

## ELEGANCE, SANITY, AND ALIENATION

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The present essay contains an outline of an attempt to comprehend life from within. For this purpose the author isolates three fundamental conditions of life in general: elegance, in-elegance, and slovenliness. The phenomenological essences of "interiority," "emptiness," and "pure negativity" are uncovered and used to interpret the epistemological basis of today's practical and theoretical life as well as the present crisis of knowledge and meaning.

Armor is a defensive equipment worn as a protection against offensive weaponry. In addition, armor constricts the movements of the wearer, it is a protection against other armors, it is used in war or tournament, and the inside is concealed from sight. Let us say that such armors are found in a world which they shape and master; they are and consider themselves to be superior to every other thing in their world. In this armored world there are two fundamental assumptions about the never seen inside of the armors. One assumption is that the inside is either nothing or is a substance, a thing called the "thing-soul." The other assumption, although it accepts the idea of a soul, is that it is not a substance, not a thing, but an ethereal spirit. Since it is not a thing, it has, among other attributes, those of indivisibility and indestructibility. The former assumption also posits indivisibility and indestructibility, but in its "scientific" mode does not need to take these attributes into account. The second assumption, then, is that the inside of the armors is a "spirit-soul."

These two fundamental assumptions are in conflict with each other especially about the result they have in and for an armored world. I will present a brief account of the terms of this conflict as seen from the side of the "spirit-soul" assumption and in the light of a few of its concepts and other secondary assumptions:

-- Our world is an armory, it is armorified. Our "spirit-soul" assumption is the basic truth that reveals the condition of the world. We are concerned with this condition and what it does to the spirit-souls. In our armored world there are armors whose condition is such that they are called "sick," meaning "useless," "dangerous," "weird," or "disordered." This "sickness" does not refer to the external deterioration of the armors but to a condition of their movement, their behavior. The imputation of "sickness," based on movements which are recorded as "weird," "incomprehensible," "dangerous," etc., is unfounded and should be carefully studied for it may reveal something about the armored world itself that produces this "sickness." The first thing we maintain then is that the present condition of our world is not only an armored world, but that in such a world armors are bound to collide constantly and inexorably. In such a situation some armors become trapped, immobilized, paralyzed; others enter into a totally disordered collision and move from place to place bouncing like unpredictable balls and hitting every other armor

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unexpectedly, and a third group simply drop out of this world to avoid collisions.

"The armored world has many "labels" for such behaviors. Among some of them we find: criminal behavior, mental illness, schizophrenia, deviant behavior, mental disorder, etc. Such a world has places to confine armors exhibiting such behaviors and other armors dedicated to their repair. For these practices, and for the interpretation of the whole armored world, the competing assumption of the "thing-soul" is used. We do not uphold such an assumption and we abstain from using their interpretation; we must either suspend judgment on the conclusions of those interpretations or we must apply our own assumption in order to reveal this suffering condition in the armored world.

"The first working assumption is, then, that in such an armored world armors collide and get into irresolvable contradictions called "double binds," "no-win-games," "impasses," etc. In our world this appears to corroborate the label of "sickness" imposed on those unfortunate armors, that it is the "sick thing-soul" that animates (from the Latin anima meaning soul) the armors in an unpredictable, weird, dangerous, and disordered manner manifested in their movement or behavior. This "labeling" of the "thing-soul" as "sick" must be questioned although the "labeling" is a fact. It is possible that the soul be only a victim, locked inside its colliding armor from which it could be rescued. Those who blame the soul, who call it "sick" do not realize that they derive this from their assumption positing the soul as a thing. But we maintain that the soul is not a thing, but an indestructible, spiritual unity; it is basically holy and as such should not be blamed. The armors and their colliding condition in an armory world must instead be blamed. Whoever attacks the soul or thinks it is a "sick thing" is inadvertently defending the maintenance of the world as an armored world. Similarly, whoever takes as his job the repairing of armors with a "sick soul" under the assumption of a "sick thing-soul" is only attempting to fix the armor in order that it can continue to exist in an armored world. In other words, the "thing-soul" does not change the armor, eliminate it or abolish the situation of an armory world in inexorable collision.

"Instead of this we should penetrate the so-called "sick" soul, for its alleged condition of "sickness" is not a condition of unblessedness, or unsoulness; the soul is only a victim. This "spirit-soul" suffers in its confinement inside a colliding, bumped, and wrecked armor, but whose wrecked and bumped appearance has not wrecked the soul inside which is an indestructible and pure spiritual unity. Whoever lets himself be deluded by the appearances of the condition and movements of the armor is a "labeler," and our armored world is unfortunately dominated by labelers who "label" the soul after the appearances of the armor's behavior, and who proceed to either dump it in the junk yard or send it to the repair shop where the armor is treated as a "sick" "thing-soul" which incorporated again as an armor into an armored world. These repairers have a sophisticated correspondence theory of truth which posits a correspondence between the "thing-soul" and the armor that it animates. It only arranges the elements of the "thing-soul" so that they correspond to already pre-established labels about the behavior of the armors. It is nothing but a defense of the "labeling" process in the armored world.

"We then maintain that the soul which is labeled "sick" is not so. We accept that those so labeled behave in peculiar ways, but the "sickness" of their souls must be questioned. First, how can a spiritual, non-thing which is an indestructible unity be "sick"? "Infirm" would be a better word, i.e., "in-firm," meaning not firm because of being tired or doubtful about armored confinement in an armored world. Such a soul is a victim sacrificed by its condition in an armored world. Victima always meant "for sacrifice."

"Now, if the soul only appears to be "sick," we should both criticize those who adhere in praxis to the correspondence theory and, in opposition to it, we should positively seek to know, to penetrate, to communicate with the allegedly "sick" soul which in its lamentable condition may have something of extraordinary importance to say. From our inspection of a world of armors in collision and from our intuition that the soul is a unity which cannot be wrecked or dismembered, because it has no members nor parts, a soul which can only be afflicted, infirmed and victimized, we may be able to criticize the system of armors, point to their inevitable collision within this system and, at the same time, call for a more "humane" treatment of armors.

"Our insight now calls for a change of the repair shops, the armorers, and the theories on which they base their practices. Only those armors which are damaged beyond immediate repair (meaning those souls which are too infirm and afflicted) or those which are in obvious dangerous and aimless paths may be confined. But the other allegedly "sick" armors should meanwhile be treated humanly, i.e., as spirit-souls enclosed in an armor. Our most radical phase calls for the elimination of armors in order to leave the souls in their nakedness, free from their constraining armors. This requires that we point out and demonstrate to the armored world that it can be changed; that the armored condition can be abolished; that there are only armors in appearance; that it is an illusion become reality but still an illusion; that there are only souls, pure and spiritual souls; and that these souls see the world as one of armors, iron hard, unchangeable and indestructible. Those souls are armorified, i.e., reified. No wonder their theories postulate the soul as a thing, as a substantial entity in correspondence with another substantial entity: the armor which wears them.

"Our theory is critical of the establishment of armoredness, and instead of condemning armors as "sick thing-souls," we seek help from the allegedly "sick souls" themselves. These souls are not "sick," they are only afflicted and infirm by being hosted inside armors in an armory world. Their affliction may be a great asset for their own help as well as for our criticism of the conditions that victimize them. Our familiarity with recent philosophy suggests that the afflicted soul may have come itself to suspend the interpretation of the world held in the armory world and reflectively notice that if the world is an armory in perpetual collision, the soul may have decided to break away from this assumptive world. It may also know that breaking these assumptions means further affliction, but in the process, although allegedly "sick" from the point of view of the armored establishment, this "deviant," in the depth of its indivisible spiritual soul, this afflicted consciousness may know a lot and our approach may benefit greatly from it. This soul does not care for the armored world and can present itself to us, although afflicted, in its nakedness. The structure of this pure and naked spirit, this consciousness, may reveal the secrets for overcoming the armored establishment and consequently for its own cure.

"Our basic position, to repeat, is that the soul is not a thing in correspondence with the armor hosting it, that it is an error to treat the "thing-soul" as animating the armor, and that therefore it is not a wrecked thing-soul. The soul is of a spiritual nature, one and indivisible; it can become afflicted by both being forced to dwell within an armor and in an armored world. This affliction cannot be alleviated, much less cured, by attempting to fix the thing-soul in the expectation that it would result in the normalization of its armor's behavior. This, we hold, would only maintain souls within their armors in an armored world with its inexorable condition of forced collision. It is, therefore, the armors themselves and their colliding armored world that must be radically abolished. We must have souls, not armors and armored worlds. The theory of the armored world is conservative and its conservatism derives from the correspondence theory

of truth between "thing-souls" and armors. This theory sees only armors, although it does not know it, for in its armorified, a reified condition of science; it deals with armors through "reified concepts" such as "thing-souls. -- "

The two conflicting theories presented above from the point of view of the theory I called the "thing-soul theory" have their philosophical ground in western rationalism, i.e., they are based on the last remains of the philosophy that characterized Western thought since Descartes. The "thing-soul theory" is grounded on Cartesian rational idealism. The "spirit-soul theory" is spiritualized Cartesianism; the ego, the soul, the pure consciousness is desubstantialized. It is even grounded on a more radically idealist rationalism than that of Descartes or Kant. It is tinted by a disguised materialism and existentialist irrationalism. This is not the place for a detailed examination of the philosophical containers of these theories. I will limit myself, then, to briefly surveying their dependence on a primitive conception of man from which they have not been able to detach themselves.

This primitive conception assumes that man is composed of two parts: body and soul; two hostile and different worlds, incompatible and irreconcilable. The pure, immortal soul is counter-posed to the impure, corruptible and perishable body. The deplorable condition of man as the union of these two contrasting elements was due to a punishment. This is the fall of man, the original sin. The body then came to be conceived as the jail, the tomb, in other words, the armor encapsulating the soul. If the soul was pure and only became incarcerated in its armor by the fall, then its true life would be interpreted as that of the soul itself. The body, the armor, had to be accepted as the sign of the punishment. This conception was central to both Christianity and Western philosophy.

