

Maximal Man. Trans. R. B. Smith.
Glenn Feldman, 1979, pp. 148-146.

WHAT IS MAN?

Ne connaît-on nous jamais l'homme?—ROUSSEAU

SECTION ONE:
THE PROGRESS OF THE QUESTION

K: Kant's Questions

KARL BUNAM VON PRZYBYCINA, one of the last great teachers of Hasidism, is said to have once addressed his pupils thus: "I wanted to write a book called *Adam*, which would be about the whole man. But then I decided not to write it."

In these naive-sounding words of a genuine sage the whole story of human thought about man is expressed. From time immemorial man has known that he is the subject most deserving of his own study, but he has also fought shy of treating this subject as a whole, that is, in accordance with its total character. Sometimes he takes a run at it, but the difficulty of this concern with his own being soon overpowers and exhausts him, and in silent resignation he withdraws—either to consider all things in heaven and earth save man, or to divide man into departments which can be treated singly, in a less problematic, less powerful and less binding way.

The philosopher Malebranche, the most significant of the French philosophers who continued the Cartesian investigation, writes in the foreword to his chief work *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674): "Of all human knowledge the knowledge of man is the most deserving of his study. Yet this knowledge is not the most cultivated or the most

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developed which we possess. The generality of men neglect it completely. And even among those who busy themselves with this knowledge there are very few who dedicate themselves to it—and still fewer who successfully dedicate themselves to it." He himself certainly raises in his book such genuinely anthropological questions as how far the life of the nerves which lead to the lungs, the stomach, and the liver, influences the origin of errors; but he too established no doctrine of the being of man.

The most forcible statement of the task set to philosophical anthropology was made by Kant. In the *Handbook* to his lectures on logic, which he expressly acknowledged—though he himself did not publish it and though it does not reproduce his underlying notes authentically—he distinguishes between a philosophy in the scholastic sense and a philosophy in the universal sense (*in sensu cosmico*). He describes the latter as "the knowledge of the ultimate aims of human reason" or as the "knowledge of the highest maxims of the use of our reason." The field of philosophy in this cosmopolitan significance may, according to Kant, be marked off into the following questions.

1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope? 4. What is man? Metaphysics answers the first question, ethics the second, religion the third and anthropology the fourth." And Kant adds: "Fundamentally all this could be reckoned as anthropology, since the first three questions are related to the last." This formulation repeats the three questions of which Kant says, in the section of his *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled *Of the ideal of the supreme good*, that every interest of the reason, the speculative as well as the practical, is united in them. In distinction from the *Critique of Pure Reason* he here traces these questions back to a fourth question, that about the being of man, and assigns it to a discipline called anthropology, by which—since he is discussing the fundamental questions of human philosophizing—only

philosophical anthropology can be understood. This, then, would be the fundamental philosophical science.

But it is remarkable that Kant's own anthropology, both what he himself published and his copious lectures on man, which only appeared long after his death, absolutely fails to achieve what he demands of a philosophical anthropology. In its express purpose as well as in its entire content it offers something different—an abundance of valuable observations for the knowledge of man, for example, on egoism, on honesty and lies, on fancy, on fortune-telling, on dreams, on mental diseases, on wit, and so on. But the question, what man is, is simply not raised, and not one of the problems which are implicitly set us at the same time by this question—such as man's special place in the cosmos, his connexion with destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow-men, his existence as a being that knows it must die, his attitude in all the ordinary and extraordinary encounters with the mystery with which his life is shot through, and so on—not one of these problems is seriously touched upon. The *wholeness* of man does not enter into this anthropology. It is as if Kant in his actual philosophizing had had qualms about setting the question which he formulated as the fundamental one.

A modern philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who has dealt (in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 1929) with this strange contradiction, explains it by the *indefiniteness* of the question, what man is. The way of asking the question about man, he says, has itself become questionable. In Kant's first three questions it is man's *finitude* which is under discussion: "What *can* I know?" involves an inability, and thus a limitation; "What *ought* I to do?" includes the realization that something has not yet been accomplished, and thus a limitation; and "What *may* I hope?" means that the questioner is given one expectation and denied another, and thus it means a limitation. The fourth question is the question about "finitude in man," and is no longer an anthropological question at all, for it is the question about the essence of existence itself. As the

basis of metaphysics anthropology is replaced by "fundamental ontology."

