Our tradition of political thought had its definite beginning in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. I believe it came to a no less definite end in the theories of Karl Marx. The beginning was made when, in The Republic's allegory of the cave, Plato described the sphere of human affairs—all that belongs to the living together of men in a common world—in terms of darkness, confusion, and deception which those aspiring to true being must turn away from and abandon if they want to discover the clear sky of eternal ideas. The end came with Marx's declaration that philosophy and its truth are located not outside the affairs of men and their common world but precisely in them, and can be "realized" only in the sphere of living together, which he called "society," through the emergence of "socialized men" (vergesellschaftete Menschen). Political philosophy necessarily implies the attitude of the philosopher toward politics; its tradition began with the philosopher's turning away from politics and then returning
in order to impose his standards on human affairs. The end came when a philosopher turned away from philosophy so as to “realize” it in politics. This was Marx’s attempt, expressed first in his decision (in itself philosophical) to abjure philosophy, and second in his intention to “change the world” and thereby the philosophizing minds, the “consciousness” of men.

The beginning and the end of the tradition have this in common: that the elementary problems of politics never come as clearly to light in their immediate and simple urgency as when they are first formulated and when they receive their final challenge. The beginning, in Jacob Burckhardt’s words, is like a “fundamental chord” which sounds in its endless modulations through the whole history of Western thought. Only beginning and end are, so to speak, pure or unmodulated; and the fundamental chord therefore never strikes its listeners more forcefully and more beautifully than when it first sends its harmonizing sound into the world and never more irritationally and jarringly than when it still continues to be heard in a world whose sounds—and thought—it can no longer bring into harmony. A random remark which Plato made in his last work: “The beginning is like a god which as long as it dwells among men saves all things”—"Δραχὲς καὶ θεὸς ἔν ἐνθρώπων ἱδρυμένη σώζει πάντα"—is true of our tradition; as long as its beginning was alive, it could save all things and bring them into harmony. By the same token, it became destructive as it came to its end—to say nothing of the aftermath of confusion and helplessness which came after the tradition ended and in which we live today.

In Marx’s philosophy, which did not so much turn Hegel upside down as invert the traditional hierarchy of thought and action, of contemplation and labor, and of philosophy and politics, the beginning made by Plato and Aristotle proves its vitality by leading Marx into flagrantly contradictory statements, mostly in that part of his teachings usually called utopian. The most important are his prediction that under conditions of a “socialized humanity” the “state will wither away,” and that the productivity of labor

* Numbered reference notes may be found following the text.
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will become so great that labor somehow will abolish itself, thus guaranteeing an almost unlimited amount of leisure time to each member of the society. These statements, in addition to being predictions, contain of course Marx’s ideal of the best form of society. As such they are not utopian, but rather reproduce the political and social conditions of the same Athenian city-state which was the model of experience for Plato and Aristotle, and therefore the foundation on which our tradition rests. The Athenian polis functioned without a division between rulers and ruled, and thus was not a state if we use this term, as Marx did, in accordance with the traditional definitions of forms of government, that is, one-man rule or monarchy, rule by the few or oligarchy, and rule by the majority or democracy. Athenian citizens, moreover, were citizens only insofar as they possessed leisure time, had that freedom from labor which Marx predicts for the future. Not only in Athens but throughout antiquity and up to the modern age, those who labored were not citizens and those who were citizens were first of all those who did not labor or who possessed more than their labor power. This similarity becomes even more striking when we look into the actual content of Marx’s ideal society. Leisure time is seen to exist under the condition of statelessness, or under conditions where, in Lenin’s famous phrase which renders Marx’s thought very precisely, the administration of society has become so simplified that every cook is qualified to take over its machinery. Obviously, under such circumstances the whole business of politics, Engels’ simplified “administration of things,” could be of interest only to a cook, or at best to those “mediocre minds” whom Nietzsche thought best qualified for taking care of public affairs.6 This, to be sure, is very different from actual conditions in antiquity, where, on the contrary, political duties were considered so difficult and time-consuming that those engaged in them could not be permitted to undertake any tiring activity. (Thus, for instance, the shepherd could qualify for citizenship but the peasant could not; the painter, but not the sculptor, was still recognized as something more than a βάτανος, the distinction being drawn in either case simply by
applying the criterion of effort and fatigue.) It is against the time-
consuming political life of an average full-fledged citizen of the
Greek polis that the philosophers, especially Aristotle, established
their ideal of \( \sigma\chi\alpha\lambda\iota\), of leisure time, which in antiquity never meant
freedom from ordinary labor, a matter of course anyhow, but time
free from political activity and the business of the state.

