

# Permanent Values and Historical Process

## 1. The Inadequacy of the Historicism and the Empiricism that Characterize Today's Culture

Widespread historicism and rampant empiricism, two of the most common characteristics of today's culture, acquire a particular relevance in light of the problem of the permanence of values in history.

Today's historicistic mindset does not take the form of a rigorous or precise theory, even though it derives from nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicism, whether in its idealistic, materialistic or culturalistic forms; rather, it gains its strength from being the more or less conscious criterion of current evaluations by the majority of cultured individuals, and compensates for its lack of philosophical rigor by being a truly integral form of historicism. This mindset carries the historicistic principle of *veritas filia temporis* [truth is the child of its time] to its most extreme consequences: that is, a historical form has no other value than its exact correspondence with the time in which it is born and of which it is simply a product; thus it possesses a momentary and ephemeral reality, and it is quickly confined to an irrevocable and definitive past.

This historicistic mindset often combines somewhat coherently with a form of practicicism. When Nietzsche denounced the sterility of historicism, he correctly meant to show that it was impossible to confront the present with categories that belonged to the past: An understanding that justifies everything, and thus rejects judging and acting, might perhaps be able to penetrate the past, but on the present will only have a paralyzing effect. Nothing but a dangerous rift between thought and action could follow from it: On the one hand, action—which is in itself destined to the present—is released from thought, that is, it becomes pure praxis; on the other hand thought—once released from action—is kept in the past, in fact confined to it, and remains there, rendered sterile and infertile.

And so, the current way of doing politics is often nothing more than pure praxis, blind to every relation with theory that is not reduced to a complete instrumentalization of doctrines, and the current way of doing history is often inspired by an artificial neutrality that, rightly suspicious of rhetoric, nonetheless makes us incapable of evaluating the problems of the present. Another commonplace in today's culture is therefore explained, namely, the one according to which ideas are confined to the past while the present has room only for ideologies: Theory and speculative discussion would be things of the past, and the present day would only respect practical debates, whether political or religious. From this derives the increasingly frequent presence of philosophers as it were split in half—one half is culturalist, the other half is ideological—in whom the capacity for speculative philosophy and the understanding of the world live separately because the first, reduced to a neutral (albeit very critical) technique, serves only to deal with doctrines from the past, and the second constitutes nothing more than a practical choice, valid only in the present. Under the aegis of historicism, thought has divested itself of truth up to this extreme.

The other characteristic of today's culture, rampant empiricism, also can be understood easily, as it is nothing other than the logical result of the attempt by the so-called social sciences to replace philosophy. Today, to the degree to which it does not give way to action, thought tends to become empirical thought, which is precisely the kind of reflection that characterizes social sciences such as psychology, sociology, ethnology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, cultural history, and so on. These sciences have the greatest legitimacy when they remain within their proper limits, where they are truly irreplaceable, fulfilling an important function that is extremely useful for philosophy itself. The data that they collect, compare, and interpret reach such a high level of generalization as to demonstrate stable elements, recurrent features, permanent structures within the flux of human history, thus bringing about a valid contribution to the ever-growing knowledge about human beings. The investigation of human cultural forms as it is practiced in this field of studies certainly intensifies the experience that human beings have of themselves and the world. One might even say that philosophy could only benefit from the success of these sciences, and they are very useful to philosophy also in the sense that they increase the plurality of experiential fields on which philosophical thought must reflect, in contact with concrete questions and dealing with particular problems.

Some intellectuals today would, however, be pleased if the social sciences did not content themselves with this function and aimed to replace

philosophy, going so far as to claim to be the only philosophy currently still possible. Truthfully, philosophy itself has allowed this to happen when it has accepted its role as a methodology for particular sciences. Taken in this way, philosophy becomes a rationality transparent to itself insofar as technically effective in individual fields of experience; that is, it becomes reason aware of itself but devoid of truth. In a word, it is *empty* thought, and as such, it is not only incapable of stopping the invasion of the social sciences, which are so rich with concrete contents, but is also ready to surrender its domain to them. At this point empirical thought—so useful when understood as the field on which to exercise a philosophical reflection committed to its own exquisitely speculative character—takes over philosophy entirely, purges it ever more of truth, and reduces it to the most resolute empiricism.