In Puritanism, the relative condition or shape of the armor was an indication of the health or sickness of the soul, the signs of its predestination. In this way, thought and conduct came to be considered as the products of original sin (or predestination), i.e., of the relative health or sickness of the soul. Philosophy substantialized the soul, i.e., the soul becomes a substance, a thing (Descartes) and the "armored thing-soul" conception pervades the philosophical thought of the West until the last quarter of the XIX century. The thing-soul becomes the regulatory center of the external world; reason is the desirable condition of the soul's health and and successful control of the world its guarantee.

It is the distrust of the "thing-soul" assumption itself and of its consequences for the world which has for the last century brought the whole of Western philosophy into question. Some of the least happy questionings have taken the form of the rejection of the external world as incomprehensible, oppressing, out of control, soulless, hostile and nauseating (Sartre). The revolt against the alleged results of the "thing-soul" conception has become a rebellion against reason in general. Irrationalism was the outcome of this rebellion. Elements of this irrationalism have pervaded the doctrines of Dostoyevski, Kafka, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and partially those of Nietzsche and Unamuno. In its most radical exponents, irrationalism represents a purely negative insubordination declaring the world "absurd" (Camus), nauseating, and a hopeless failure. As a consequence, everything becomes devalued: life, language, society, reason, comfort, custom, communication, consumption, etc. The pure ego, pure consciousness, intersubjectivity, the individual, the pure "for itself," the "spirit-soul" becomes again a prominent reality. In its revolutionary new form it represents a return to the primitive conception of man minus the religious interpretation. The "thing-soul" conception is condemned as a "reified" abstraction

and the "spirit-soul" is defended against its inhuman, oppressive, absurd, and nauseating external world. It becomes the "armored spirit-soul" conception of the world. The contemplative faction of this view advocates a renunciation of the world as corrupt, meaningless, impure, irrational, absurd, as a deplorable jail and tomb of the spirit-soul. Another faction wants to attack and destroy the external armor and defends the spirit-soul against all labels of "sickness."

These forms of thought and action are erroneous interpretations of the most serious philosophical achievements of Western thought. They are precisely what contemporary philosophy strove to overcome -- the nihilist tendencies of Western rationalism as grounded in the primitive conception of man sketched above. It is as if these factions had singled out the exposition of the nihilist tendencies (articulated by philosophy in order to be overcome) and made them their own.

## II

Phenomenology, as the description of pure essences, is the possibility of philosophy, not a philosophy itself. This is clear for at least three philosophers who in my judgment have understood Husserl properly: Ortega y Gasset, Heidegger and Julian Marias. Thus, Husserl's phenomenology was according to Ortega, "no . . . una filosofia: fue . . . una buena suerte" (Ortega y Gasset, 1960:411). According to Heidegger: "'Phenomenology' means:

ἀποφαίνειν τὰ φαινόμενα (apophainesthai ta phainomena): to let that which shows itself be seen in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1951: 40 and 1962:58). The great contribution of Husserl then has to be understood in its historical context. Husserl's phenomenology was the formulation of the possibility of philosophy at the end of a period of philosophical darkness, the dark ages of positivism, which preceeded Husserl. This is why it is incomprehensible how Husserl's phenomenology is sometimes confused with unphilosophical positivism. The cry of phenomenology: Zu den Sachen Selbst!: to the things themselves! remains either confusing for many admirers of phenomenology or is taken as the motto of Husserl's radical positivism. If we want to call it positivism we should at least keep in mind that it is radically different from what has come to be known as positivism.

After this preparatory introduction I would like to move to what is the main concern in this essay: the phenomenological exegesis of elegance. What is elegance? In common everyday language and in reference to clothes or dress weaving, for example, we could say: elegance is a manner of dressing, of wearing one's clothes in such a way that we wear our clothes rather than be worn by them. This common description of elegance does not contain yet everything we need for a phenomenological exegesis of elegance; its essence is still concealed. The example of dressing, will be used as the scenario, in the sense of stage, to facilitate my exegesis. My attempt at a phenomenological exegesis of elegance must be understood in the most general sense. The reader is reminded that without a background or a stage, description becomes very difficult and that the phenomenological description of essences becomes easier if a concrete example is used. I should also make clear that I am not concerned here with a critico-theoretical analysis. Criticism is only possible between two theoretical perspectives whose antagonism is reflected in criticism. Whatever criticism is involved in the present exegesis is only secondary and derivative.

What is elegance then? The English language has several words to refer to elegance or to an elegant person. The most usual synonyms are: refinement, clarity, purity, ease, grace or gracefulness, polish, finish, propriety or appropriateness, good taste, harmony, simplicity,

rhythm, symmetry, (good) style, euphony, classicism, purism, discriminative, correctness, artistic, fluent, mellifluous, balanced, neat, well-expressed, etc. Of most of these words there are a few which I will single out for the exegesis of elegance; these are" (clarity), ease and grace, propriety, harmony or balance, (euphony), artistic, (fluent), (attractiveness), and well (expressed). I have put in parantheses those words which will be of most importance later. Using the example of dress we can say that that manner of wearing our clothes rather than being worn by them is what we mean by ease, grace, and even attractiveness. We are still far from understanding what elegance is; its essence is still concealed. Let us examine another situation.

When something or somebody appears to us in such a way that it or he elicits from us the words graceless, vulgar, common, harsh, abrupt, dry, stiff, cramped, forced, labored, artificial, mannered, ponderous, turgid, affected, crude, full, forcing, what do we mean? We are saying that something is lacking. We see things, we see persons wearing clothes, using objects, surrounded by objects, but we get a strange feeling of coldness, of incompleteness; we are overwhelmed by the presence of things but we feel that something is missing, that when we look we sense this lack but we do not necessarily know or understand what is lacking, what should be there. We usually tend to think that it lacks grace, manners, attractiveness; that it should not be harsh, stiff, cramped, forced, affected, dull, etc. We may even say that it lacks elegance and that what is missing is something we call elegance; we say, then that we are in the presence of somebody who is "in-elegant." In the example of dressing we would perhaps notice that the clothes are wearing the "in-elegant" person. In any case, what we may think to be missing is not understood; we only perceive a "lack of" something and it gives us a mysterious feeling of coldness and irritability. (The phenomenological exegesis of irritability is connected to the present exegesis of elegance, but I will not be concerned with it directly in this essay.) This phenomenological perception of what is missing, the "lack of" is a negative perception. It is like "looking" at a box open on one end and feeling uneasy because it should be filled with something and yet we do not know what this "something" is. We only know that it is not in the box.

So far, we can say that in elegance something is present and in in-elegance something is missing. In the first case, we feel the presence of something which is still concealed and which we do not yet understand in the phenomenological sense. In the case of in-elegance, on the other hand, we perceive negatively, i.e., we perceive the "lack of" which always demands completion. In both cases, the only thing that presents itself before us, in the physical sense of presence, are objects, dresses, possessions, things and their shapes, colors, their arrangement, and movement, etc. The objects can be the same in both cases. For example, an elegant person may wear the same dress as an in-elegant person and yet we would be able, in most cases, to say that one is elegant and the other in-elegant. If we are perceptive we can say that the elegant "knows how to wear the dress" and the in-elegant "does not" or is "worn by the dress." In other words, elegance is not uniquely determined by objects. The common belief that the elegant is surrounded by special objects, expensive, choice, and unique is only a delusion, an optical illusion. We will later understand why this suggests an important point that I would like to emphasize at this point: elegance or in-elegance is not uniquely determined by objects although objects are indispensable in each case. I would like to reemphasize that objects are indispensable.

Objects then are unimportant although indispensable. If objects do not uniquely determine elegance or in-elegance but they are indispensable, this means that objects do not say anything, they are silent, mute. Dilthey said that nature is silent and inexpressive and that for this reason Nature is "explained"; only life is understood. What does this muteness, this silence

of objects mean? It means that by themselves they do not express anything. Contrary to what contemporary empiricists believe, objects do not speak for themselves. Now, the unimportance of objects should allow us to grasp something crucial about elegance and in-elegance. Elegance is characterized by the transparency of the indispensable objects whereas in-elegance is characterized by the opaqueness of objects. Said in a different way: elegance ignores or is indifferent to the indispensable objects whereas in-elegance concentrates or sees only objects. For more generality I will emphasize that by object here I mean anything which is perceived by the senses, whether a static object, a motion, a gesture, a role, or a behavior. Using again the example of dressing I can say that a symptom of elegance is manifest when we wear our clothes in such a way that we are not aware of them, i.e., that we wear them as if they were not there. We ignore or are indifferent to them. The elegant mother will tell her daughter, "Put your dress on and then forget it." On the other hand, in-elegant dressing will be manifest when the clothes catch our attention, when we are "conscious" of them, when they are visible and we are subject to them, i.e., when they wear us. We behave in such a manner that we allow the clothes to determine our movements and to catch our attention.