In Marx's ideal society these two different concepts are inex-
tricably combined: the classless and stateless society somehow
realizes the general ancient conditions of leisure from labor and, at
the same time, leisure from politics. This is supposed to come
about when the "administration of things" has taken the place of
government and political action. This twofold leisure from labor
as well as politics had been for the philosophers the condition of
a \( \beta\lambda\sigma\upsilon\theta\varepsilon\omega\rho\nu\kappa\omega\delta\)s, a life devoted to philosophy and knowledge in the
widest sense of the word. Lenin's cook, in other words, lives in a
society providing her with as much leisure from labor as the free
ancient citizens enjoyed in order to devote their time to \( \nu\epsilon\lambda\iota\sigma\iota\varepsilon\omega\delta\theta\alpha\omega\),
as well as as much leisure from politics as the Greek philosophers
had demanded for the few who wanted to devote all their time to
philosophizing. The combination of a stateless (apolitical) and
almost laborless society loomed so large in Marx's imagination as
the very expression of an ideal humanity because of the traditional
connotation of leisure as \( \sigma\chi\alpha\lambda\iota\) and \( \omega\tau\iota\iota\mu\), that is, a life devoted
to aims higher than work or politics.

Marx himself regarded his so-called utopia as simple prediction,
and it is true that this part of his theories corresponds to certain
developments which have come fully to light only in our time.
Government in the old sense has given way in many respects to
administration, and the constant increase in leisure for the masses
is a fact in all industrialized countries. Marx clearly perceived
certain trends inherent in the era ushered in by the Industrial
Revolution, although he was wrong in assuming that these trends
would assert themselves only under conditions of socialization of
the means of production. The hold which the tradition had over
him lies in his viewing this development in an idealized light, and
in understanding it in terms and concepts having their origin in
an altogether different historical period. This blinded him to the authentic and very perplexing problems inherent in the modern world and gave his accurate predictions their utopian quality. But the utopian ideal of a classless, stateless, and laborless society was born out of the marriage of two altogether non-utopian elements: the perception of certain trends in the present which could no longer be understood in the framework of the tradition, and the traditional concepts and ideals by which Marx himself understood and integrated them.

Marx’s own attitude to the tradition of political thought was one of conscious rebellion. In a challenging and paradoxical mood he therefore framed certain key statements which, containing his political philosophy, underlie and transcend the strictly scientific part of his work (and as such curiously remained the same throughout his life, from the early writings to the last volume of Das Kapital). Crucial among them are the following: “Labor created man” (in a formulation by Engels, who, contrary to an opinion current among some Marx scholars, usually rendered Marx’s thought adequately and succinctly).3 “Violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one,” hence: violence is the midwife of history (which occurs in both the writings of Marx and of Engels in many variations).4 Finally, there is the famous last thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, however, to change it,” which, in the light of Marx’s thought, one could render more adequately as: The philosophers have interpreted the world long enough; the time has come to change it. For this last statement is in fact only a variation of another, occurring in an early manuscript: “You cannot aufheben [i.e., elevate, conserve, and abolish in the Hegelian sense] philosophy without realizing it.” In the later work the same attitude to philosophy appears in the prediction that the working class will be the only legitimate heir of classical philosophy.