Whatever this finding represents, it is no longer Kant. Heidegger has shifted the emphasis of Kant's three questions. Kant does not ask: "What *can* I know?" but "What *can* I *know*?" The essential point here is not that there is something I can do and thus something else that I cannot do; nor is it that there is something I know and thus something else that I do not know; but it is that I *can know* something, and that I can then ask what that is that I can know. It is not my finitude that is under discussion here, but my real participation in knowing what there is to know. And in the same way "What ought I to do?" means that there is something I ought to do, and thus that I am not separated from "right" doing, but precisely by being able to *come to know* my "ought" may find the way to the doing. Finally, "What may I hope?" does not assert, as Heidegger thinks, that a "may" is made questionable here, and that in the expectation a want of what may not be expected is revealed; but it asserts, first, that there is something for me to hope (for obviously Kant does not mean that the answer to the third question is "Nothing"), secondly, that I am permitted to hope it, and thirdly, that precisely because I am permitted I can learn what it is that I may hope. That is what Kant says. And thus in Kant the meaning of the fourth question, to which the first three can be reduced is, what sort of a being is it which is able to know, and ought to do, and may hope? And the fact that the first three questions can be reduced to this question means that the knowledge of the essence of this being will make plain to me *what*, as such a being, it can know, *what*, as such a being, it ought to do, and *what*, as such a being, it may hope. This also means that indissolubly connected with the finitude which is given by the ability to know *only* this, there is a participation in infinity, which is given by the ability to know at all. The meaning is therefore that when we recognize man's finitude we must at the same time recognize his participation in infinity, not as two juxtaposed qualities

but as the twofold nature of the processes in which alone man's existence becomes recognizable. The finite has its effect on him and the infinite has its effect on him; he shares in finitude and he shares in infinity.

Certainly Kant in his anthropology has neither answered nor undertaken to answer the question which he put to anthropology—What is man? He lectured on another anthropology than the one he asked for—I should say, in terms of the history of philosophy, an earlier anthropology, one that was still bound up with the uncritical "science of man" of the 17th and 18th centuries. But in formulating the task which he set to the philosophical anthropology he asked for, he has left a legacy.

3

It is certainly doubtful to me as well whether such a discipline will suffice to provide a foundation for philosophy, or, as Heidegger formulates it, a foundation for metaphysics. For it is true, indeed, that I continually learn what I can know, what I ought to do, and what I may hope. It is further true that philosophy contributes to this learning of mine: to the first question by telling me, in logic and epistemology, what being able to know means, and in cosmology and the philosophy of history and so on, what there is to know; to the second question by telling me, in psychology, how the "ought to do" is carried out psychically, and in ethics, the doctrine of the State, aesthetics and so on, what there is to do; and to the third question by telling me, at least in the philosophy of religion, how the "may hope" is displayed in actual faith and the history of faith—whereas it can certainly not tell me what there is to hope, since religion itself and its conceptual elaboration in theology, whose task this is, do not belong to philosophy. All this is agreed. But philosophy succeeds in rendering me such help in its individual disciplines precisely through each of these disciplines *not* reflecting, and not being able to reflect, on the wholeness of man. Either a philosophical discipline shuts

out man in his complex wholeness and considers him only as a bit of nature, as cosmology does; or (as all the other disciplines do) it tears off its own special sphere from the wholeness of man, delimits it from the other spheres, establishes its own basic principles and develops its own methods. In addition it has to remain open and accessible, first to the ideas of metaphysics itself as the doctrine of being, of what is and of existence, secondly to the findings of the philosophical branch disciplines, and thirdly to the discoveries of philosophical anthropology. But least of all may it make itself dependent on the latter; for in every one of those disciplines the possibility of its achieving anything in thought rests precisely on its objectification, on what may be termed its "de-humanization," and even a discipline like the philosophy of history, which is so concerned with the actual man, must, in order to be able to comprehend man as a *historical being*, renounce consideration of the whole man—of which the kind of man who is living outside history in the unchanging rhythm of nature is an essential part. What the philosophical disciplines are able to contribute to answering Kant's first three questions, even if it is only by clarifying them, or teaching me to recognize the problems they contain, they are able to do only by *not* waiting for the answer to the fourth question.