Now, if in today's culture there is some obstacle that keeps us from recognizing the presence of permanent values within the historical process, it is the historicist mindset and the triumphant empiricism. From a historicist point of view, the value of historical forms consists exclusively in their adherence to the time in which and from which they arise, that is, in their ability to express their own epoch. It is therefore a matter of a thoroughly transitory validity, rigorously limited to the narrow precincts and paltry duration of the historical situation. From an empiricist point of view, constant structures certainly exist in human history, verifiable beyond even the most subtle differences in situation, behavior, and civilization; but, these constants are nevertheless verifiable only in an empirical way and cannot be elevated above the level of a pure fact. In conclusion, in history there would exist on the one hand values that lack permanence, and on the other hand constant characteristics that do not suffice as values.

## 2. The Historicity of Values and Historical Durability

At this point it is necessary to submit the concept of permanent values in history to a rigorous philosophical critique, not only in order to protect it from ruin at the hands of historicism and empiricism, but also to correct and sharpen its meaning. Far too often we entertain, without critique, the rather naïve idea that history is the temporal realization of supra-temporal values, along with the simple distinction that follows from it between permanent insofar as supra-historical values and historical and thus temporal facts. If the problem is to distinguish in history what is

truly permanent as a supra-historical value from what, as a historical fact, is solely temporal, one must recognize that in history everything is equally historical and temporal, including values, and that in the human world even permanence can mean nothing more than historical durability.

It is necessary to admit that in history all values are historical: They are born in time, surging forth from history, and live in time where they awaken new history. History is both that which flows into them and also that which moves from them; that is, it is both the substance of which they are formed and also the activity that they promote in their own footsteps because every value is simultaneously result and model, completion and beginning, and thus at the same time includes a past and opens up a future, concludes a process and begins new ones. The permanence of values consists precisely in their fully historical reality as for both origin and effectiveness; it consists in their capacity to endure in time after being born within time, and in their somewhat perpetual existence, whereby they condense the history that has nourished them into the stability of one historical form and also stimulate a new activity that is inspired by them and models itself after them. In a word, the permanence of values consists in a presence that is enduring in time because it generates history.

The dialectic of exemplarity and kindredness, which articulates the historical comportment of human beings, suffices to explain this sort of durability. On the one side, a human work that is not only new but truly original—where originality is the fortunate and indissoluble marriage of the universal and unquestionable feature of value with the singular and unrepeatable feature of success—becomes an exemplar and demands to be taken up and continued in a new activity; and on the other side, this exemplarity is effective only when it is welcomed within a historical environment spiritually akin to that from which the original value has emerged, so that only kindredness makes its original continuation possible.

On the one hand, it seems impossible to accept the still rather popular idea that the rhythm of human spirit consists in an alternation between innovative impulses and inactive pauses, as if the perpetuation of a successful result were tied to a passive habit. The exemplarity of value is not the immobile completeness of a perfection that could only allow its imitation; rather, it is the generative vigor of originality that not only demands but also even initiates an industrious and eager emulation. On the other hand, exemplarity bears fruit only when welcomed within an act of agreement and participation, the kind that only the communal feeling [*simpatia*] and awareness of belonging to a same spiritual community can

inspire. Only at this point the new activity is in its turn original because, far from being subjected to the model, it instead seizes the opportunity to welcome and assimilate it so that the exemplarity of value, albeit an independent power, acts solely as internal stimulus and support for the activity that could discover and adopt it.

Thus, styles and customs establish themselves in all human activities as true lasting traces in the history of humanity, living incarnations of the very durability of values. But their duration is exactly historical: They last as long as the correspondence between exemplarity and kindredness ensures an equilibrium between conservation and innovation. When the kindredness weakens, this equilibrium breaks and the *synthesis* that inseparably united conservation and innovation gives way to the *dilemma* of repetition and revolt, and to the choice between conformity or rupture. Styles and customs, rigidified into manners and habits, degenerate toward death under the blows and refusals of a rebellious will.