What is, then, elegance, or better, what is the essence (in the phenomenological sense) of elegance? Before I present this essence I have to clarify that elegance is both "a seeing" and "a being" in the active sense. The same applies for in-elegance. Thus, "elegant seeing" (in the phenomenological sense of "seeing") "looks" through objects, objects become transparent or ignored in this "seeing." When elegance "looks" and cannot get beyond the objects, i.e., the objects are inevitably visible (in the physical sense), when the objects are so interposed that they cannot be ignored, when they remain opaque, when they stubbornly resist "elegant seeing" as if insisting that they should speak for themselves; then elegance "sees" in-elegance. As a mode of "being," elegance is a condition in which objects are given the possibility of being transparent, ignored, that is, the possibility of indifference towards them. On the other hand, "in-elegant seeing" sees only objects. Objects are inexorably opaque and empirically visible. As a consequence, objects become dictatorial for in-elegant seeing, they present themselves and demand that they should speak for themselves. Thus, "in-elegant seeing" is "object seeing," it is pure empiricism. "In-elegant seeing" can never understand elegance, i.e., it can never phenomenologically perceive elegance, or better, the essence of elegance. It only sees objects. Such seeing would therefore consider it elegant, for example, to wear expensive clothes, to have expensive things or possessions, etc. "In-elegant seeing" is phenomenologically blind. Similarly, "in-elegant being" is a condition in which objects have no possibility of becoming transparent, of being ignored, of becoming indifferent.

I have so far then presented general characteristics of elegance. First, that for elegance, as a mode of being, objects are indispensable but unimportant; second that objects are given the possibility of being transparent, unnoticed, i.e., the possibility of being indifferent towards them, of being ignored, and thirdly, that in elegance "something" is present which is not occluded by the object themselves. This "something" is the essence of elegance and I will call it "interiority." What "elegant seeing" sees in elegance is "interiority." The elucidation of the structure of this essence will not be treated in this essay.

The characteristics of in-elegance are, as a mode of being, first, that objects are both indispensable and important; second, that objects remain inexorably opaque, they are unavoidable, they impose themselves on us, catch the attention and fixate themselves as independent and as if speaking for themselves; and thirdly, that in in-elegance "something" is missing: the

only thing there is a "lack of." Since what is missing is not in in-elegance, this "lack of," which I will call "emptiness," is the essence of in-elegance. What "in-elegant seeing" sees everywhere is "exteriority." It only sees objects.

There is crossing of terms here which I feel should be clarified. What "elegant seeing" sees in elegance is its essence, "interiority," and in in-elegance it sees "emptiness," i.e., the "lack of" interiority. On the other hand, "in-elegant seeing" sees "exteriority," i.e., the objects themselves both in elegance and in in-elegance; in fact we could say that in-elegance can never "see" elegance. If we want to accentuate this description we could say that elegance is all "interiority" whereas in-elegance is all "exteriority."

Furthermore, since for elegance objects are indispensable, although not important, we could say that elegance is "completeness" whereas in-elegance is "incompleteness." We sometimes hear the expressions "finished," "balanced," "polished" to refer to elegant appearance in dress and in conduct. The reference to "completeness," in the phenomenological sense, is implicit. The opposite words are similarly used to refer to in-elegance and implicitly contain the meaning of "incompleteness." We also hear the words "shallow" and "superficial" to refer to in-elegance; they implicitly contain the meaning of "lack of depth," i.e., superficiality or lack of interiority, and emptiness.

The phenomenological exergesis of elegance and in-elegance is not complete yet. Elegance comes from elegire, Latin for "to elect," "to choose." What kind of choice? Tentatively I would say "proper" choice. Proper derives from the Latin propius, meaning "your very own." Now choice in general demands that something be chosen, let us say an object. But does the chosen object uniquely determine elegance as choice? I have shown before that objects themselves do not determine elegance. What then? Does the act of "choosing" determine elegance? Not at all. Objects are chosen for the sake of or to convey elegance. In the act of choosing there is always a subject, choice always implies an active subject. Elegant choice must, according to what I have said so far, have a peculiar characteristic; mainly, it must choose or handle objects in such a way that the objects become imperceptible. Why? Because the objects themselves are not the concern of elegance. Objects are for elegance, not elegance itself. It is the exteriorization of "interiority" as the essence of elegance that objects serve. Objects then become the language of elegance. But a language serves the purpose of saying something; this something is "interiority." "Proper" choice, i.e., "one's very own" choice is actually the manifestation of one's very own interiority through objects such as language. Elegance, then, is essentially "meaningful" talk about one's interiority. The "objective" world becomes a language to convey "interiority." Everything is language, not just the spoken and written language, but objects themselves, clothes, possessions, and things around oneself. This language, whose vocabulary is composed of objects, all objects, is the language of interiority and must not itself stand between "interiority" and its destination which is another "interiority." It must pass unnoticed, invisible; it must not itself catch our attention. Just as in elegant dressing the clothes cannot constrain the wearer who must be unaware of them but who chooses (wears) them as if they were not there, inelegance, generally speaking, all objects become an unnoticeable language.

If the object-language of elegance distracts from what it speaks about it becomes snobbery and ostentation. Ostentation means precisely to "show off" objects, and objects, I have said, do not speak for themselves. When objects, then, become the only thing present, they give the elegant that feeling of "emptiness" which is the essence of the in-elegant, the



ostentatious, and the snob. Since, again, objects do not speak for themselves, in-elegance is either "silence" or "meaninglessness." The in-elegant does not say anything, he does not have anything to say.

I have been saying that for elegance, whose essence is interiority, all objects become the words of a language and that the words (the objects) must become transparent. This also applies to the case of our spoken and written language. Speech or writing is meaningful, it conveys something, only when it is elegant, when it is used to say something rather than to be displayed, ostentated, or shown off. When language becomes petrified, when its use is careless and rigid, our attention is caught by the words, and we become distracted by the words themselves. The words wear the speaker. It is then that we say "it does not make any sense," "it is meaningless," "rhetorical," etc. But, what "does not make any sense"? What is "meaningless"? The language itself? Not at all, It is the speaker. He is not telling us anything. The language is only shown ostentatiously; our attention is caught by the words. However familiar they are to us, words become like objects when used by the in-elegant. They become petrified, thingified, reified; they become opaque. They are interposed between the speaker's interiority and the destination of this interiority, i.e., one or several other interiorities. We only hear words, sounds. They may be arranged in a grammatically impeccable way but they are, on the whole, silent. Since they make noise, they irritate us. My seven-year-old daughter once made a perceptive remark. She said, "Mama, words don't mean anything, do they?" A particular language as a whole, or the language of a particular group (e.g. sociologists, psychologists, mathematicians, etc.) can become itself a rigid coat to be worn by and in spite of the richness of its vocabulary.

The essence of elegance is, then, "interiority," and elegance is choice of objects such that they become a language which in turn must be imperceptible and transparent. Language must be like a medium through which "interiority" is transmitted. The medium must have the characteristics of "clarity" and "fluency" so that "interiority" is transmitted "euphorically" (from the Greek *euphonos*, well-sounding). Now, all this reveals a further fundamental characteristic of "interiority." This characteristic is called "expressiveness." "Expressiveness" is "interiority" manifesting or exteriorizing itself. "Interiority" is not only potentially expressible, it is only and in so far as it is being expressed. "Interiority" can also be interpreted as the source, the fountain, the birth place of "creativity." Or, "creativity" is the act of exteriorizing "interiority." But since "interiority" is only in its being expressed, "interiority," "creativity," and "expressiveness" are inextricably bound together. Meaningful creativity is then as essence of elegance which uses the "external" world as its language in such a way that the external world becomes invisible. An analogy may serve here to illustrate this "transparency" of objects in elegance.

Language, as I have said, is the medium to transmit the essence of elegance which is "interiority." This medium must be transparent in order to "see" that which is transmitted or communicated through it. The physical analogy of this medium is clear air or clear water. A physical object is seen if the medium is transparent (which can be another object such as water or a clean crystal or glass). When the air is foggy or another opaque object is interposed between us and the first object, the first object remains concealed. In our case, what has to be transmitted is not an object; on the contrary, objects are the media, which although physically visible, must be transparent or invisible to allow the transmission of "interiority." This is related to what Husserl meant by perception and *aperception*.

The reader may think at this point that "interiority" is a metaphysical obscurity or at most a concept which epistemologically has no more claim to existence than a wave, a positron, or a graviton have in physics; it is an invention useful to "explain" phenomena. This interpretation will confuse scientific thinking with phenomenological understanding of life from within life itself. Life, as Ortega y Gasset has aptly demonstrated, is the "radical reality" from which we depart even to make science. I have no time here to present the difference between phenomena in the scientific sense and phenomena in the phenomenological sense. Let it be enough to say that the essence "interiority" is phenomena in the phenomenological sense. It is the essence of elegance. As used in language, it is definitely a concept but a phenomenological concept referring to a fundamental element of the reality of life.

Interiority, then, is a phenomenological essence; it is the thing itself; it is a fundamental condition of life. Ortega already noticed that elegance is an essential facet of life where it finds its secret roots. Interiority is not something statically "contained in" life; it exists only insofar as it is "being expressed." It must be communicated by language and through language. When expressed it uses the objects around, e.g., dresses, roles, gestures, possessions, etc. When an exchange of interiorities occurs we say there is comprehension or co-penetration and the relationship or communication is said to be "meaningful." The best example of this is the phenomena of love and friendship. Love could be said to be the supreme exchange of elegances. When a lover "looks" at his or her love, he or she does not truly "see" the lover's face, hair, eyes, body, clothes, gestures, roles, etc. Remember that one of the characteristics of elegance is the indifference to the objects and exteriorities which, although indispensable as the media of transmission of interiorities, as the object-language, become transparent. Thus, in genuine love, lovers do not "see" themselves, i.e., their exteriors. Lovers are in a perfect exchange of interiorities. This is the reason why it is said that "love is blind."

Dilthey noticed that life is like an underground current pushing towards the surface. The internal seeks its manifestation in the external. This manifestation of life Dilthey calls "expression." I would prefer to say that life is speech. When man talks and does not say anything he is in-elegant. When he does he is elegant. Elegance then, is saying something about oneself. This something is what I call one's interiority. The so-called external world becomes a language. In-elegant man does not say anything, the objects wear him and are expected to speak for themselves. Thus, man lives as man only insofar as he can engage in dialogue, or multilogue. For this he needs objects to be worn, to become a language. As soon as he no longer wears his clothes, his objects, as soon as these objects become opaque, he becomes in-elegant and the objects are expected to speak for themselves. They come to wear him. Man is then "empty." To deprive man of his clothes, his roles, his objects, simply because they have come to wear him, without thinking that naked man is not man, is an absurdity. We have seen before that words become meaningless when used by the in-elegant because in him they form the exterior, the only thing to ostentate. But words do not say anything by themselves as objects do not speak for themselves. This is the reification of language mentioned before. Language becomes a degeneration of words when used by the in-elegant.