None of these statements can be understood in and by itself. Each acquires its meaning by contradicting some traditionally accepted truth whose plausibility up to the beginning of the modern
age had been beyond doubt. “Labor created man” means first that labor and not God created man; second, it means that man, insofar as he is human, creates himself, that his humanity is the result of his own activity; it means, third, that what distinguishes man from animal, his differentia specifica, is not reason, but labor, that he is not an animal rationale, but an animal laborans; it means, fourth, that it is not reason, until then the highest attribute of man, but labor, the traditionally most despised human activity, which contains the humanity of man. Thus Marx challenges the traditional God, the traditional estimate of labor, and the traditional glorification of reason.

That violence is the midwife of history means that the hidden forces of development of human productivity, insofar as they depend upon free and conscious human action, come to light only through the violence of wars and revolutions. Only in those violent periods does history show its true face and dispel the fog of mere ideological, hypocritical talk. Again the challenge to tradition is clear. Violence is traditionally the ultima ratio in relationships between nations and the most disgraceful of domestic actions, being always considered the outstanding characteristic of tyranny. (The few attempts to save violence from disgrace, chiefly by Machiavelli and Hobbes, are of great relevance for the problem of power and quite illuminative of the early confusion of power with violence, but they exerted remarkably little influence on the tradition of political thought prior to our own time.) To Marx, on the contrary, violence or rather the possession of the means of violence is the constituent element of all forms of government; the state is the instrument of the ruling class by means of which it oppresses and exploits, and the whole sphere of political action is characterized by the use of violence.

The Marxian identification of action with violence implies another fundamental challenge to tradition which may be more difficult to perceive, but of which Marx, who knew Aristotle very well, must have been aware. The twofold Aristotelian definition of man as a ζωον πολιτικῶν and a ζωον λόγων ξυόν, a being attaining his highest possibility in the faculty of speech and the life in a polis,
was designed to distinguish the Greek from the barbarian and the
free man from the slave. The distinction was that Greeks, living
together in a polis, conducted their affairs by means of speech,
through persuasion (πειθουσ), and not by means of violence,
through mute coercion. Hence, when free men obeyed their gov-
ernment, or the laws of the polis, their obedience was called
πειθαρχεία, a word which indicates clearly that obedience was ob-
tained by persuasion and not by force. Barbarians were ruled by
violence and slaves forced to labor, and since violent action and
toil are alike in that they do not need speech to be effective, bar-
barians and slaves were ἀνευ λόγος, that is, they did not live with
each other primarily by means of speech. Labor was to the Greeks
essentially a nonpolitical, private affair, but violence was related
to and established a contact, albeit negative, with other men.

Marx’s glorification of violence therefore contains the more specific
denial of λόγος, of speech, the diametrically opposite and tradi-
tionally most human form of intercourse. Marx’s theory of ideo-
logical superstructures ultimately rests on this anti-traditional hos-
tility to speech and the concomitant glorification of violence.

For traditional philosophy it would have been a contradiction
in terms to “realize philosophy” or to change the world in ac-
cordance with philosophy—and Marx’s statement implies that
change is preceded by interpretation, so that the philosophers’ in-
terpretation of the world has indicated how it should be changed.

Philosophy might have prescribed certain rules of action, though no
great philosopher ever took this to be his most important concern.
Essentially, philosophy from Plato to Hegel was “not of this world,”
whether it was Plato describing the philosopher as the man whose
body only inhabits the city of his fellow men, or Hegel admitting
that, from the point of view of common sense, philosophy is a
world stood on its head, a verkehrte Welt. The challenge to tradi-
tion, this time not merely implied but directly expressed in Marx’s
statement, lies in the prediction that the world of common human
affairs, where we orient ourselves and think in common-sense
terms, will one day become identical with the realm of ideas where
the philosopher moves, or that philosophy, which has always been
only "for the few," will one day be the common-sense reality for everybody.