Nor can philosophical anthropology itself set itself the task of establishing a foundation either for metaphysics or for the individual philosophical sciences. If it attempted to answer the question *What is man?* in such a general way that answers to the other questions could be derived from it, it would miss the very reality of its own subject. For it would reach, instead of the subject's genuine wholeness, which can become visible only by the contemplation of all its manifold nature, a false unity which has no reality. A legitimate philosophical anthropology must know that there is not merely a human species but also peoples, not merely a human soul but also types and characters, not merely a human life but also stages in life; only from the systematic comprehension of these and of all other differences, from the recognition of the dynamic that exerts power within every particular reality and between them,

and from the constantly new proof of the one in the many, can it come to see the wholeness of man. For that very reason it cannot grasp man in that absoluteness which, though it does not speak out from Kant's fourth question, yet very easily presents itself when an answer is attempted—the answer which Kant, as I have said, avoided giving. Even as it must again and again distinguish within the human race in order to arrive at a solid comprehension, so it must put man in all seriousness into nature, it must compare him with other things, other living creatures, other bearers of consciousness, in order to define his special place reliably for him. Only by this double way of distinction and comparison does it reach the whole, real man who, whatever his people or type or age, knows, what no being on earth but he can know, that he goes the narrow way from birth towards death, tests out what none but he can, a wrestling with destiny, rebellion and reconciliation, and at times even experiences in his own blood, when he is joined by choice to another human being, what goes on secretly in others.

Philosophical anthropology is not intent on reducing philosophical problems to human existence and establishing the philosophical disciplines so to speak from below instead of from above. It is solely intent on knowing man himself. This sets it a task that is absolutely different from all other tasks of thought. For in philosophical anthropology man himself is given to man in the most precise sense as a subject. Here, where the subject is man in his wholeness, the investigator cannot content himself, as in anthropology as an individual science, with considering man as another part of nature and with ignoring the fact that he, the investigator, is himself a man and experiences his humanity in his inner experience in a way that he simply cannot experience any part of nature—not only in a quite different perspective but also in a quite different dimension of being, in a dimension in which he experiences only this one part of all the parts of nature. Philosophical knowledge of man is essentially man's self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*), and man can reflect about himself only when the cognizing person, that is, the philosopher

pursuing anthropology, first of all reflects about himself as a person. The principle of individuation, the fundamental fact of the infinite variety of human persons, of whom this one is only one person, of this constitution and no other, does not relativize anthropological knowledge; on the contrary, it gives it its kernel and its skeleton. In order to become genuine philosophical anthropology, everything that is discovered about historical and modern man, about men and women, Indians and Chinese, tramps and emperors, the weak-minded and the genius, must be built up and crystallized round what the philosopher discovers by reflecting about himself. That is a quite different matter from what, say, the psychologist undertakes when he completes and clarifies by reference to his own self in self-observation, self-analysis and experiment, what he knows from literature and observation. For with him it is a matter of individual, objectivized processes and phenomena, of something that is separated from connexion with the whole real person. But the philosophical anthropologist must stake nothing less than his real wholeness, his concrete self. And more: it is not enough for him to stake his self as an *object* of knowledge. He can know the *wholeness* of the person and through it the wholeness of *man* only when he does not leave his *subjectivity* out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness. In other words, he must carry out this act of entry into that unique dimension as an act of his *life*, without any prepared philosophical security; that is, he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living. Here you do not attain to knowledge by remaining on the shore and watching the foaming waves, you must make the venture and cast yourself in, you must swim, alert and with all your force, even if a moment comes when you think you are losing consciousness: in this way, and in no other, do you reach anthropological insight. So long as you "have" yourself, have yourself as an object, your experience of man is only as of a thing among things, the wholeness which is to be grasped is not yet "there"; only

when you are, and nothing else but that, is the wholeness there, and able to be grasped. You perceive only as much as the reality of the "being there" incidentally yields to you; but you do perceive that, and the nucleus of the crystallization develops itself.