The "seeing" of only roles, things, objects, coats, etc. is a "seeing" of in-elegance by in-elegance. Only exteriors in collision are seen, as two in-elegant women collide when found worn by the same dress. Since the essence of in-elegance is "emptiness," in-elegance can only concentrate on exteriors and talk about exteriors as if these exteriors spoke for themselves. In-elegance cannot express anything for expressivity is the fundamental condition of "interiority"

which in-elegance lacks. In-elegance then moves in a world of exteriors; it is pure "objectness." Just as two in-elegant women talk about clothes, objects, or possessions, the in-elegant account of the world talks about roles, role conflict, social systems, armors, etc. In-elegance "explains" but does not understand.

Interiority as the essence of elegance is not consciousness, the ego, or the content of consciousness. These are abstract constructs whereas interiority is a concrete essence discoverable through the phenomenological exegesis of life. Interiority is the very basis of human life; it is pure expressivity, it is talkative. It uses the world as its language universe in a constantly creative and meaningful way. The world is for interiority; the world is not something "in-itself." Since the world is for interiority, it is only and insofar as it is or become a transparent media for expressing interiority. For elegance the world is a "means" where interiority is the self-sufficient "end." For in-elegance the world is "in-itself" and there is no goal, no end proper: the world is a means toward no goal; means are its own goal.

### III

The West today is predominately in-elegant. The organization of collective life to the point of total sacrifice of the individual is almost a commonplace and yet, there is little understanding of the situation. The feeling of emptiness said to overtake the modern man remains a mystery. Overwhelmed by the immensity of industrial wealth: objects, positions, gadgets, a sumptuous dress, this interminable exterior baffles us as a monstrous "nothingness." It leaves us with a strange feeling; it seduces us to search for a meaning we do not know. The imposing view of that impressing exteriority, the immensity of objects, the sumptuous and ostentatious dress remains inarticulate, inexpressive, silent. Thus the feeling of the loneliness of life in an in-elegant world.

The organization of collective life is today believed to require the automatic execution of a variety of movements and behaviors. Organization requires rigidity and "modernization": provisions, regulations, automation, discipline, etc. Individuals are required to automatize their behavior and sacrifice their individuality and spontaneity. Only those behaviors defined by the system of organization are important. These behaviors which define him in the organizational life are his roles. He is then a policeman, a teacher, a manager, a worker, etc. His is a role, a behavioral tag. Today social science practically knows only roles. Behind that role, that coat, that dress, that armor, there is a big question mark. In section I of this essay I have given two of the prevalent assumptions regarding the inside of this armor. The so-called interactions, social relations involving rules, regulations, norms, standards, and prohibitions, are relations and collisions between roles, coats, and armors. They are mechanical, automatic, and abstract. This is, of course, how in-elegance "sees" itself in an in-elegant world. In-elegance is abstractive: to deal with objects and exteriors it is forced to abstract.

Industrialization and the organization of collective life is not itself a consequence of in-elegance; only the character which life takes within such worlds is. Industrialization and organized life may be accomplished equally by in-elegance and elegance. The character of life will nevertheless be radically different. In the former, life will be a silent and lonely existence where the individual is a isolated atom (monad) among objects, among exteriors. In the latter, life will be expressive, communicative, talkative. The objects are the media of expression, they become the universal language to express interiority.

Since a role is like an abstract coat, it is capable of being worn in a variety of ways. The wearer of a role can accept it as prefabricated and submit his life to it, and be worn by his role-coat. This situation is as if the coat were bought in a shop with a list of prescriptions about how to wear it and where to wear it. Such a person surrenders to the instructions of how to display this object. He is a manager, a doctor, a technician, a secretary, and nothing else. He is then "professional" which means to be "responsible" in following the instructions of the shop about how to wear his role-coat. The coldness and "impersonality" surrounding the job place and the office is due to the fact that there is nobody there except coats. When this manikin takes his coat off (stops enacting his role) he stands naked and does not know what to do; his life dims, he is bored, his life is an emptiness, a nothingness. Only a pure frigid ego remains. Deprived of the only thing there is -- the role-coat -- this ego drinks and drugs itself. In personal interaction, in situations in intimacy, he is clumsy, turpid; he has to wear another coat, become the joker, the chatterer, the popular person. This pure ego must have a versatile wardrobe. He has to dress and display. But each coat is prefabricated. The corporations draft the rules and prescriptions of how to wear these role-coats (how to be a manager's wife, how to play golf with your boss, how to act as a politician's wife, etc.). Each role-coat becomes a straight jacket, an armor. This is how the ego "exists" in an in-elegant world.

But this is not the only way of wearing coats. Ortega, who already noticed the organization of life in Germany as early as 1850, gives for contrast an interesting example of a Sevillian traffic policeman who confronted in the street with a traffic jam does not rigidly display the traffic ordinances but instead, in a most personal way, waves his arms in the air, his helmet pushed to the side of his ear, and in a Hameltian monologue expresses himself saying:

"\_\_\_ Ci e lo que yo digo! Que no puee cer! Coche parriba, coche p'abajo!  
Que no puee cer! \_\_\_" <sup>1</sup>

Another example is provided by a Mexican friend of mine who, on one occasion, while he was a student, left his car parked momentarily in the faculty parking lot. When he returned he found a university policeman very diligently drafting a ticket. My Mexican friend, in a very personal way, addressed the policeman to tell him that he left his car there because he was to pick up a book and run out in a few minutes. The policeman proceeded immutably, mechanically, and like a pre-programmed automaton moved his lips to utter two words: "Sorry, sir!" My Mexican friend futilely continued to tell the policeman, in the most polite manner, that he was acting like an automaton and that he was dealing with a human being, that the ticket would amount to one-fifth of his month's graduate assistantship, and that as a person he should emphathize with his situation. My friend's words were being addressed not to a person, but only to a policeman, a role a thing; and things do not interact, they are passive resistances. Like a mountain, when spoken to, they reflect the echo of your voice, you hear yourself and yourself alone.

These two examples serve again to illustrate what I have said in section II in relation to elegance and in-elegance, mainly, that clothing does not determine elegance or in-elegance. Thus, that exteriority which for the in-elegant becomes everything, which is visible, hard,

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<sup>1</sup> "Heaven forbid! This can't be, that's all! Cars this way, cars that way! This can't be, that's all!" (Ortega, 1951:195).

constraining, and which wears him -- this exterior becomes unnoticeable for the elegant. To the elegant, objects, roles, the coats of life and their alleged "system" are not "reified," and "de-alienation" is either already accomplished or it is a meaningless abstraction of the in-elegant. Alienation is for him simply a word, a concept with no reference to his manner of being, i.e., his life. For elegance, a de-alienation is then a negative concept of the dissatisfied in-elegant who want to stop the in-elegance of their world but do not understand life. For the elegant, the exterior is indispensable. If this exterior is destroyed, if he is divested of it, it would signify the eradication of the media, language universe, through which he expresses his "interiority." The radical change of the system becomes in his eyes as monstrous as the radical elimination of all language. Only to the dissatisfied in-elegant of an in-elegant world, who has not understood the essence of elegance, who does not understand what "interiority" is, only to that individual would such occurrences be possible.

This leads to the phenomenological exegesis of another facet of life. In an in-elegant world where the essence "emptiness" predominates, where all is exteriority, pure objectness, in this world a rebellion must necessarily be a rebellion against objectness. This rebellion can take two forms: one, the control of the increasing complication of objectness, i.e., the simplification of the world; and two, a rejection of objectness. Let us examine the former first.

The abundance of superficiality, of objectness, represents an increase of possibilities and choices above needs. This increase in the quantity and variety of exteriority gives the illusion of an increase in external freedom which is actually an increase in complication. This situation calls for simplification of the complicated externality. From the side of the in-elegant, simplification is attempted by juridical and scientific legislation. In an in-elegant epoch, when the increase of pure exteriority becomes overwhelming, everything seems out of control. The multiple empty egos of the in-elegant find themselves without direction. It is then that the legislative body becomes extremely active. Pure reason, the intellectual tool of the in-elegant, is employed to the utmost, not only politically but through science as well. What does this mean? Simply that a "scientific" explanation of man becomes the best and only feasible way to approach the problem of the complicated externality. For the in-elegant, all is externality, objectness; it can be treated and explained as physics explains nature. Thus, the attempt to formulate principles and laws which are pure, absolute, radical, pristine, (more geometrico, as Spinoza would say) in order to "explain" man becomes the only manner which the in-elegant can conceive as the solution to the complicated world of externality in which he lives. It is a most radical legislative attempt. Scientific sociology, psychologism, massive behaviorism, economicism, structuralism, technolgoism, scientism, systems analysis, and the computerization of society are only a few names for the different attempts to simplification. That behaviorism flourishes in a complicated in-elegant world is no enigma. Where all is exteriority, where emptiness is the essence which predominates, only movements, going, coming, making things, enacting roles, stimulating and responding, acting and reacting, reinforcing; in short, only "behavior" is there. Man is conceived as a thing in movement, in locomotion and transmutation, eating, dressing, colliding, scattering, etc. Man is a role player, a SIMSOCCER, a fashion model of his role-coats. Most of sociology has become convinced that interaction exhausts the social man.