These three statements are framed in traditional terms which they, however, explode; they are formulated as paradoxes and meant to shock us. They are in fact even more paradoxical and led Marx into greater perplexities than he himself had anticipated. Each contains one fundamental contradiction which remained insoluble in his own terms. If labor is the most human and most productive of man's activities, what will happen when, after the revolution, "labor is abolished" in "the realm of freedom," when man has succeeded in emancipating himself from it? What productive and what essentially human activity will be left? If violence is the midwife of history and violent action therefore the most dignified of all forms of human action, what will happen when, after the conclusion of class struggle and the disappearance of the state, no violence will even be possible? How will men be able to act at all in a meaningful, authentic way? Finally, when philosophy has been both realized and abolished in the future society, what kind of thought will be left?

Marx's inconsistencies are well known and noted by almost all Marx scholars. They usually are summarized as discrepancies "between the scientific point of view of the historian and the moral point of view of the prophet" (Edmund Wilson), between the historian seeing in the accumulation of capital "a material means for the increase of productive forces" (Marx) and the moralist who denounced those who performed "the historical task" (Marx) as exploiters and dehumanizers of man. This and similar inconsistencies are minor when compared with the fundamental contradiction between the glorification of labor and action (as against contemplation and thought) and of a stateless, that is, actionless and (almost) laborless society. For this can be neither blamed on the natural difference between a revolutionary young Marx and the more scientific insights of the older historian and economist, nor resolved through the assumption of a dialectical movement which needs the negative or evil to produce the positive or the good.
Such fundamental and flagrant contradictions rarely occur in second-rate writers, in whom they can be discounted. In the work of great authors they lead into the very center of their work and are the most important clue to a true understanding of their problems and new insights. In Marx, as in the case of other great authors of the last century, a seemingly playful, challenging, and paradoxical mood conceals the perplexity of having to deal with new phenomena in terms of an old tradition of thought outside of whose conceptual framework no thinking seemed possible at all. It is as though Marx, not unlike Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, tried desperately to think against the tradition while using its own conceptual tools. Our tradition of political thought began when Plato discovered that it is somehow inherent in the philosophical experience to turn away from the common world of human affairs; it ended when nothing was left of this experience but the opposition of thinking and acting, which, depriving thought of reality and action of sense, makes both meaningless.

II

The strength of this tradition, its hold on Western man’s thought, has never depended on his consciousness of it. Indeed, only twice in our history do we encounter periods in which men are conscious and over-conscious of the fact of tradition, identifying age as such with authority. This happened, first, when the Romans adopted classical Greek thought and culture as their own spiritual tradition and thereby decided historically that tradition was to have a permanent formative influence on European civilization. Before the Romans such a thing as tradition was unknown; with them it became and after them it remained the guiding thread through the past and the chain to which each new generation knowingly or unknowingly was bound in its understanding of the world and its own experience. Not until the Romantic period do we again encounter an exalted consciousness and glorification of tradition. (The discovery of antiquity in the Renaissance was a
first attempt to break the fetters of tradition, and by going to the sources themselves to establish a past over which tradition would have no hold.) Today tradition is sometimes considered an essentially romantic concept, but Romanticism did no more than place the discussion of tradition on the agenda of the nineteenth century; its glorification of the past only served to mark the moment when the modern age was about to change our world and general circumstances to such an extent that a matter-of-course reliance on tradition was no longer possible.

The end of a tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that this power of well-worn notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its living force and as the memory of its beginning recedes; it may even reveal its full coercive force only after its end has come and men no longer even rebel against it. This at least seems to be the lesson of the twentieth-century aftermath of formalistic and compulsory thinking, which came after Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche had challenged the basic assumptions of traditional religion, traditional political thought, and traditional metaphysics by consciously inverting the traditional hierarchy of concepts. However, neither the twentieth-century aftermath nor the nineteenth-century rebellion against tradition actually caused the break in our history. This sprang from a chaos of mass-perplexities on the political scene and of mass-opinions in the spiritual sphere which the totalitarian movements, through terror and ideology, crystallized into a new form of government and domination. Totalitarian domination as an established fact, which in its unprecedentedness cannot be comprehended through the usual categories of political thought, and whose "crimes" cannot be judged by traditional moral standards or punished within the legal framework of our civilization, has broken the continuity of Occidental history. The break in our tradition is now an accomplished fact. It is neither the result of anyone's deliberate choice nor subject to further decision.