### 3. Beyond Values and Beyond Durability: The Presence of Being

When speaking of permanent values in history, however, one does not mean the permanence mentioned above: In this case, one understands a presence far more originary and profound, of which historical durability can be in itself neither the effect nor the distinguishing mark.

It is a matter of a stimulating and regulating power internal to human industriousness [*operosità*]; it is so profound that it is inseparable from the acts that it produces and indistinguishable from the response that it receives, but it is also so peremptory that it is irreducible to human activity and present to it as its starting point and norm. In a word, it is presence without figure, yet powerful and unwavering—the presence of Being. Such a power need not appeal to external and preexistent values because it is inseparable from the activity that it stimulates and guides, nor does it need to be considered as its own value because it possesses and exercises a vigorous power in itself. We need not return to Heidegger's very severe yet persuasive critique of the concept of value in order to convince ourselves that ontology has no need for axiology, nor to understand that to conceive of Being as value does not exalt it, but degrades it.

Value is a quality of human works, and exemplarity is the power of historical values. To claim that Being should be endowed with exemplarity in order to have a stimulating power, and likewise that Being should be a

value in order to possess normative vigor, amounts to attributing to Being qualities inferior to its nature and forgetting that the capacity for stimulation and regulation derives more from the *inexhaustibility* and *originaryity* of *Being* than from the *exemplarity* and *originality* of *value*. Understanding Being as value turns everything upside down: Being is then subordinated to human needs and human beings are released from the service of Being; as a result, Being depreciates and falls into oblivion, whereas human beings are degraded and consigned to the negative because to believe that one has the power to exalt humanity while suppressing the ontological character of its activity actually means reducing the human to a position below itself. When humanity strives to make itself *super-human* [*superuomo*], its destiny is to become nothing but *sub-human* [*subuomo*].

It is also impossible to claim that historical durability is the sign or effect of Being's presence. First of all, it would be excessive optimism to believe that the durable is in itself positive. Frequently, truth is neither effective nor recognized in the human world, and evil is often more popular and successful than the good. Nor should one refrain from admitting that the negative can also be durable: In human history, the negative is certainly more persistent and tenacious than the positive. Indeed, in a certain sense, true persistence is precisely negativity because obstinacy and stubbornness are the orientations best suited to evil and error. Even if against our will, we must abandon the naïve trust that enduring things are always positive and that the good should be, in and of itself, enduring. This prejudice contradicts itself, as it is itself an effect of the persistence of the negative: *diabolicum est diabolium negare* [to deny the devil is a devil's activity].

Moreover, the presence of Being has so little to do with historical durability that one could just as easily attribute it to a simple instant. There is no reason why Being should reside in the enduring rather than in the momentary, and its presence neither extends the life of the enduring nor cuts short the momentary. It matters little whether Being appears in the rapidity of the instant or in the extension of time because it can make itself present in a single instant or remain absent from an entire epoch. Thus, the merely temporal distinction between the enduring and the ephemeral does not suffice to distinguish the ontological import of any temporal trait. It is true that time is the only venue for the appearance of Being, yet it is also true that the external traits of temporality are not transformed by the presence of Being. There is also no sign that could, from the outside, characterize the bearer of Being among the moments of time, as the temporal aspect of such a bearer is always the same. Similarly for Kierkegaard, the possession of the eternal does not change the

everydayness of time, and the knight of faith has all the features of a tax collector or a grocer on vacation, of a shopkeeper who dedicates himself to his work with earthly perseverance and at night smokes his pipe content that the day is at its end. He possesses the infinite, but none of it leaks through to the outside, and no sign of the incommensurable betrays him, because he lives completely entrusted to the finite, as only the one who contains the eternal can do.

The problem is not to distinguish what in history would be permanent as a supra-historical value from what, as a historical fact, would be solely temporal. In history, *everything* is equally historical and temporal. The problem is rather to recognize the presence of Being in history, and thus to distinguish—in what is *entirely and equally* historical and expressive of its own time—between that which is *solely* historical and expressive and that which is *also* ontological and revelatory, between those things whose nature and value exhaust themselves in historicity, and those whose historicity is the opening and path to Being, and thus its site and apparition.