The integration of culture and society, the one-dimensionality of contemporary man pointed out by today's critics of society is misleading. Instead, it would be more appropriate to talk about complication, disintegration and disorientation, and the attempt at simplification. This is what disturbs the critic and at the same time escapes him. He still sees only the surface, an immense superficiality. The zest for simplification is also found among critics. They interpret

all this externality as contradictory and what they propose as solution -- the elimination of contradictions -- is their name for simplification. In-elegant man begins to dream about the simple, the primitive culture, the return to nature. He wants a communal, homogeneous, undifferentiated life, a life where everything is the same: no roles, no sex differences, no intellectual differences. He wants a flat land because he is tired of the complex externality which his life is in an in-elegant world. The quest for simplification has then two extreme forms: fascism and radical rejection of objectness. Both are responses to a complicated in-elegant world. Man becomes a mixture of nostalgia and revolution, frenetic systematization and legislation and radical rejection of the world.

The radical rejection of objectness in an in-elegant world is the rejection of the in-elegant's dress which has come to be regarded as oppressive. It is not the rejection of in-elegance but the rejection of objectness, of the clothing of the in-elegant. Since objectness and exteriority is all there is in an in-elegant world, this rejection must necessarily mean a fall into that which will remain if exteriority is rejected -- "emptiness." This situation, in contrast with elegance and in-elegance I will call "slovenliness." The essence of slovenliness is "untidiness" and its fundamental condition is "negativity" or "negativeness." This fundamental condition of "untidiness," "negativity," has the peculiar characteristic of being an open-ended negation, i.e., the result of the negation is open, indeterminate, unknown. The reason for this is simple. An in-elegant that revolts against in-elegance becomes slovenly, i.e., does not care for his dress, he rejects it. But the in-elegant without dress is in nothing; it is a pure ego, an abstraction. His concrete life is indeterminate, he lives suspended from a nowhere. Negativity in an in-elegant world can only be the negativity of exteriority and superficiality; it is, in a sense, pure negativity.

Slovenliness is, therefore, a phenomenon that can only occur in an in-elegant world where the insight into the actuality of interiority and interiority itself have either disappeared or have never been present (in the phenomenological sense). It is, therefore, not an attempt to bring back something which has been lost or to "create" it. It only represents a rebellion lived in praxis by some and theoretized as criticism among the intellectual critics. But in a world of in-elegance neither one can grasp interiority. Thus, the rebellion can only articulate abstract notions. "De-reification," "de-alienation," "de-ideologization" and "de-mystification" are the most common of these abstract concepts. When more specifically articulated, they come to represent ideas such as "abolition of all roles" (feminists), "abolition of contradictions and dialectical overcoming" (radical left), etc. It is then an abstract rebellion and an abstract critique of abstracted exteriorities. It is abstract negation; it is the rebellion and criticism of the in-elegant against themselves. It proposes divestment and nakedness as the solution to the problem of the complexity in an in-elegant world. Words, empty abstract concepts are the only things that remain. If examined closely they are always negative and as all pure negation, they are empty. This is not mysterious. The in-elegant in revolt against himself thinks that nothing can be lost by standing naked for after all there is nothing to express, nothing to talk about. Thus, feminism becomes misanthropism, philosophy becomes misosophy and thought becomes nihilism.

The pure negativity of in-elegant revolt against in-elegance is nevertheless the first incomplete insight of the in-elegant into in-elegance. It is the phenomenological insight or perception of a "lack of." But a perception of a "lack of," as we already saw in Section II is a negative perception. In thought, this becomes the idea of a "lack of something" which is missing, and therefore unknown. This means to have thought the "unknown." But to think the "unknown" is to think the "possibility of"; it is therefore the thought of "pure possibility." "Pure possibility"

is either everything or "nothingness" which is the opposite of something. This is the reason why Hegel said: "being is nothingness." "Nothingness," "lack of," and "pure possibility" are then fundamental conditions of life in general and dangerously prevalent in an in-elegant world. This will be better illustrated in the next section on the phenomenological exegesis of the tragic life of the parvenu. Life without possibility is inconceivable. It is a necessary derangement. The three fundamental facets of life are, then, elegance, in-elegance and slovenliness.

The "mental" condition of elegance is "sanity"; that of in-elegance is "in-sanity"; and that of slovenliness is "derangement." Sanity also means "sound," i.e., euphonic. It is the condition of "meaning," "com-prehension," co-penetration," and "clarity." It is life understanding itself. There could not be a better definition of sanity. That fundamental facet of life where love, friendship, the meaningful exchange of interiorities, expressiveness and the conversion of the external world into a language universe was phenomenologically uncovered from elegance. Sanity is the elegance of living. The return to sanity is the return to elegance. Elegance is being oneself despite the dress. It is not being aware of the clothes; it is indifference towards the clothes. It is not disdain, rebellion, or attempt to control the clothes. It is wearing one's clothes so that one can act indifferently towards them. Elegance refuses both nakedness and control. This is sanity.

In-elegance, on the other hand, is a condition of in-sanity, i.e., "un-dound." Life cannot understand itself because the world is all exteriority and life is fundamentally interiority. Interiority is precisely what in-elegance lacks and does not know it. Emptiness, the essence of in-elegance is not intuited either. Life is "explained" but not understood. Incomprehensibility, lack of communication and meaninglessness are the consequence of the lack of expressiveness that characterizes both in-elegance and insanity.

Finally, slovenliness is the derangement of life. It is the indeterminate negation of in-sanity. Indeterminacy means being nowhere. It is therefore only the pure possibility of return to sanity, insanity or the permanence of derangement. It is paralysis.

Life always involves a complex set of choices, sympathies and antipathies, respect and disdain, in an endless human drama. Life is a lived tragedy. Thus, to a certain degree life is always a "double bind." Contemporary man, the in-elegant man, the man who lacks interiority, who is pure emptiness, also lacks an understanding of life and its fundamental condition. The condition of this man is one of in-sanity, whether or not he breaks down into what is today called "mental illness." The intellectual rationalism which serves as the intellectual tool of the in-elegant world remains in its negation as slovenliness. Intellectual slovenliness is then rationalist and uses rationalism as the basic tool of criticism. The intellectualization of derangement is rationalist. Its concepts are as fantastic as those of the purely rational geometry, e.g., a point (that which has no parts), a line (length without breadth), etc. These are purely fantastic conceptions which are only possible in thought. As mentioned above, the rationalism of intellectualized derangement also operates with purely fantastic concepts such as de-alienation, de-reification, de-ideologization, etc. without previous and careful analysis of these concepts. As a consequence they have become mere words, meaningless abstractions. Nietzsche, Dilthey, Bergson, Ortega y Gasset, and Heidegger have been telling us that intellectualism can only attempt to "explain" life and that it will therefore find it convenient to resort to rationalist concepts. But life, they tell us, cannot be "explained"; it can only be understood. When the revolt against in-elegance does not reject the intellectual tool of in-elegance which is

rationalism, the result is rationalist intellectualized derangement. Then, not different from the in-elegant systematizers of the complexity of life in an in-elegant world (the quest for simplification mentioned before), intellectualistic criticism will want concrete life to be molded by the concepts of abstract reason.

Single individuals, whole peoples, or epochs can be characterized by the predominance of one or more of the three fundamental conditions of life. The industrialized West is characterized by the predominance of insanity and derangement.

#### IV

To illustrate the phenomenological exegesis of elegance, in-elegance, and slovenliness I have chosen the phenomenon of the parvenu, or better, the tragic life of the parvenu. The "nouveau riche," the "parvenu," the "snob," the "arrivist," the "social climber" is said to be despised by both those with whom he used to belong and by those to whom he aspires to belong. The parvenu himself denies his origins, i.e., he denies those with whom he belonged: his parents, relatives, former friends, and acquaintances. He is said to "aspire" to "enter" another group. In the rigid language of sociologists he has a "group of origin" and a "group of reference" to which he "aspires" to "enter." This phenomenon is as common as it is little understood. Many speculations making allusion to hate, resentment, rejection, "life style," etc. have been attempted. Max Weber's study on status is still the best attempt but very deficient.

"To be-long with" is "to-be-with" somebody in a lasting manner. "To-be with" is to "co-exist." The "co" of co-exist indicates a mutuality of exchange. Exchange of what? What kind of exchange? Obviously the exchange of things can be observed to take place in life. But the mere exchange of things does not imply co-existence for as we well know the exchange of things can take place among totally unknown persons of different races, creeds, languages, etc. Exchange of things can therefore take place among total strangers. All this despite the apparent fact that exchange unites people. Stranger means "to be-long outside of one's own." Stranger connotes "out-side one's previous experience," "un-known," "un-familiar." It connotes extraneousness, externality, foreignness, difference. A stranger is an alien (from the Latin alienus, to be-long to an-other).

The parvenu (from French parvenir, to arrive; Latin pervenire) is a stranger everywhere. He is a stranger to himself, to those he used to "be-long-with," to those he thinks are his equals (inter pares) in the "the arriving," i.e., to his co-parvenus, and to those he thinks should accept him. (Those who in his estimation have "been-there-long".) He is up-rooted, he has no roots (without radix); he therefore has nothing to hold on to: no soil from which to nourish his life. He cannot go to the roots of origin which he has lost, he has not grown new roots to hold on to the new soil of his destination, and he is presently rootless. He is therefore the least radical being in existence. This, in passing, also indicates why he is easily politically seduced.

If he is without anybody "to-be-with," "to be-long-with," to "co-exist," it is because he has nothing to exchange. Does he have to exchange something? Can the life to which he aspires be possible without a particular kind of exchange? The parvenu leads a tragic life because what he needs to exchange is something he does not have. What is this "something"?



