico as an instance of a more recent cyclical theory: 'Vico retained the idea of the cyclical character of history; that is to say, he defended the view that mankind could and perhaps would relapse into barbarism. Spengler's conception of the cyclical nature of history, something that would show humanity its own worthlessness and the indifference of nature, has quite a different meaning. What underlies Vico's view is not a blind fatalism that actually excludes history, but its opposite: his horror of the Middle Ages that were experienced as dark and that had not yet acquired the transfiguring aura with which the Romantics endowed them. Vico's limitations were that the age he lived in did not yet possess the dynamism of a ceaselessly advancing society; that his view remained anthropological in the last analysis; that for all his talk of the historical nature of mankind, he still believed in the immutability of human nature and that he kept returning to a belief that a relapse into barbarism was a possibility. This can be explained by the fact that, although the concepts of the individual and his fate, history, mediated one another, he failed to work out their implications in a radical way' (Vo 2047ff.).
Lecture 2 Universal and Particular

1 This lecture is the first to have survived as the transcription from a tape recording. However, a few sentences appear to be missing at the very beginning. The transcript has only the phrase ‘something about history as an academic discipline’ (Vo 9740). The rest has been supplied by the editor.

2 See Leopold von Ranke, Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494–1514, 2nd edn., Leipzig, 1874 (Sämliche Werke, 3, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 33/4, p. VII: ‘History has been given the task of judging the past, of instructing the contemporary world for the benefit of future generations; the present attempt does not presume to undertake such lofty tasks: it wishes merely to tell how it really happened.’

3 From the French word for event. Adorno is probably thinking of the Annales school of history, whose interdisciplinary approach contrasts with that of a histoire événementielle, a form of historiography that confines itself to the recording of events.

4 The Great Elector, i.e., Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg (1620–88), laid the foundations for the rise of Prussia to the status of a major European power under his grandson, Frederick the Great [Trans.].

5 Cf. Negative Dialeetics, p. 320: ‘No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the shot-slap to the megaton bomb.’

6 Max Weber’s concept of rationality was the subject of a study by Adorno’s friend Hermann Grab, who had written a thesis on it in Frankfurt under the supervision of Gottfried Salomon-Delatour; see Hermann J. Grab, Der Begriff des Rationalen in der Soziologie Max Webers: Ein Beitrag zu den Problemen der philosophischen Grundlegung der Sozialwissenschaft, Karlsruhe, 1927 (Sozialwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen 3).

7 The first edition of Dialektik der Aufklärung appeared in Amsterdam in 1947. Horkheimer resisted a new edition for a long time and it was not until the year of Adorno’s death that it appeared again, with the imprint Frankfurt, 1969.

8 To bolster his objections to the concept of examples, Adorno liked to appeal to Kant, as he does in Negative Dialetics. There was no lack of evidence in Kant for ‘the aversion of speculative thinking from the so-called example as something inferior’. Such sharpening of the judgment is indeed the one great benefit of examples. Correctness and precision of intellectual insight, on the other hand, they more usually somewhat impair. For only very seldom do they adequately fulfill the requirements of the rule (as casus in terminis [i.e., limiting cases]). Besides, they often weaken that effort which is required of the understanding to comprehend properly the rules in their universality, in independence of the particular circumstances of experience, and so accustom us to use rules rather as formulas than as principles. Examples are thus the leading strings of judgment; and those who are lacking in the natural talent can never dispense with them. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Kemp Smith, A 134/B 173, p. 178.

9 Adorno came across this theory of Spengler’s in Der Mensch und die Technik: Beitrag zu einer Philosophie des Lebens, which appeared in 1931 and which he reviewed in 1932: ‘Consistently with his mythical outlook, Spengler speaks of “The crime and fall of Faustian man” and prophecies the imminent demise of Western technology, which he believes is doomed to oblivion because for the non-Faustian souls of the future “Faustian technology is no inner necessity”, although according to Spengler himself, “within thirty years . . . the Japanese will be technological experts of the first rank”. The Westerners affected by this change will be left with no alternative but a heroic and tragic view of life’ (GS, vol. 20.1, p. 198).

10 The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process. This conviction and intuition is a hypothesis in the domain of history as such. In that of Philosophy it is no hypothesis. It is there proved by speculative cognition, that reason – and this conviction and intuition is a hypothesis – is the Infinite Material underlying all the natural and spiritual life which it originates, as also the Infinite Form – that which sets this Material in motion.’ G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, p. 9.