The attempts of great thinkers after Hegel to break away from
patterns of thought which had ruled the West for more than two thousand years may have foreshadowed this event and certainly can help to illuminate it, but they did not cause it. The event itself marks the division between the modern age—rising with the natural sciences in the seventeenth century, reaching its political climax in the revolutions of the eighteenth, and unfolding its general implications after the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth—and the world of the twentieth century, which came into existence through the chain of catastrophes touched off by the First World War. To hold the thinkers of the modern age, especially the nineteenth-century rebels against tradition, responsible for the structure and conditions of the twentieth century is even more dangerous than it is unjust. The implications apparent in the actual event of totalitarian domination go far beyond the most radical or most adventurous ideas of any of these thinkers. Their greatness lay in the fact that they perceived their world as one invaded by new problems and perplexities which our tradition of thought was unable to cope with. In this sense their own departure from tradition, no matter how emphatically they proclaimed it (like children whistling louder and louder because they are lost in the dark), was no deliberate act of their own choosing either. What frightened them about the dark was its silence, not the break in tradition. This break, when it actually occurred, dispelled the darkness, so that we can hardly listen any longer to the over-loud, “pathetic” style of their writing. But the thunder of the eventual explosion has also drowned the preceding ominous silence that still answers us whenever we dare to ask, not “What are we fighting against” but “What are we fighting for?”

Neither the silence of the tradition nor the reaction of thinkers against it in the nineteenth century can ever explain what actually happened. The non-deliberate character of the break gives it an irrevocability which only events, never thoughts, can have. The rebellion against tradition in the nineteenth century remained strictly within a traditional framework; and on the level of mere thought, which could hardly be concerned then with more than the essentially negative experiences of foreboding, apprehension,
and ominous silence, only radicalization, not a new beginning and reconsideration of the past, was possible.

Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche stand at the end of the tradition, just before the break came. Their immediate predecessor was Hegel. He it was who for the first time saw the whole of world history as one continuous development, and this tremendous achievement implied that he himself stood outside all authority-claiming systems and beliefs of the past, that he was held only by the thread of continuity in history itself. The thread of historical continuity was the first substitute for tradition; by means of it, the overwhelming mass of the most divergent values, the most contradictory thoughts and conflicting authorities, all of which had somehow been able to function together, were reduced to a unilinear, dialectically consistent development actually designed to repudiate not tradition as such, but the authority of all traditions. Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche remained Hegelians insofar as they saw the history of past philosophy as one dialectically developed whole; their great merit was that they radicalized this new approach toward the past in the only way it could still be further developed, namely, in questioning the conceptual hierarchy which had ruled Western philosophy since Plato and which Hegel had still taken for granted.

Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche are for us like guideposts to a past which has lost its authority. They were the first who dared to think without the guidance of any authority whatsoever; yet, for better and worse, they were still held by the categorical framework of the great tradition. In some respects we are better off. We need no longer be concerned with their scorn for the “educated philistines,” who all through the nineteenth century tried to make up for the loss of authentic authority with a spurious glorification of culture. To most people today this culture looks like a field of ruins which, far from being able to claim any authority, can hardly command their interest. This fact may be deplorable, but implicit in it is the great chance to look upon the past with eyes undistracted by any tradition, with a directness which has disappeared
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The destructive distortions of the tradition were all caused by men who had experienced something new which they tried almost instantaneously to overcome and resolve into something old. Kierkegaard's leap from doubt into belief was a reversal and a distortion of the traditional relationship between reason and faith. It was the answer to the modern loss of faith, not only in God but in reason as well, which was inherent in Descartes' *de omnibus dubitandum est*, with its underlying suspicion that things may not be as they appear and that an evil spirit may willfully and forever hide truth from the minds of man. Marx's leap from theory into action, and from contemplation into labor, came after Hegel had transformed metaphysics into a philosophy of history and changed the philosopher into the historian to whose backward glance eventually, at the end of time, the meaning of becoming and motion, not of being and truth, would reveal itself. Nietzsche's leap from the nonsensuous transcendent realm of ideas and measurements into the sensuousness of life, his "inverted Platonism" or "trans-valuation of values," as he himself would call it, was the last attempt to turn away from the tradition, and it succeeded only in turning tradition upside down.