An example may clarify more precisely the relation between the psychologist and the anthropologist. If both of them investigate, say, the phenomenon of anger, the psychologist will try to grasp what the angry man feels, what his motives and the impulses of his will are, but the anthropologist will also try to grasp what he is doing. In respect of this phenomenon self-observation, being by nature disposed to weaken the spontaneity and unwilliness of anger, will be especially difficult for both of them. The psychologist will try to meet this difficulty by a specific division of consciousness, which enables him to remain outside with the observing part of his being and yet let his passion run its course as undisturbed as possible. Of course this passion can then not avoid becoming similar to that of the actor, that is, though it can still be heightened in comparison with an unobserved passion its course will be different: there will be a release which is willed and which takes the place of the elemental outbreak, there will be a vehemence which will be more emphasized, more deliberate, more dramatic. The anthropologist can have nothing to do with a division of consciousness, since he has to do with the unbroken wholeness of events, and especially with the unbroken natural connexion between feelings and actions; and this connexion is most powerfully influenced in self-observation, since the pure spontaneity of the action is bound to suffer essentially. It remains for the anthropologist only to resign any attempt to stay outside his observing self, and thus when he is overcome by anger not to disturb it in its course by becoming a spectator of it, but to let it rage to its conclusion without trying to gain a perspective. He will be able to register in the act of recollection what he felt and did then; for him memory takes the place of psychological self-experience. But as great writers in their dealings with other men do not deliberately register their peculiarities and, so to speak,

make invisible notes, but deal with them in a natural and uninhibited way, and leave the harvest to the hour of harvest, so it is the memory of the competent anthropologist which has, with reference to himself as to others, the concentrating power which preserves what is essential. In the moment of life he has nothing else in his mind but just to live what is to be lived, he is there with his whole being, undivided, and for that very reason there grows in his thought and recollection the knowledge of human wholeness.

II: From Aristotle to Kant

I

The man who feels himself solitary is the most readily disposed and most readily fitted for the self-reflection of which I am speaking; that is, the man who by nature or destiny or both is alone with himself and his problematic, and who succeeds, in this blank solitude, in meeting himself, in discovering man in his own self, and the human problematic in his own. The times of spiritual history in which anthropological thought has so far found its depth of experience have been those very times in which a feeling of strict and inescapable solitude took possession of man; and it was the most solitary men in whom the thought became fruitful. In the ice of solitude man becomes most inexorably a question to himself, and just because the question pitilessly summons and draws into play his most secret life he becomes an experience to himself.

In the history of the human spirit I distinguish between epochs of habitation and epochs of homelessness. In the former, man lives in the world as in a house, as in a home. In the latter, man lives in the world as in an open field and at times does not even have four pegs with which to set up a tent. In the former epochs anthropological thought exists only as a part of cosmological thought.

In the latter, anthropological thought gains depth and, with it, independence. I will give a few examples of both, which offer a glance at a few chapters of the *pre-history* of philosophical anthropology.

Bernhard Grethysen (a pupil of my teacher Wilhelm Dilthey, the founder of the history of philosophical anthropology) rightly said of Aristotle, in a work called *Philosophical Anthropology* (1931), that with him man ceases to be problematic, with him man speaks of himself always as it were in the third person, is only a "case" for himself, he attains to consciousness of self only as "he," not as "I." The special dimension, in which man knows himself as he can know himself alone, remains unentered, and for that reason man's special place in the cosmos remains undiscovered. Man is comprehended only in the world, the world is not comprehended in him. The tendency of the Greeks to understand the world as a self-contained space, in which man too has his fixed place, was perfected in Aristotle's geocentric spherical system. The hegemony of the visual sense over the other senses, which appears among the Greeks for the first time, as a tremendous new factor in the history of the human spirit, the very hegemony which enabled them to live a life derived from *images* and to base a culture on the forming of images, holds good in their philosophy as well. A visual image of the universe (*Weltbild*) arises which is formed from visual sense-impressions and objectified as only the visual sense is able to objectify, and the experiences of the other senses are as it were retrospectively recorded in this picture. Even Plato's world of ideas is a visual world, a world of forms that are seen. But it is not before Aristotle that the visual image of the universe is realized in unsurpassable clarity as a universe of things, and now man is a thing among these things of the universe, an objectively comprehensible species beside other species—no longer a sojourner in a foreign land like the Platonic man, but given his own dwelling-place in the house of the world, not, indeed, in one of the highest storeys, but not in one of the lower, either, rather in the respectable middle. The pre-

supposition for a philosophical anthropology in the sense of Kant's fourth question is lacking here.