11 Adorno discusses the relation of Dilthey to Hegel in the ‘Introduction to the Philosophy of History’ of 1957: ‘The fundamental assumption of this philosophy of history is the idea that history is the work of conscious human beings. In so far as it is based on spirit, on the mind of these people, it is objective, and the subject that knows history in a sense recognizes itself in history, or, alternatively, by recognizing itself in history, the subject is liberated from the limitations of its own position whatever that might be. It thus experiences the absolute relativity of every individual spiritual structure and becomes absolute in the
consciousness of this relativity. There is a strange combination here of Hegelian elements with a sceptical, positivist mood and a kind of Lebensphilosophie that rejoices in identification. His philosophy is like an amalgam of metaphysics and anti-metaphysics. This gives Dilthey's philosophy a kind of floating quality, difficult to pin down. The nerve of this entire epistemology of history, the Critique of Historical Reason, is that an objective knowledge of history is possible—even though there are no historical laws comparable to scientific laws—because history is essentially made of the same stuff, the same core as the knowing subject. It follows that the subject can understand it objectively because by understanding it he really understands himself" (Vo 2004).

12 Adorno discussed Hegel's concept of spirit in a number of passages in Hegel: Three Studies; see, especially, pp. 3 and 17 passim.

Lecture 3 Constitution Problems

1 This was Eduard Steuermann, the pianist and composer, who died in New York on 11 November 1964. Cf. Adorno's obituary 'Nach Steuermann's Tod' (GS, vol. 17, p. 311ff.) as well as the selection from their letters ('Die Komponisten Eduard Steuermann und Theodor W. Adorno: Aus ihrem Briefwechsel', in Adorno-Noten: Mit Beiträgen von Theodor W. Adorno [and others], ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Berlin, 1984, p. 40ff.

2 Joseph Arthur Count Gobineau (1816–82) was a French diplomat, orientalist and writer. He developed a doctrine of intellectual distinctions between different races, arguing that only the 'Aryan' race was capable of developing culture. In this respect he was an important intellectual forerunner of the Nazis. Cf. his Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines, 4 vols, Paris, 1953–5.


4 On Simmel's book, see also the lecture 'Über das Problem der individuellen Kausalität bei Simmel' that Adorno gave in New York in 1940 and that was published in the Frankfurter Adorno Blätter VIII, Munich, 2002.

5 First edition, Munich, 1919.

6 Marginal utility economics and marginal utility theory are terms used to describe an economic theory developed in the last third of the nineteenth century. This theory defined the exchange value of commodities with reference not to the quantity of labour required to produce them, but to the values or 'utility preferences' of the economic subjects. The 'marginal' utility refers to the overall decreasing benefit or utility of goods as their quantity increases, e.g., if a family of four has thirty pieces of bread, the addition of one further slice is of only marginal benefit.

7 'There's nothing better, on a holiday, / Than talk and noise of war, in Turkey, let's suppose, / Some place where armies come to blows, / One watches from one's window, sips one's glass, / While down the river all those fine ships pass. / And back home in the evening, we congratulate / Each other on our peaceful happy state.' J. W. von Goethe, Faust, Part One, trans. David Lake, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 29, lines 860–7.

8 In Negative Dialectics Adorno discusses the empiricist critique of naïve realism, "culminating in Hume's abolition of the thing", on p. 186f. [Trans.]


10 Cf. Negative Dialectics, pp. 119 and 187; see also Hegel: Three Studies, p. 11, and 'Parataxis', Notes to Literature, vol. 2, p. 137.

11 Adorno uses the same quotation in the Problems of Moral Philosophy, p. 164, and also in Negative Dialectics, p. 318. Franz von Sickingen (1481–1523) was a marauding Knight of the Empire. In 1522, as a supporter of Martin Luther, he attacked the Archbishop of Trier, and in May 1523 he received a mortal wound during the siege of his own castle near Landstuhl by the Archbishop's troops. [He has the reputation of a Romantic, swashbuckling rebel and figures in a number of literary works, including Goethe's Götz von Berlichingen (which celebrates a similar folk hero) and a play by Ferdinand Lassalle, one of the founders of German socialism. [Trans.]

Lecture 4 The Concept of Mediation

1 Notes to Literature, vol. 2, p. 3ff.

2 Cf. the section on 'Group Spirit and Dominion', in Negative Dialectics, pp. 307–9, for a statement of Adorno's conviction that the bad triumphs in committees because it is the more objective reality.