In the phenomenological exegesis of elegance we saw that its essence, "interiority," was precisely what was lacking in in-elegance without in-elegance intuiting it. The parvenu is not elegant, he is in-elegant. Those with whom he wants to "be-long" assumedly are elegant and have an "interiority." Those to whom he used to be-long may have had an-other "interiority"; and those whom he finds in the same boat are, like him, without "interiority" of any kind. Several questions arise here. First, why is the parvenu without an "interiority" if assumedly he had one when he used to be-long-with those with whom he no-longer be-longs? The answer must come from the previous phenomenological exegesis of elegance and in-elegance. He is in-elegant because his condition is one of display of newly acquired objects such as possessions and positions. As I have mentioned before, this ostentation of pure exteriority of objects catches the attention of others. Objects themselves do not express anything; they are dead, silent, mute. Objects, like words themselves, if we concentrate on their sounds, are simple physical perceptions. These objects were the in-elegant parvenu; they are not worn by him. They have no meaning in themselves and therefore do not express anything.<sup>2</sup>

I have already shown how objects become or are the language of elegance although language itself does not say anything. These objects turned into a language are necessary and indispensable, but they are ignored by the elegant; he is indifferent to them. Why? If he were not, if the objects were to become the center of attention, the objects themselves, not the elegant person would be present. I have also shown how love and friendship are examples of the supreme manifestation of elegance. The elegant then is a person whose whole "external" world becomes a language to communicate his "interiority." I have also said that the parvenu is in-elegant, that is, he has no "interiority." The fundamental characteristic of "interiority" is "expressiveness" and the parvenu is expressionless because the media of expression is opaque; it is not transparent as in the elegant. This potential media is the world of his ostentatious display.

The reader may be tempted to think that the parvenu has an "interiority" concealed by the objects. This may be the case if "interiority" is understood as consciousness or an ego. But "interiority" is nothing like that. This is an important point since previous superficial accounts of the phenomenon of the parvenu have not realized that the parvenu may desperately think that what he lacks is "style" (in the behavioristic sense). But the more he tries to acquire this style, e.g., giving balls, parties, dressing fashionably, socializing with those he considers to be his "group of reference," studying manners and etiquette, sponsoring the arts, frequenting the opera, visiting museums, and, in short, acquiring that "style of life" which externally seems to him a requirement for "acceptance," the less he may succeed. External appearances may indicate a success but they are only appearances. The more he tries, the more he remains a parvenu. The parvenu is always a parvenu. Parvenuism, if I may be allowed this neologism, is almost as permanent a condition as being tall or short. Only the second generation may "make it." The phenomenon of the parvenu definitely refers to a crucial aspect of life. In the presence of this refractoriness of the parvenu condition we have come to accept all kinds of meaningless explanations about people, classes, human nature, etc. To say that the parvenu does not have the "style of life" of those he aspires to be-long-with, that the latter refuse to "accept" him because

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<sup>2</sup>I should like to mention here something which I did not mention earlier and which I think might throw further light on this exegesis. Objects made by man may be the conductors of the interiority of their creator. For example, an artistic object. In industrial society this possibility is almost absent. Manufactured objects are "lifeless," i.e., inexpressive. This is also understood if we keep in mind that industrial society is an in-elegant society.

he is not "one of them," that he has "no tradition," "lineage," that he "shows his origin," that his presence is "embarrassing" because "awkward," "amannered," -- this, all of this, is a question long begging. It is a description of a phenomenon of life by the appearances. No more revealing is the account in terms of the evilness of man, of snobbism, of selfishness, of exclusivity, of interests. The empirical sociologist, armed with statistics, matrices, Markov chains, mobility studies, probabilities of entering and leaving "social strata," of income distributions and so forth says even less. Sociologists have long forgotten life itself and, as a consequence, vital phenomena remains largely un-understood. The parvenu, then, does have an "interiority," he is expressionless, he is therefore silent; he is only objectness, exteriority, pure superficiality.

To "be-long" means, again, to "be-long-with," to "co-exist," to exchange "interiorities." This implies to "be-in-a-dia-logue." To be accepted is to be "re-cognized." "Re-cognition" is to know again, to perceive to be identical with "something" previously "unknown," i.e., the perception of something as existing or true (notice that the Latin *cognitio* means "a getting to know"). It is this "knowing," this "perceiving" of "something" which demands the existence of "interiority." Re-cognition is, then, the mutual cognition of "interiority" where cognition is phenomenological perception. (We live phenomenologically.) It is only when "interiority" exists, as in elegance, that it can be re-cognized, perceived. It is only by understanding that life is fundamentally based on the exchange of interiorities that we can escape from the darkness of intellectualist "knowing." This "knowing" itself has to be understood from within life itself. It would be difficult to account for our life if we do not understand that the "external" world has the possibility of being a transparent media through which interiorities are transmitted and communicated. This, in passing, indicates the precariousness of a life pervaded by in-elegance and parvenuism. The "loneliness," the "solitude," the "abandonment," the "nausea" that existentialists talk about is only a small indication of in-elegant life. Where objects alone or predominantly unite man, there is no communication. Recent attempts to concentrate on the condition of "distorted communication" among contemporary man (e.g., Habermas) and the attempt to formulate a theory that would allow the development of "undistorted communication" lack the fundamental phenomenological insight into elegance as a fundamental condition of sane life. These approaches are still caught up in the notion of conscious self-reflection and ignore the condition of in-elegance which may intrinsically impede the possibility of that self-reflection. Habermas's distinction between work and interaction is a step in the right direction if the interaction is understood phenomenologically as the possibility of exchange of "interiorities." Otherwise, these theories have to be either radically modified or abandoned. Superficiality, exteriority, and objectness as the essential characteristic of in-elegance and parvenuism, entails either the lack of "interiority" or its phenomenological concealment. It is the interference (the distortion) of communication by the objects becoming or being opaque, by the objects not being part of the language used in the communication or exchange of interiorities that characterize in-elegance. This is also an extremely important point for linguistics. The phenomenological exegesis of elegance, and in-elegance is, I think, crucial for the understanding, not the explanation, of life in the most general sense.

In the particular case of the life of the parvenu, then, the fundamental exchange of interiorities is lacking because there is no "interiority." This, in general, means also that he is a stranger to himself. How can one be a stranger to one-self? By being extraneous, external, foreign, alien to one-self. Notice that if alien means "to be-long to an-other," alien to one-self then means "to be-long to an-other self." How can one "be-long to an-other self"? What is this other self? This other self can be an-other person or object. And is not this precisely what

"in-elegance" is? It is other persons, objects, roles, clothes, which wear the in-elegant person. He be-longs to them, he is worn by them. He IS these objects, he is nothing but this exteriority, he is therefore empty. "Emptiness" is the essence of in-elegance and objectness its fundamental characteristic. The in-elegant is therefore a role or set of roles, he is the clothes that wear him, he is not, sensu stricto, even alienated; he is like a thing. The subject then is reduced to an abstract ego. But this ego, this consciousness is an abstraction. It is possible to say then that a world of parvenus is a collectivity of things and has therefore the same character as nature which can therefore be dealt with, explained, and controlled in the same way as physics deals with matter. This is precisely the way in which the theorists of the in-elegant world try to apprehend life! It was an American conservative who indicted America when he said: "Americans are nouveau riche wanting to become aristocrats." The name of this American is George Homans.

The exact phenomenological exegesis of the structure of "interiority," as mentioned before, does not pertain here and I must beg my readers to excuse me for this incompleteness. For the present essay only, the exegesis of the essences of elegance, inelegance and slovenliness as such are required.

The emptiness, the lack of interiority of the parvenu leaves him alone in the world. In this sense, we are all lonely to a greater or lesser degree; we are all parvenues. The phenomenon of loneliness, which has been so thoroughly treated by existentialist philosophies, has been popularized by Sartre's phrase "we are alone." Ortega y Gasset, even before Heidegger, exposed the fundamental condition of life to be a "radical solitude." In the present example, loneliness is clearly the condition of the parvenu who is a stranger to himself, to those he used to "be-long-with," to those he considers in the same station, his inter pares or co-parvenu, and to those he aspires to "be-long-with." This is not only a condition of loneliness, but a tragedy also. "La vida tiene un sentido tragico" as Unamuno has well understood.

The condition of the parvenu is the paradigm of life itself: the ideal type for the phenomenological exegesis of life. Could we not say that life is nothing but arriving, a coming-from which no longer is, to which we cannot return; a going-toward which is not yet, and which we will never reach because we are denied access to or recognition by it? The parvenu is the objectivation of life itself. To understand life requires to "see" phenomenologically through the forms of objectivized life. As I mentioned before, we live phenomenologically but interpret it intellectualistically. Intellectuality is itself a mode of life, it is an activity which pertains to life. To pretend to tailor concrete life by the patterns of the rationalist concepts of the intellect is a thing of the past, mainly of the dark ages of rationalist positivism.

The resemblance of life in the affluent society today and that of the parvenu is no coincidence. Modern life as a whole is a life in which everybody is a parvenu. This is the topic of the next section.

## V

Youth is not only a condition of the body but a vital attitude. As a biological condition youth does not necessarily coincide with a youthful attitude. There are people who are born old and old people who exhibit a young mentality. Of the various symptoms of youth I think the following to be most characteristic: primitivism, sense of prepotency and superiority, vigor, belief that it can solve the problems of the world, petulance, capriciousness, ostentation,

emptiness and superficiality, indiscretion, frivolity, flightiness, avidity to socialize and gather, external exuberance, activity for its own sake, insatiability, consumptiveness, easy persuasion, simplistic, idealistic, fickle, playful, experimentative, avid for novelty, restlessness. Youth is naive, candid and innocent; it becomes easily tired of things; it is faddish. Youth is usually persuaded by appearances; bright colors and flamboyant designs attract the young easily. Youth in general is a condition of not being yet. The whole world is ahead.

All the characteristics of the parvenu and the young belong as well to our present epoch as a whole. But the American people are the prototype of the youthful parvenu.