#### 4. The Inexhaustibility of Being as Foundation of Its Presence and Ulteriority in Historical Forms

How is Being present in history? First and foremost we should exclude the metaphysical identification of the Absolute with the finite, which would impress on history a univocal and progressive direction and would recognize the manifestation of the Absolute in a series of historical moments. The problematicity of the relation between human beings and Being has nothing to do with an objective metaphysical glance that claims to see the Absolute unfold in the multiplicity of its manifestations. Although Being only ever appears in time, not all time is revelatory because Being abandons those who betray it, and thus whole epochs remain devoid of truth.

Nor is the presence of Being tied to the exercise of a pure formality, which according to a renewed transcendentalism would receive its content only from the circumstances, and would ensure the success of human activities on the ground of an intrinsic and autonomous criterion of reason and behavior. When removed from the vigor of their originary ontological rootedness, human thought and freedom sink to the neutrality of a purely instrumental reason or a mere technique for behavior.

Furthermore, Being is not present in history through its very own determinacy, in a form that is recognizable as unique and definitive, one that aids in the comparison of historical forms, thus rendering their

appraisal swift, easy, and infallible. The presence of Being can be configured only historically, and Being has no other way to appear or place to reside but in historical forms. Being resides there in its *inexhaustibility*, that is, on the one hand with a *presence* that makes these forms its only way of appearing, and on the other hand with an *ulteriority* that allows none of them to contain it exclusively. Being resides there in such a way that it entrusts itself to the forms that reveal it, to the point of being inseparable from them; yet Being is never fully dissolved in a historical form, even though it gives itself over to it. This does not mean that when a historical form is revelatory one can separate, within it, a temporal and transient aspect from an atemporal and immutable substance, because everything in it is equally temporal and revelatory; nor does it mean that Being could distinguish itself from the historical form such that it could compare that form with another in order to judge them; rather, it means that Being resides in historical forms as an always ulterior presence, in all of the irrepressible force of its inexhaustibility.

There is no need to claim that this inexhaustibility of Being is, as one says today, a sort of meta-cultural permanence continually unformed and inaccessible so that it floats above all historical events, as if it feared contamination through contact with time and would retain its innovative and stimulatory power only if it were immune from every historical predicament. Aside from the fact that the meta-historicity of something appears less through its power to transcend its own historical forms and more from its power to be embodied in ever newer forms, it nevertheless remains the case that Being resists figuration to such a degree that it appears solely in historical determinations with which it truly coincides. Certainly, Being is present in such determinations in the only way that it can reside *wholly*, that is, in its inexhaustibility, which keeps it from dissolving into any one of these forms. This inexhaustibility does not tower over the historical forms, however; rather, it appears only *within* each one of them. And whereas Being only appears within a historical form, from which it is inseparable without being exhausted, it must also be said that this form is a *revelation* of Being, that is, neither its alteration nor disguise nor surrogate, but *Being itself as* historically determined.

##### 5. Historical Forms as Interpretations of Being: The Elimination of Relativism

This presence of Being in history refers back to that concept of *interpretation* where the originary solidarity between human beings and truth is



realized. Interpretation is also revelatory and historical at the same time, because on one hand truth is accessible only within each individual perspective, and on the other hand it is this same historical situation that is the pathway to truth. Truth cannot therefore be revealed unless one is already determining and formulating it, which only occurs personally and historically. The interpretation of truth is also the possession of an infinite: Truth offers itself only within the formulation that one gives of it and is inseparable from this formulation, such that it could not be presented with a determinacy and objectivity by which the formulation itself could be compared and judged from the outside; and that formulation, although unable to monopolize the inexhaustibility of truth that supports an infinity of other formulations, is *truth itself* in the form of a personal possession, and is nothing other than truth: not its image, nor its distortion, nor its replacement.