§

The first to pose the genuine anthropological question anew, and in the first person—more than seven centuries after Aristotle—was Augustine. The solitude out of which he asked the question can only be understood when one realizes that that round and unified world of Aristotle had long since collapsed. It collapsed because the soul of man, divided against itself, could no longer grasp as truth anything but a world which was divided against itself. In place of the sphere which had collapsed there now arose two autonomous and mutually hostile kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. We meet them again in almost every system of that widespread and manifold spiritual movement of gnosis, which at that time seized the embarrassed heirs of the great oriental and antique cultures, split the godhead and emptied value from creation; and in the most consistent of these systems, in Manichaeism, there is even, consistently, a double earth. Here man can no longer be a thing among things, and he can have no fixed place in the world. Since he consists of soul and body he is divided between the two kingdoms, he is simultaneously the scene and the prize of the struggle. In each man the original man who fell is manifested; in each man the problematic of being is stated in terms of life. Augustine emerged from the school of Manichaeism. Homeless in the world, solitary between the higher and the lower powers, he remains homeless and solitary even after he found salvation in Christianity as a redemption that had *already taken place*. So he asks Kant's question in the first person, and not, indeed, as with Kant, as an objectivized problem, which the hearers of his logic lectures could certainly not understand as a question directed to themselves; but he takes up the question of the psalmist again in real address, with another sense and in

another tone: *What is man that thou art mindful of him?* He asks for information from one who can give it: *quid ergo sum, Deus meus? quæ natura mea?* He does not mean only himself; the word *natura* says clearly that in his person he means man, that man whom he calls the *grande profundum*, the great mystery. And he even draws that same anthropological conclusion which we have heard in Malebranche; he does it in his famous accusation of men, that they marvel at mountains, at the waves of the sea and the course of the stars, but "relinquish" themselves without being astonished at themselves. This wonder of man at himself, which Augustine demands as a result of his own self-experience, is something quite different from the wonder with which Aristotle in his metaphysic makes all philosophizing begin. The Aristotelian man wonders at man among the rest, but only as a part of a quite astonishing world. The Augustinian man wonders at that in man which cannot be understood as a part of the world, as a thing among things; and where that former wondering has already passed into methodical philosophizing, the Augustinian wondering manifests itself in its true depth and uncanniness. It is not philosophy, but it affects all future philosophy.

In the post-augustinian west it is not the contemplation of nature, as with the Greeks, but faith which builds a new house in the cosmos for the solitary soul. The Christian cosmos arises; and this was so real for every medieval Christian that all who read the *Divina Commedia* made in spirit the journey to the nethermost spiral of hell and stepped up over Lucifer's back, through purgatory, to the heaven of the Trinity, not as an expedition into lands as yet unknown, but as a crossing of regions already fully mapped. Once again there is a self-enclosed universe, once again a house in which man is allowed to dwell. This universe is still more finite than that of Aristotle, for here finite time too is taken into the image in all seriousness—the finite time of the Bible, which here appears, however, transformed into a Christian form. The pattern of this image of the universe is a cross, whose vertical beam is finite space from heaven to hell, leading right across the

heart of the human being, and whose cross-beam is finite time from the creation of the world to the end of days; which makes time's centre, the death of Christ, fall coveringly and redemptively on the centre of space, the heart of the poor sinner. The medieval image of the universe is built round this pattern. In it Dante painted life, the life of men and spirits, but the conceptual framework was set up for him by Thomas Aquinas. As of Aristotle, so too it is true of Aquinas, though he was a theologian, and therefore in duty bound to know about the real man who says "I" and is addressed as "Thou," that man speaks here "as if we were always in the third person." In Aquinas's world-system man is indeed a separate species of a quite special kind, because in him the human soul, the lowest of the spirits, is substantially united with the human body, the highest of physical things, so that man appears as it were as "the horizon and the dividing line of spiritual and physical nature." But Aquinas knows no special problem and no special problematic of human life, such as Augustine experienced and expressed with trembling heart. The anthropological question has here come to rest again: in man, housed and unproblematic, no impulse stirs to questioning self-confrontation, or it is soon appeased.