This essential characteristic of American culture serves to clarify many misunderstandings. For example, it is usually accepted that America is the most rapidly changing society in the West. I think this is an illusion based on superficial observation. Youth is faddish, it likes to pursue temporary and ephemeral stimulants. It is easily excitable and wants constantly renewable stimulation. We are accustomed to hear what the college girl wants: "meet new people, visit new places, have new experiences," in other words, to "have fun." The rapid alternation of fads brought about by a youthful people should not be confused with change and much less with historical change. Industry produces to satisfy fads. This is the reason why American products are notoriously short-lived. Everything is built to last for as long as the fad. All industrial products bear this mark of youthful demand. America is pervaded by youthful banality creating an atmosphere of ephemeral superficialities, shallow and without depth which are expressionless; they come and go without leaving any long-lasting imprint. Other common traits of Americans, such as their concern with mobility, consumption, socializing, having parties, being accepted, being liked, and being popular are also symptoms of their youthful and in-elegant world view.

Whole epochs can be young. Ours is definitely a young epoch, an epoch of youthful parvenus, an epoch without roots and without soil. The unrest and uneasiness of today are the best manifestations of this condition. As a consequence, our epoch is one of crisis, a turning point, a stage of ambiguity and tension, of suspense, when the future is least sure. Europe has been going through this stage for the last century. The so-called "Americanization of Europe" is imprecise; it should be called the rejuvenation of Europe which includes her receptivity to the influences of the youthful America. Europe is then becoming a continent of youthful parvenus. But parvenu Europe has a "group of reference": its history. History is the memory and tradition of a whole people and it becomes present in philosophy. This is why the crisis of the West was first noticed by European philosophy.

Pathology defines a crisis as a moment in a disease at which a decisive change must occur either in the direction of recovery or death. In Greek, Krisis had the connotation of decision. Crises are, then, moments when something must be done. In section III I have interpreted this urge to do something as the urge to simplify and control the world on the one hand and a revolt against the complication and emptiness on the other. This represents an inordinate emphasis on social engineering, on "law and order" and social welfare at one extreme and an attack on everything as supporting the status quo at the other extreme. But this attack on the status quo is not because the status quo is an orderly and secure state. On the contrary, the opposite is the case. It is an irony that the "defenders" of the status quo are perceived as the advocates of "law and order" by their opponents and critics. The latter are not less concerned with law and order; it is the status quo in revolt against itself. The status quo of a youthful epoch is restless, insecure, and uneasy. The parvenus never want their stage to be a permanent condition; they

want to be "accepted," "re-cognized." But when a whole people is parvenu it has nobody that can "accept" and "re-cognize" them. This, then, represents a period of history which is a universal tragedy. This is why it is an epoch of crisis, a dreadful crisis. Continental philosophy has been saying precisely this for the last century. As the voice of the wise elder, contemporary philosophy is a reflection on the mistakes of its own youth which addresses the reticent youth of today's period of history, a period of unparalleled rejuvenation, a juvenile and misosophic period sure of itself in its insecurity, deaf, arrogant and treacherous, a young parvenu who refuses to look back and wants only to look forward into nothingness.

In an epoch of youthful parvenus, the physiologically old become a burden of incomparable magnitude. This is because old age is the denial of youth, of vitality, of vigor; but above all, it is ugly. The physiologically old are bound to be very ugly in a youthful age of in-elegant parvenus. The essence of in-elegance is superficiality, exteriority, and the most "visible" in the physiologically old is the external deterioration of their once exuberant surface. But the old in a youthful age are also young, i.e., in-elegant, empty. The conflict between the ages so characteristic in America is a conflict between exteriors, for everything is exteriority, superficiality; the physiological surface of the body is another surface, an inexorable coat. The so-called "generation gaps," the obsessive concern with age, the drastic "age gradings" of Americans (e.g., the "pre-teenager," the "teenager," the "don't trust anybody over thirty" and the "over the hill" categories, the obsessive display of sex and youthful bodies, the body ostentation) are inevitable manifestations of the concern with surfaces, exteriors, things.

Thus, the old are confined in homes for the aged. The feelings of rejection and inutility on the part of our elders, their loneliness and feeling of inadequacy are not at all mysterious. These are the signs of the tragedy of senescent life in an epoch of youthful parvenus. The parvenu always denies his "old folks." Surfaces and exteriors provide the basis for his theory of valuation. Societies of youthful parvenus are therefore geronticidal.

What could old age offer? Nothing, nothing at all. This is the tragic truth of our age. The apparent concern for the condition of the old is hypocritical. Bodily care, proper confinement, luxurious settings in their homes, welfare dedication and social security improvements are all ineffective and useless and futile. The sanity of life is elegance. All those attempts are in-elegant. The physiologically senescent do not have anything to offer in youthful epochs of parvenus. The old are empty and therefore expressionless. They rarely have anything to communicate and contribute, and when they do, it can not be received by their chronologically younger contemporaries. The latter, which are in-elegant youthful parvenus do not and cannot see anything but surfaces and exteriors. The old must therefore be necessarily perceived as empty, deteriorated containers, and as such, they are disposed of.

Biological death in such an epoch becomes the ugliest sight; it is the most offensive happening that can occur in a youthful age of parvenus; it is utterly repulsive and threatening. Death is not a sad event of life when the final departure of a loved one, the definite break between interiorities becomes an occasion for a meditation on life; death is a repugnant relief, an unloading of a heavy and ugly burden. Death must therefore be concealed. The body must be processed through the funeral home, put out of sight there; its exterior must be covered with make-up, its blood drained and replaced with a preserving liquid substance; it must be made to look as much alive as possible. (Exteriors are very important for the young and the in-elegant. It is interesting to observe that funeral homes in America are often the most sumptuous in their towns.) It follows, then, that outer manifestations of grief must be repressed; reminders of the

deceased such as mourning clothes, wakes, etc., must be absent; they are the reminders of the ugliest event. Burials are smooth and circumspect; a smooth ride from the funeral home to the cemetery where only a small stone will mark the location of the body. Death, in general, must be put out of one's mind. Death is not life; death, on the contrary, is profundity; it is transcendental, philosophical, and mysterious. Life, the life of the youthful parvenu, is on the contrary, all externality, superficiality, factuality, and ostentation; life is "showing off: and it is to "show off."

The meaning of death, its ontological presence, is as absent in youth that the latter is prone, as a consequence, to be temerious, daring and violent. Youth lives life as a constant risk of death; it is almost fearless. The American is violent, bodily aggressive, and ready to "pick a fight." For the youthful American, this is one more "excitement." Violence is for them an integral part of life; if absent, if not constantly represented on the screen, in literature, on T.V. the American gets bored -- non-violence is death itself, violence is life. It is interesting to see that there is almost no "Western" motion picture which does not have a fight portrayed as excitement and enjoyment for its own sake, a "free for all." Americans say: "violence is as American as apple pie"; they do not even understand the reasons for this. This provides in my estimation another insight into the dreadful condition of cultures of youthful parvenus, of in-elegant peoples. "Violence is as American as apple pie" is imprecise; it should say: in-elegance is as American as youthful parvenuism, as primitivism, as emptiness. In this type of violence there is no risking of life for "great causes." Whoever does not understand this does not understand American life. America is the most unheroic nation in history and our epoch is, in general, the least heroic epoch. Epochs of crisis and unrest like ours are cowardly, dull, and boring. Nevertheless, they are epochs of lively self-annihilation. They are nihilist through and through. The gluttony of in-elegant life is threatened with death by starvation from lack of an elegance it does not know.

World history will not record in the future our epoch as heroic.

To be young is not to be yet . . . America is not yet. The American is not yet. He has not begun his history yet. He lives his own prehistory. And in prehistory there are no protagonists, no particular destiny; only pure circumstance prevails. . . . America is the name of a situation, of a stage. . . . The American cannot be defined for the simple reason that he is not yet . . . (Ortega, 1932:378).

Americans have waited in vain for the "Great American Novel" without realizing that a "Great Novel" requires a "Great Protagonist" and where there is no history there is no protagonist.

## VI

The twentieth century has been a century of transition and crisis. A whole century has been spent on a battle between physical reason and vital reason, between the realization of pure reason and its overcoming. History will record it as one of the greatest transitional points in man's own humanization, provided that he survives it. The past fifty years have witnessed the crisis from all sides and thinking men have become conscious of their destiny. The crisis of Marxism is more than just a crisis within this particular doctrine; it is the last cry of the historical crisis of the West. The inheritance of the West has to be saved from its dangerous course. Oswald Spengler, in 1926, saw in it the "decline" (or better the decadence) of the West. Before

him, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Unamuno led a philosophical revolt against what they thought was at the center of the problem: the cult of rationalism and scientism. Their philosophies leaned towards irrationalism and provided the basis for contemporary philosophy. They were the great doubters who shouted: "The old edifice is crumbling, look to life!" They took a good look at the youthful and beautiful Apollo, the god of light and reason who illuminated the world sunk in darkness, who purified this world of every obscure and irrational element, who victoriously rescued order from chaos, and saw that Apollo, the god of measure and harmony had gone too far: he now wanted to rationalize all reality including life. The Apollonian rejuvenation of toady is a threat to life itself; Apollo has gone mad, insane. Protagoras' man as "the measure of all things" succumbed to a mad Apollo who now rules mercilessly. Man needs to examine himself as Heraclitus, "I have examined myself." Socrates, the father of Western thought, has been forgotten. His dictum: "A life which does not reflect on itself is not worth living" has almost become a reality. Life was handed to Apollo unconditionally to be dictated from above. But the reality of life is not a known thing, i.e., it is not to be "explained" intellectually or rationally through the Apollonian revelation; life is experienced and understood ontologically. Maine de Biran, W. Dilthey, M. Sheler, N. Hartmann, Bergson, Ortega y Gasset, Heidegger, and others knew this very well. The reality of life ponders ontologically; it is the "radical reality," as Ortega y Gasset says, from which everything springs.