Interpretation is therefore born as revelatory and plural *at one and the same time*, and for this reason it escapes every accusation of relativism. Its plurality derives from the overabundant nature of the very truth that resides there, that is, it surges forth from the same source whence the manifestation of truth springs; and far from dispersing truth into a series of indifferent formulations, this plurality unveils truth in its inexhaustible richness. In its infinity, truth can offer itself to many diverse perspectives, and interpretation maintains its uniqueness in the very act that multiplies its formulations, in the same way that a work of art, far from dissolving in a plurality of arbitrary performances, remains the same work while entrusting itself to always newer interpretations that know how to grasp and render it, and while coinciding with them.

The final elimination of relativism becomes possible as soon as one grasps the *revelatory and at the same time plural* nature of interpretation, that is, when one understands fully that in interpretation the *revelatory* aspect is *inseparable* from the *historical* aspect. The interpretative relation between truth and its formulation is *at one and the same time* one of identity and ulteriority in perfect equilibrium. In one sense, truth coincides with its formulation so that it can be possessed in a revelatory way; yet this possession does not go so far as to authorize its exclusive and complete, let alone unique and final, presentation, for in such a case it would no longer be interpretation, but a surrogate for truth, that is, one of the many historical formulations that claim to be absolute and replace truth. In another sense, truth is always ulterior in respect to its formulation, but only so as to require a plurality of formulations. Truth does not convey a sense of its absolute ineffability, against which all formulations would remain fatally inadequate and irreparably insignificant, in a common and

resigned equivalence and indifference, as relativism would have it, thereby cutting off any exit save an arbitrary and praxistic choice.

In the same way, a historical form—an epoch, civilization, or idea—can be an interpretation of Being, namely Being itself as historically determined, without implying an affirmation of relativism. Even the relation between Being and the historical form that reveals it is *interpretative*. That demonstrates, moreover, how the presence of Being in history is something much more radical and profound than any historical durability. Interpretation, in the very act that explains how a historical form is an epiphany of Being, grounds a reality that from the outside may even bear a resemblance to historical duration, but that possesses a nature much more substantial and originary—tradition.

## 6. The Originarity of Tradition

The possibility of tradition is tied *necessarily* to the interpretation of truth. In fact, interpretation gives a formulation of truth while possessing it as inexhaustible. That means that it contains *at one and the same time* a bottomless reserve of implicit possibilities and the indication of a specific manner of their realization. As possession of an inexhaustible, interpretation implies an immeasurable divide between explicit and implicit, said and unsaid, already thought and not yet thought. This divide grounds the difference between past, present, and future; but because it comes from that same inexhaustibility of the true that is originarily possessed by interpretation, it prevents the present from the possibility of finding the authentic meaning of the past unless [such a meaning] is referred back to the origin, and at the same time it offers [the present] the possibility of attaining the origin through its own reference to the past. Therefore, an interpretation necessarily grounds a tradition, because the unceasing deepening that it solicits ties the unraveling of present possibilities not only to the patrimony of possibilities already developed, but also to the very source of infinite possibilities. Thus a historical form is simultaneously a determinate interpretation of Being and a reserve of possibilities to be discovered and developed; and the stimulus to develop them, along with the way of discovering them, is suggested *at one and the same time* by the *past* and by *Being*: by the past, not as time gone by, but as historical reality referred back to its origin; and by Being, not in its alleged unrepresentability, but as that which is historically determined. A tradition gushes

forth and flows precisely from that past recovered in its ontological root-ness and placed back within the temporal appearing of Being.

One can now see how far true tradition is from historical durability, even though it can assume its form and aspect. Consider, for example, loyalty to the past taken as heritage to be preserved, legacy to be worthy of, and wealth to be invested; or kindredness intended as a task, so that one knows how to project the past in its exemplarity and continue it in an original way; or the steady purpose of diligently cultivating the equilibrium between conservation and innovation: These are all noble and worthy things, but they have little to do with tradition, of which at best they can be the subjective form and exterior garment, destined to disappear in the void without tradition itself. Tradition is something far more profound because it does not limit itself to being the transmission of a historical result, but is fundamentally a listening to Being; that is, it is a dialogue with the past only insofar as it is an appeal to the origin. It traverses the centuries not because it is positioned in time, but because it is inserted at the heart of the temporal advent of Being.