3

In the late middle ages there already emerged a new earnestness about man as man. The finite world still hedged man safely in: *hunc mundum haud aliud esse, quam amplexissimam quandam hominis domum*, says Carolus Bovillus as late as the sixteenth century. But the same Bovillus cries to man: *homo es, sistere in homine*, and thus takes up the motif that had been expressed by the great Cusa before him: *homo non vult esse nisi homo*. This by itself certainly does not imply that man by his nature steps out of and forth from the world. For Cusa there is not a thing which would not prefer its own being to all being and its own way of being to all other ways of being; all that it wishes in eternity to be nothing but itself, but

to be this one thing always more perfectly in the way proper to its nature; it is precisely from this that the harmony of the universe grows, for every being contains everything in a special "contraction."

But with man there is also thought, the reason which measures and values. He has in himself all created things, like God; but God has them in himself as the archetypes, man has them in himself as relations and values. Cusa compares God to the coining master of the mint, and man to the money-changer with his scale of values. God can create all, we can know all; we can know all because we too carry all in ourselves potentially. And soon after Cusa, Pico della Mirandola draws from this proud self-assurance the anthropological conclusion, which again reminds us of the words of Malebranche: *nos autem peculiare aliquid in homine quaerimus, unde et dignitas ei propria et imago divinae substantiae cum nulla sibi creatura communis competitur*. Here the theme of anthropology already clearly appears. But it appears without that setting of the problematic which is indispensable for the genuine establishment of anthropology—the deadly earnestness of the question about man. Man steps forth here in such autonomy and such consciousness of power that the real question does not step up to him. These thinkers of the Renaissance affirm that man can know, but the Kantian question, *what he can know*, is still quite foreign to them; he can know all. It is true that the last in the series of these thinkers, Bovillus, excepts God: the human spirit cannot reach God, but Bovillus lets the whole universe be known by man, who has been created outside it as its spectator, in fact, as its eye. So securely are these pioneers of a new era still housed in a secure universe. Cusa, it is true, speaks of the spatial and temporal infinity of the universe, and thus deprives the earth of its central position, and destroys in thought the medieval pattern. But this infinity is only one that is thought, it is not yet beheld and lived. Man is not yet solitary again, he has still to learn again to ask the solitary man's question.

But at the same time as Bovillus was extolling the universe as man's *amblystima domus*, all the walls of the

house were in fact already crumbling beneath the blows of Copernicus, the unlimited was pressing in from every side, and man was standing in a universe which in actual fact could no longer be experienced as a house. Man was no longer secure, but though at first he had a heroic enthusiasm for the grandeur of this universe, as with Bruno, then a mathematical enthusiasm for its harmony, as with Kepler, yet finally, more than a century after the death of Copernicus and the publication of his work, the new reality of man proved itself to be more powerful than the new reality of the universe. Pascal, a great scientist, a mathematician and a physicist, young and destined to die early, experienced beneath the starry heavens not merely, as Kant did, their majesty, but still more powerfully their uncanniness: *le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*. With a clarity that has not since then been surpassed he discerns the twin infinities, that of the infinitely great and that of the infinitely small, and so comes to know man's limitation, his inadequacy, the casualness of his existence: *combien de royaumes nous ignorons!* The enthusiasm of Bruno and Kepler which as it were skipped man is here replaced by a terribly clear, melancholy yet believing sobriety. It is the sobriety of the man who has become more deeply solitary than ever before, and with a sober pathos he frames the anthropological question afresh: *qu'est ce qu'un homme dans l'infini?* Cusa's sovereignty, in which man boasted that he carried all things in himself and thus that he could know all things, is opposed here by the insight of the solitary man, who exclaims being exposed as a human being to infinity: *Constatons donc notre portée: nous sommes quelque chose, et ne sommes pas tout; ce que nous avons d'être nous dérobe la connaissance des premiers principes, qui naissent du néant; et le peu que nous avons d'être nous cache la vue de l'infini*. But, in this renewal of anthropological thought, from the very fact that self-reflection is carried out with such clarity, there is yielded man's special place in the cosmos. *L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature: mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser: une vapeur, une goutte d'eau,*

suffit pour le tuer. Mais, quand l'univers pétrasserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt et l'aveugle que l'univers a sur lui. L'univers n'en sait rien. This is not the stoic attitude over again; it is the new attitude of the person who has become homeless in infinity, for here everything depends on the knowledge that man's grandeur is born of his misery, that he is different from all things just because even as he passes away he can be a child of the spirit. Man is the being who knows his situation in the universe and is able, so long as he is in his senses, to continue this knowledge. What is decisive is not that this creature of all dares to step up to the universe and know it—however amazing this is in itself; what is decisive is that he knows the relation between the universe and himself. Thereby from out of the midst of the universe something that faces the universe has arisen. And that means that this "from out of the midst" has its own special problematic.