3 See Introduction to the Sociology of Music.

4 First published in Leipzig, 1900.


6 Adorno is referring to the Cologne banker Kurt, Freiherr von Schroeder (1889–1966), in whose house Hitler and Papen met on 4 January 1933. Following that meeting Papen won President Hindenburg over to the idea of inviting Hitler to form a coalition government.

7 See Werner Mangold, Gegenstand und Methode des Gruppendediskussionsverfahrens: Aus der Arbeit des Instituts für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt am Main, 1960.

8 The source of this remark has not been discovered. It is conceivable that Adorno had in mind arguments that are at least echoed in his lectures.
and that Engels presented in connection with Saint-Simon, even though these are not directly attributed to him; see Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, vol. 2, pp. 109-13.

9 Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 226: 'O my brothers, am I then cruel? But I say: That which is falling should also be pushed! Everything of today – it is falling, it is decaying; who would support it? But I – want to push it too!'


11 Adorno used the English expression [Trans.]

12 See Gerhart Baumert, with the assistance of Edith Hunninger, Deutsche Familien nach dem Kriege, Darmstadt, 1954 (Gemeindestudie, Monographie 5). In his introduction to the study, Adorno wrote: 'This monograph is a contribution to sociological knowledge in the sense that it does not conceal the disintegration of traditional social institutions and attitudes, but allows them to emerge without any ideological superstructure. There can be no question of claiming that the current threat to the institution of the family has somehow been lifted in the long term by the solidarity displayed in the recent emergency. It should only be mentioned that the divorce figures have in fact gone down following their sharp rise, but still stand far above their prewar level. The same thing holds good for the numbers of "incomplete" families. What is striking is the increase in marriages between young men and older women. A socio-psychological interpretation of this finding could shed light on profound structural changes in society' (GS, vol. 20.2, p. 630).

13 See Werner Sombart, Der moderne Kapitalismus: Historisch-systematische Darstellung des gesamteuropäischen Wirtschaftslebens von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 3 vols, Berlin 1902-27; and also Der Bourgeois: Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen, Munich, 1913.

14 The passages Adorno has in mind come from The German Ideology: 'When the reality is described, a self-sufficient philosophy loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which are derived from the observation of the historical development of men. These abstractions in themselves, divorced from real history, have no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata.' The German Ideology, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976, vol. 5, p. 37. A textual variant is even more pointed: 'We know only a single science, the science of history. One can

look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable: the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist.' Ibid., p. 28. On the transition of philosophy to history anticipated by Marx but disavowed by history, a transition which forms the starting-point of Negative Dialectics, see Adorno's remarks in the lectures of 1957 on the philosophy of history: 'Hegel's concept of mediation, of becoming, when you extract it from its terminological shell, means nothing other than history. Marx expressed this in the extreme statement that philosophy passes over into history. Of course, to maintain that history as we have experienced it hitherto, actual history which has been a slaughterhouse of unending suffering, could be the site of truth calls for a greater degree of confidence than is possible at present. What is meant by Marx's statement is that the self-understanding of history, history raised to the level of self-knowledge, is identical with what philosophy traditionally claims to be; it is that in a higher sense historiography and philosophy merge into one' (Vo 1959f.).

15 'God governs the world, the actual working of his government – the carrying out of his plan – is the History of the World. This plan philosophy strives to comprehend; for only that which has been developed as the result of it, possesses bona fide reality. That which does not accord with it, is negative, worthless existence [faule Existenz].' (Hegel, The Philosophy of History, p. 36.)

Lecture 5 The Totality on the Road to Self-Realization

1 Adorno gave 'An Introduction to the Philosophy of History' in the summer semester of 1957. His handwritten notes for the course have survived (Theodor W. Adorno Archive Vo 2305-2338), as well as the fair copy of a shorthand record (Theodor W. Adorno Archive, Vo 1899-2069). Cf. on the 1957 lectures, p. 271 above, note 18 (lecture 1), p. 273, note 11 (lecture 2), pp. 276-7, note 14 (lecture 4), et al.


3 See also note 14 above (lecture 4), pp. 276-7.

4 See 'Classicism, Romanticism, New Music', in Sound Figures, p. 106ff.

5 See, above all, Thesis VII of 'On the Concept of History', in which the question is raised 'with whom does historicism actually sympathize? The answer is inevitable: with the victor. All rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors. Hence, empathizing with the victor invariably benefits the current rulers. The historical materialist knows what this means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which current rulers step over those who are lying