Tradition has an essentially originary and ontological nature. It does not simply suggest loyalty to the past and transmission of a heritage; rather, it indicates the very conditions of such a loyalty and transmission, freeing them from a merely temporal dimension and returning them to their originarity. It shows that linking the present to a past and continuing a past in the present is truly possible and fertile only if the past is delivered from its mere temporality and recovered in a more originary manner, only if the past is considered to be a bearer of the implicit, and for that reason imbued with an ontological import, and only if the past is seen not as anterior to the present, but as close to Being. It shows that only the loyalty to Being can point out a possibility worthy of development in a historical form, and that a genuine invocation of the past means evoking the originary presence that it contains. The determining element in tradition is thus the call to the origin and the recovery of the ontological dimension of time, as it becomes manifest in the fact that the great traditions love to attribute a mythical character to their own beginnings and an esoteric character to their own means of transmission. The allegory in this is clear: On the one hand, one represents that which is originary and close to Being as primordial and distant in time, and on the other hand, one imagines as esoteric that which, due to its revelatory character, deserves a protection capable of preserving it from temporal dissipation.

## 7. Regeneration and Revolution

Tradition contains within itself the possibility of continual renewal due to its originarity, one that places it in direct contact with Being. True renewal of the past does not consist so much in a subjective act of originality inspired by kindredness in the person who welcomes and prolongs it, as it does in the fact that *by its very nature* tradition cannot hand something down if not through renewal of it, because tradition draws directly from the first spring of every authentic novelty that is the always fresh and inexhaustible source of Being, of that for which "every single day is as though it were the first." More than a renewal, this is the case of a true and proper *regeneration* that may even implicate or require profound transformations feared only by those who count on the durability of historical values and the constants in human behavior. The guardians of truth do not fear these transformations, for they know that they are due to a commitment to deepen the inexhaustibility of Being. At this level, the problem is no longer that of avoiding the loss of equilibrium between conservation and innovation but, much more radically, of choosing whether to remain faithful to Being or betray it because faithfulness is owed not to a historical and temporal form as such, but to the originary presence that is harbored there.

Tradition is the opposite of revolution not because it opposes revolution with conservation, but precisely because the originary and ontological regeneration that tradition demands differs completely from the regeneration advanced by revolution, regeneration that only has a temporal and secondary nature. First of all, revolution wants to start again from the *beginning*, whereas tradition is a continual recovery of the *origin*. The true object of a revolutionary stance is the *past* as such, whereas in tradition it is above all *Being*. Revolution longs for a new beginning *in time*, whereas tradition refers to the origin whence only a regeneration *of time* can come.

Furthermore, by virtue of the revelatory and plural nature of interpretation, tradition reaches the level where a formulation of truth and a historical formulation are affirmed over the recognition of other formulations and other forms through a free discussion with them. Conversely, grounding its own idea on the radical rejection of others, revolution removes such an idea from the pluralistic level of interpretation and turns it into a mere surrogate for truth, thus lowering itself to the level of temporality left to itself and immersed in the oblivion of Being.

Finally, revolution, in its most rigorous meaning today, is radical praxism that tries to institute the unity of theory and praxis *after* their separation, and that by proposing nothing more than their re-unification, remains still entangled within the lower register of division, unable to elevate itself to the ontological relation. Such a relation would be the *originary* unity of theory and praxis because it is indivisibly revelation of truth and decision for Being.

## 8. Being and Freedom

Certainly, by not appearing in a form that is its own, let alone unique and definitive, but always in the historical forms from which it is inseparable, Being opens the way to an apparent disorder wherein the lack of an extrinsic and objective criterion that could serve as an infallible point of reference seems to abandon everything to uncertainty and contestability, that is, exactly to what one wants to avoid when speaking of permanent values in history. This uncertainty and indeterminacy, however, are the exterior signs of an important and decisive fact: The interpretation of truth and the revelation of Being are entrusted to our freedom.