Different as these rebellions against tradition are in content and intention, their results have an ominous similarity: Kierkegaard, jumping from doubt into belief, carried doubt into religion, transformed the attack of modern science on religion into an inner religious struggle, so that since then sincere religious experience has seemed possible only in the tension between doubt and belief, in torturing one's beliefs with one's doubts and relaxing from this torment in the violent affirmation of the absurdity of both the human condition and man's belief. No clearer symptom of this
modern religious situation can be found than the fact that Dostoevski, perhaps the most experienced psychologist of modern religious beliefs, portrayed pure faith in the character of Myshkin "the idiot," or of Alyosha Karamazov, who is pure in heart because he is simple-minded.

Marx, when he leaped from philosophy into politics, carried the theories of dialectics into action, making political action more theoretical, more dependent upon what we today would call an ideology, than it ever had been before. Since, moreover, his springboard was not philosophy in the old metaphysical sense, but as specifically Hegel's philosophy of history as Kierkegaard's springboard had been Descartes' philosophy of doubt, he superimposed the "law of history" upon politics and ended by losing the significance of both, of action no less than of thought, of politics no less than of philosophy, when he insisted that both were mere functions of society and history.

Nietzsche's inverted Platonism, his insistence on life and the sensuously and materially given as against the suprasensuous and transcendent ideas which, since Plato, had been supposed to measure, judge, and give meaning to the given, ended in what is commonly called nihilism. Yet Nietzsche was no nihilist but, on the contrary, was the first to try to overcome the nihilism inherent not in the notions of the thinkers but in the reality of modern life. What he discovered in his attempt at "trans-valuation" was that within this categorical framework the sensuous loses its very raison d'être when it is deprived of its background of the suprasensuous and transcendent. "We abolished the true world: which world has remained? perhaps the world of appearances? . . . But no! together with the true world we abolished the world of appearances." 5 This insight in its elementary simplicity is relevant for all the turning-about operations in which the tradition found its end.

What Kierkegaard wanted was to assert the dignity of faith against modern reason and reasoning, as Marx desired to assert again the dignity of human action against modern historical contemplation and relativization, and as Nietzsche wanted to assert the dignity
of human life against the impotence of modern man. The traditional oppositions of *fides* and *intellectus*, and of theory and practice, took their respective revenges upon Kierkegaard and Marx, just as the opposition between the transcendent and the sensuously given took its revenge upon Nietzsche, not because these oppositions still had roots in valid human experience, but, on the contrary, because they had become mere concepts, outside of which, however, no comprehensive thought seemed possible at all.