4

We have seen that the strict anthropological question, which refers to man's specific problematic, becomes insistent in times when as it were the original contract between the universe and man is dissolved and man finds himself a stranger and solitary in the world. The end of an image of the universe, that is, the end of a *security* in the universe, is soon followed by a fresh questioning from man who has become insecure, and hence problematic to himself. But it can be shown that a *way* leads from one such crisis to the next, and on to the one after that. The crises have something essential in common, but they are not similar. Aristotle's cosmological image of the universe breaks up from within, through the soul's experience of the problem of evil in its depth, and through its feeling of being surrounded by a divided universe; Aquinas's theological image of the universe breaks up from without, through the universe manifesting itself as unlimited. What causes the crisis is on the one occasion a

myth, the dualistic myth of gnosis, on the other occasion it is the cosmos of science itself, no longer clothed with any myth. Pascal's solitude is truly historically *later* than Augustine's; it is more complete and harder to overcome. And in fact something new arises that has not existed before; work is carried out on a new *image* of the universe, but a new *house* in the universe is no longer built. Once the concept of infinity has been taken seriously a human dwelling can no longer be made of the universe. And infinity itself must be included in the image of the universe—which is a paradox, for an image, if it is really an image, is limited, yet now the unlimited itself must enter the image. In other words, when the point is reached where the image ends, the point, say—to use the language of modern astronomy—of the nebula, which are a hundred million light-years distant from us, then it must be felt with the utmost urgency that the image does not and cannot end. Incidentally it may be noticed, though it is self-evident, that Einstein's concept of finite space would be by no means fit for rebuilding the universe as a house for man, since this "finite" is essentially different from that which produced the feeling of the universe as a house. And more, it is certainly possible that this concept of the universe, which has been disclosed by the mathematician's genius, freed from sensuality, can one day become accessible to natural human understanding; but it will no longer be in a position to produce a new *image* of the universe, not even a paradoxical image as the Copernican concept could. For the Copernican concept only fulfilled what the human soul had vaguely felt in the hours when the house of universal space, the Aristotelian or the Thomist, seemed too cramped, and it dared to beat on its walls to see if a window could not be thrown out into a world beyond—it fulfilled it, it is true, in a way which deeply perturbed this same human soul, which cannot help being as it is, once and for all. But Einstein's concept of the universe signifies no fulfillment of the spirit's inking, but the contradiction of all its inkings and imaginings; this universe can still be thought, but it can no longer be imaged, the man who thinks it no longer really lives in it.

The generation which works modern cosmology into its natural thought will be the first, after several millennia of changing images of the universe, which will have to forgo the possession of an image of its universe; this very fact, that it lives in a universe which cannot be imaged, will probably be its feeling of the universe, so to speak its image of the universe: *imago mundi nova—imago nulla*.

3

I have far anticipated the course of our investigation. Let us return to our second example and ask how from there we reach our age in its special human homelessness and solitude, and its new setting of the anthropological question.

The greatest attempt to master the situation of post-copernican man, as mediated to us by Pascal, was undertaken shortly after Pascal's death by a man who was destined to die almost as young. Spinoza's attempt, from the point of view of our problem, means that astronomical infinity is both unconditionally accepted and stripped of its uncaniness: extension, of which this infinity is stated and demonstrated, is only one of the infinitely many attributes of infinite substance, and it is one of the two which alone we know—the other is thought. Infinite substance, also called God by Spinoza, in relation to which this infinity of space can be only one of infinitely many attributes, *loves*, it loves itself, and it loves itself also, and especially, in man, for the love of the human spirit for God is only *pars infiniti amoris, quo Deus se ipsum amat*. Here one may say that Pascal's question, what is a man in the infinite, is answered: he is a being in whom God loves himself. Cosmology and anthropology appear here in-possibly reconciled, but the cosmos has not again become what it was with Aristotle and Aquinas—a manifold universe, ordered as an image, in which every thing and every being has its place and the being "man" feels himself at home in union with them all. A new security of being in the world is not given; yet for Spinoza this is not

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