This does not mean that Being is abandoned to freedom, and thus that freedom is abandoned to itself: By its own exercise, freedom attests to the originary presence that solicits freedom in the very act in which such a presence entrusts itself to freedom, and that governs freedom in the very act in which such a presence accepts becoming the object of freedom's choice. The act through which freedom decides for or against Being is also the act by which it decides to either confirm itself or deny itself because it is a matter of confirming or rejecting the ontological relation that constitutes the very being of the human beings. Freedom is so tied to Being that freedom validates Being through its own decision for or against it, and it affirms it, albeit in the form of a betrayal, even when it rejects it thereby negating and destroying itself.

There is, therefore, something stable even if it does not establish itself as an absolute and permanent value or in a unique and definitive formulation—it is the stimulation and regulation, internal to human activity yet irreducible to it that is indebted to the presence of Being yet is set to work by human freedom. Such stimulation and regulation are attested in those rare and happy moments in human activities [*operare*] when entirely distinct attitudes like *audacity* and *humility* are joined *inseparably*, when

the most silent and subdued listening to Being demands the courage to risk a personal formulation of truth.

### Notes

Page 34: On the dialectic of exemplarity and kindredness, allow me to direct the reader to the treatment of that topic developed in Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica: teoria della formatività* (second edition, 115–150), and in the essay “Tradition and innovation” contained in Luigi Pareyson, *Conversazioni di estetica* (Milan: Mursia, 1966). Everything that I say there regarding aesthetics also applies to the whole of human activity. On the idea that forms give rise to styles, I refer the reader to the thought of Augusto Guzzo.

Page 35: Heidegger’s critique of the concept of value can be found above all in Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 196–199; in “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” translated by Frank Capuzzi in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 263–266; and in *Off the Beaten Track*, translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 168–173. Heidegger’s critique is based on the principle that the attribution of value to Being supposes a subjectivistic conception that can have no coherent result other than the absolutization of the human point of view, and thus the most complete “forgetfulness of Being.” On the one hand, the concept of value not only degrades entities once the concept is applied to them by not thinking Being in them, but it also forgets and suppresses Being itself because it does not let it open itself in its truth; instead, it reduces Being to a pure and simple fact, propped up vainly by an artificial and alternate event of attribution of value to Being and of Being to value. On the other hand, the ones who are degraded and changed in such a way are human beings themselves, who, neglecting Being, become the “killer[s] of God,” able to utter “the biggest blasphemy possible against Being,” and thus descend below themselves and are lost. Even Gabriel Marcel recalls the primacy of ontology: Axiology not rooted in ontology is false because it replaces authentic values, which are “mediators of transcendence,” “incarnate essences,” and “active evidences,” with artificial values, which in their deceptive objectivity are nothing other than subjective projections: being, value, and freedom can only be saved together (Gabriel Marcel, “Aperçus sur la liberté,” in *La Nef*, 19 [1946], and “Ontologie et axiologie,” in *Esistenzialismo cristiano* [Padua: Cedam, 1949]).

Page 36: The Latin expression that I used to clarify the concept of the “persistence of the negative,” namely, *diabolicum est diabolum negare*, suggests from a different point of view and with a different emphasis the expression by Franz von Baader: “*Diabolum negare est Diabolo credere* [to deny the devil is to believe in the devil]” (in Franz von Bader, *Sämtliche Werke* IV 360).

Pages 36–37: Kierkegaard’s beautiful pages on the everyday and earthly nature of the knight of faith are found in *Fear and Trembling*, translated by Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 47–50.

Page 42: The citation concerning the origin as that which “every single day is as though that day were its first” is from Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 97, when after having affirmed that “all thinkers in the history of philosophy have said fundamentally the same thing,” he observes that what follows is not at all the necessity of “only one philosophy,” as if “everything had already been said,” because “*dieses ‘dasselbe’ hat allerdings den unausschöpfbaren Reichtum dessen zur inneren Wahrheit, was jeden Tag so ist, als sei es sein erster Tag*” [And yet this ‘sameness’ has an inner truth, namely the inexhaustible richness of what on every single day is as though that day were its first.]