That these three outstanding and conscious rebellions against a tradition which had lost its *δόξα*, its beginning and principle, should have ended in self-defeat is no reason to question the greatness of the enterprises nor their relevance to the understanding of the modern world. Each attempt, in its particular way, took account of those traits of modernity which were incompatible with our tradition, and this even before modernity in all its aspects had fully revealed itself. Kierkegaard knew that the incompatibility of modern science with traditional beliefs does not lie in any specific scientific findings, all of which can be integrated into religious systems and absorbed by religious beliefs for the reason that they will never be able to answer the questions which religion raises. He knew that this incompatibility lay, rather, in the conflict between a spirit of doubt and distrust which ultimately can trust only what it has made itself, and the traditional unquestioning confidence in what has been given and appears in its true being to man's reason and senses. Modern science, in Marx's words, would "be superfluous if the appearance and the essence of things coincided." 6 Because our traditional religion is essentially a revealed religion and holds, in harmony with ancient philosophy, that truth is what reveals itself, that truth is revelation (even though the meanings of this revelation may be as different as the philosophers' *ἀλήθεια* and *ἐλευθερία* are from the early Christians' eschatological expectations for an *ἐποκράτωσιν* in the Second Coming), 7 modern science has become a much more formidable enemy of religion than traditional philosophy, even in its most rationalistic versions, ever could be. Yet Kierkegaard's attempt to save faith from the onslaught of modernity made even religion modern, that is, subject
to doubt and distrust. Traditional beliefs disintegrated into absurdity when Kierkegaard tried to reassert them on the assumption that man cannot trust the truth-receiving capacity of his reason or of his senses.

Marx knew that the incompatibility between classical political thought and modern political conditions lay in the accomplished fact of the French and Industrial Revolutions, which together had raised labor, traditionally the most despised of all human activities, to the highest rank of productivity and pretended to be able to assert the time-honored ideal of freedom under unheard-of conditions of universal equality. He knew that the question was only superficially posed in the idealistic assertions of the equality of man, the inborn dignity of every human being, and only superficially answered by giving laborers the right to vote. This was not a problem of justice that could be solved by giving the new class of workers its due, after which the old order of *suum cuique* would be restored and function as in the past. There is the fact of the basic incompatibility between the traditional concepts making labor itself the very symbol of man's subjection to necessity, and the modern age which saw labor elevated to express man's positive freedom, the freedom of productivity. It is from the impact of labor, that is to say, of necessity in the traditional sense, that Marx endeavored to save philosophical thought, deemed by the tradition to be the freest of all human activities. Yet when he proclaimed that "you cannot abolish philosophy without realizing it," he began subjecting thought also to the inexorable despotism of necessity, to the "iron law" of productive forces in society.

Nietzsche's devaluation of values, like Marx's labor theory of value, arises from the incompatibility between the traditional "ideas," which, as transcendent units, had been used to recognize and measure human thoughts and actions, and modern society, which had dissolved all such standards into relationships between its members, establishing them as functional "values." Values are social commodities that have no significance of their own but, like other commodities, exist only in the ever-changing relativity of social linkages and commerce. Through this relativization both the
things which man produces for his use and the standards according to which he lives undergo a decisive change: they become entities of exchange, and the bearer of their "value" is society and not man, who produces and uses and judges. The "good" loses its character as an idea, the standard by which the good and the bad can be measured and recognized; it has become a value which can be exchanged with other values, such as those of expediency or of power. The holder of values can refuse this exchange and become an "idealist," who prices the value of "good" higher than the value of expediency; but this does not make the "value" of good any less relative.

The term "value" owes its origin to the sociological trend which even before Marx was quite manifest in the relatively new science of classical economy. Marx was still aware of the fact, which the social sciences have since forgotten, that nobody "seen in his isolation produces values," but that products "become values only in their social relationship." His distinction between "use value" and "exchange value" reflects the distinction between things as men use and produce them and their value in society, and his insistence on the greater authenticity of use values, his frequent description of the rise of exchange value as a kind of original sin at the beginning of market production reflect his own helpless and, as it were, blind recognition of the inevitability of an impending "devaluation of all values." The birth of the social sciences can be located at the moment when all things, "ideas" as well as material objects, were equated with values, so that everything derived its existence from and was related to society, the bonum and malum no less than tangible objects. In the dispute as to whether capital or labor is the source of values, it is generally overlooked that at no time prior to the incipient Industrial Revolution was it held that values, and not things, are the result of man's productive capacity, or was everything that exists related to society and not to man "seen in his isolation." The notion of "socialized men," whose emergence Marx projected into the future classless society, is in fact the underlying assumption of classical as well as Marxian economy.
It is therefore only natural that the perplexing question which has plagued all later "value-philosophies," where to find the one supreme value by which to measure all others, should first appear in the economic sciences which, in Marx's words, try to "square the circle—to find a commodity of unchanging value which would serve as a constant standard for others." Marx believed he had found this standard in labor-time, and insisted that use values "which can be acquired without labor have no exchange value" (though they retain their "natural usefulness"), so that the earth itself is of "no value"; it does not represent "objectified labor." 9 With this conclusion we come to the threshold of a radical nihilism, to that denial of everything given of which the nineteenth-century rebellions against tradition as yet knew little and which arises only in twentieth-century society.