An essential characteristic of human life is doing, activity, creativity, and this always requires a resistance, an obstacle to overcome, something alien to man. The result of this essential vitality of life does not have to be judged as progress, improvement, or the progressive perfectibility of man. Happiness is not the goal of man as positivist progressivism has upheld. The ideal of a future eternal bliss and the belief of its being the state of happiness is tantamount to wanting life to cease as human life: it is an animalistic goal. It is for this reason that certain contemporary interpretations of the idea of de-alienation of man are barbaric. It is the barbarism of contemporary vulgar rebellion and criticism. If man did not intuit or feel a strangeness, an alienation in his life, he would not, sensu stricto, act; in fact, he would not even think, philosophize, love, desire, overcome, in short, exist. Only animals are unaware of their uncertainty; man's life is fundamentally uncertain.

Contemporary revolutionary spirit is contaminated by the rationalism of a mad Apollo. It posits something pure, uncontaminated, virtually perfect such as the rationally perfect point and line of geometry. Ortega y Gasset has brilliantly exposed this tendency of Western rationalism in his El Ocaso de las Revoluciones. Certain modern revolutionism resembles a geometrician who wanted to realize the perfect point, that which has no parts. To any objection of Utopia this revolutionism would respond that nothing is impossible for man. Does this include also the possibility for man to become inhuman? Does the realization of this pure concept guiding the revolutionary entail the dehumanization of man? The radical revolutionary no less than his opponent -- the radical systematizer of today's complicated life -- has not examined this carefully. Both want to subject life to an abstraction; both may very well be oriented toward the dehumanization of man. The reason is that both are caught up in the rationalist madness of toady's Apollo.

To declare a grandiose project of man Utopian is difficult. Some realizable projects are Utopian if believed to be accomplished in an unrealizable span of time. But there are other projects which are unrealizable even in infinite time. I say this because unless we understand that man can cease to exist as human, or cease altogether, such projects are, if not Utopian,

utterly inconceivable. Certain contemporary interpretations of de-alienation, de-reification, de-ideologization have either lost all meaning or are extravagances of slovenly theories which do not comprehend man. To enjoy freedom one must possess a tremendous amount of wisdom and self-knowledge of life. There is no greater slavery than the pursuit of freedom for freedom's sake. Among the young, freedom is like a loaded pistol in the hands of a child. As Cervantes would say: "freedom is easier to achieve than to enjoy."

The contempt for authority among the American youth in search of freedom stems from the lack of respectable authorities in an epoch of youthful parvenus. Without, as sociologists would say, "a group of reference" youth is right, but confuses his disrespect for authorities who lack authority with the contempt for authority itself. The tragic condition of our elders examined in the previous section is the best indication. The educators must themselves be educated, as Marx said. Yet, unless these youthful parvenus mature into wisdom and elegance the present epoch is doomed to the barbarism of authorityless equality. Youth rejects direction because it finds no authoritative direction. Can it direct itself? Well, today the masses rule through their elected leaders and yet they find themselves directionless.

Whence the lack of respect for authority, even among supposed equals? Respect also connotes esteem, deference and discrimination regarding a person's superiority. It also connotes admiration, approbation and veneration. All that these aspects connote is demanded by authority today without having the basis for inspiring it in those who are to be respectful. Authority today is like the ostentatious in-elegant who demands submission to his display of clothes and objects which he assumedly has in larger quantity. But the in-elegant does not have anything to say, he only has his display of clothes, objects, books, etc.; each of them are silent, mute, although very visible. It is the number of clothes and objects wearing him, the number of books published, and in general the external quantity which in an in-elegant world gives the in-elegant the power to impose themselves on others. On this basis he gets access to positions of administrative manipulation and demands a respect which is reluctantly granted by the in-elegant subordinates and never recognized by the elegant. For the in-elegant subordinate, this reluctance is manifested as jealousy in the sense of wishing to be as in-elegant as the in-elegant superior, i.e., a desire to have as many objects of display as the superior. For the elegant the lack of respect is literally one of disgust. A loathing accompanying the strong imposition of in-elegance on him by this type of authority. It is like that nauseating and repugnant feeling we have when somebody forces on us an overdone external manifestation which we cannot avoid. Structural authority as I would like to call it, is not authority sensu stricto. It is the basis of a "pecking order" in an in-elegant world where quantity and display dominate. It is for this reason that all authority has come to be regarded as "oppressive" and thus to be rejected. Where authority proper does not exist, that which passes for authority (structural authority) lacks respect. It can only maintain itself by emphasizing further the very aspect accounting for its lack of respect -- this is in-elegance.

Under these circumstances society becomes an amorphous entity in which single individuals are lost in an aimless and constantly precarious environment. The company of society meets with the most radical solitude of the individual. This has already been shown in the analysis of life in an in-elegant world of youthful parvenus. Boredom looms large. I think it was Benedetto Croce who said that boredom is the situation in which our solitude is taken away without giving us company in return. It is then that aimless masses and groups strive for "meaning," for simplification of a noisy world robbing our solitude without giving company in return. But since collectives never think, their movement is thoughtless, lacking philosophy,



and without a comprehension of life and reality. The latter has become a dead fact, a social fact, as the great social positivist Durkheim triumphantly announced. Social and cultural criticism becomes the dominant literary genre from the most obtruse and abstract to the most popular and readily consummable. The masses glut themselves on self-criticism. This has become a favority pasttime of popular culture today. Aimless and amorphous like a fluid without a container, which sees no limits, no perspectives, it looks in vain for the walls of the container; it desperately looks for God. So fluid is this amorphous mass that its directionlessness ceases only momentarily when like a liquid it is channeled by fads and sporadic leaders. But soon it tends to spill over again.

This is the condition of a youthful, in-elegant and parvenu life on the verge of slovenliness.

### Concluding Summary

I have presented three fundamental aspects of life in the form of three metaphors: elegance, in-elegance and slovenliness. As fundamental aspects of life they represent the basic ground elements nourishing our more general attitudes toward life. They are, in a sense, the ground foundations for whole philosophies. They should not be confused with any characteristics of a fixed human nature although they represent a condition of existence as permanent as human existence itself. A fundamental condition of life is the ground of philosophy but not philosophy itself. It only establishes the general aspect of the philosophy and the variations within it but not the specific character of the philosophy or its variants. For example, in-elegance is the fundamental ground of naturalism, materialism, positivism, rationalism (not reason), scientism, behaviorism, sociologism, technologism, and other related "isms." Their essence is the same as that of in-elegance, mainly, the emphasis on the external world (externality, superficiality, and objectness) as the only or most important reality. Spiritual life, interiority, or fundamental interior life experiences are considered either as epiphenomena dependent on the primary reality or simply not decisive. As in in-elegance, externality wears us.

Philosophic variations united by a general attitude toward life constitute an integrated world view. When the predominant world-view persists in a particular cultural and historical condition, e.g., the youthfulness of the present epoch as its essential characteristic, the predominant world-view may no longer fit the prevalent human situation, i.e., it may no longer account for the new experiences of life. It is then that life comes to experience this lack of account for the new experiences as a problem. A life experience, it should be noticed, becomes a problem only when it is not justified or accounted for meaningfully. "Meaninglessness," then, is a life experience revealing that the new life conditions are not accounted for, i.e., they do not "make sense." This is an important point not fully recognized today. A crisis is always a breakdown of meaning.

The attempt to account for the new situation, to give it meaning, stimulates thought and action. One of these stimulations manifests itself as an attempt to control the situation. (Meaninglessness always appears as a complication, i.e., a situation not tied together by a convincing justification.) This control aims at a simplification borrowing on the conceptual and applied knowledge contained within the predominant world view. This response is bound to fail, although it may be able to preserve the situation for quite a long time. The reason is that it maintains the lack of meaning of the very world view which it attempts to use. This attempt,

then, does not properly represent a philosophical renovation, an overcoming of the failure of the predominant world view to provide meaning for life. In our epoch this orientation is grounded in in-elegance.

The other search for meaning involves a variety of orientations all characterized by an indeterminate negation of the new conditions of life. These orientations may range from a desire to overthrow the whole "system" to a retreat from the "system." They encompass both practically lived orientations as well as theoretical criticism. The unlimited freedom of the individual or his emancipation in a future world becomes the dominant idea. Exotic and mystical world views internally developed or imported from exotic cultures become very attractive either as substitutes for the lack of meaning within the prevalent world view or as a justification for its rejection. These extraneous world views, as ideas, are only temporary hopes which cannot succeed for they represent a drastic break with the historical dependency of man on his culture. They are a break with history (although the attempt is made to see some of them as a "historical necessity"). They represent, in other words, a demand on culture similar to the demand on man to become amnesic and still be able to walk around his historically conditioned environment. This orientation tends to lack an understanding of man and his human condition. The reason is because it tends to ignore the inexorability of historical continuity; and a break with historical continuity is like amnesia. It ignores the fact that we think with our past as our memory. In our epoch this mode of search for meaning is grounded on an emphasis on the fundamental condition of life which I have called slovenliness.

Finally, a third orientation is represented by a serious philosophical criticism of the past and the formulation of a new philosophy (a new world view) which will both overcome the present conditions and preserve the historical continuity indispensable for the preservation of man as a human being. It is an attempt to understand life and its fundamental condition. Usually, its beginnings are an unsystematic attempt to understand life from within. It is also an attempt to comprehend the other possible orientations for a search for meaning as well as their plausibility or unplausibility. It then represents an attempt to reform life, provide meaning within the inexorability of historical continuity, and to overcome the predominant world view, or its indeterminate negation, which no longer accounts for the new life experiences. In our epoch this orientation is grounded on the fundamental condition of life which I have called elegance.

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