Nietzsche seems to have been unaware of the origin as well as of the modernity of the term "value" when he accepted it as a key notion in his assault on tradition. But when he began to devaluate the current values of society, the implications of the whole enterprise quickly became manifest. Ideas in the sense of absolute units had become identified with social values to such an extent that they simply ceased to exist once their value-character, their social status, was challenged. Nobody knew his way better than Nietzsche through the meandering paths of the modern spiritual labyrinth, where recollections and ideas of the past are hoarded up as though they had always been values which society depreciated whenever it needed better and newer commodities. Also, he was well aware of the profound nonsense of the new "value-free" science which was soon to degenerate into scientism and general scientific superstition and which never, despite all protests to the contrary, had anything in common with the Roman historians' attitude of sine ira et studio. For while the latter demanded judgment without scorn and truth-finding without zeal, the wertfreie Wissenschaft, which could no longer judge because it had lost its standards of judgment and could no longer find truth because it doubted the existence of truth, imagined that it could produce meaningful results if only it abandoned the last remnants of those absolute standards. And when Nietzsche
proclaimed that he had discovered "new and higher values," he was the first to fall prey to delusions which he himself had helped to destroy, accepting the old traditional notion of measuring with transcendent units in its newest and most hideous form, thereby again carrying the relativity and exchangeability of values into the very matters whose absolute dignity he had wanted to assert—power and life and man's love of his earthly existence.

IV

Self-defeat, the result of all three challenges to tradition in the nineteenth century, is only one and perhaps the most superficial thing Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche have in common. More important is the fact that each of their rebellions seems to be concentrated on the same ever-repeated subject: Against the alleged abstractions of philosophy and its concept of man as an animal rationale, Kierkegaard wants to assert concrete and suffering men; Marx confirms that man's humanity consists of his productive and active force, which in its most elementary aspect he calls labor-power; and Nietzsche insists on life's productivity, on man's will and will-to-power. In complete independence of one another—none of them ever knew of the others' existence—they arrive at the conclusion that this enterprise in terms of the tradition can be achieved only through a mental operation best described in the images and similes of leaps, inversions, and turning concepts upside down: Kierkegaard speaks of his leap from doubt into belief; Marx turns Hegel, or rather "Plato and the whole Platonic tradition" (Sidney Hook), "right side up again," leaping "from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom"; and Nietzsche understands his philosophy as "inverted Platonism" and "transformation of all values."

The turning operations with which the tradition ends bring the beginning to light in a twofold sense. The very assertion of one side of the opposites—fides against intellectus, practice against theory, sensuous, perishable life against permanent, unchanging, suprasensuous truth—necessarily brings to light the repudiated opposite and
shows that both have meaning and significance only in this opposition. Furthermore, to think in terms of such opposites is not a matter of course, but is grounded in a first great turning operation on which all others ultimately are based because it established the opposites in whose tension the tradition moves. This first turning-about is Plato's περαγωγή τῆς ψυχῆς, the turning-about of the whole human being, which he tells—as though it were a story with beginning and end and not merely a mental operation—in the parable of the cave in The Republic.

The story of the cave unfolds in three stages: the first turning-about takes place in the cave itself when one of the inhabitants frees himself from the fetters which chain the cave dwellers' "legs and necks" so that "they can only see before them," their eyes glued to the screen on which shadows and images of things appear; he now turns around to the rear of the cave, where an artificial fire illuminates the things in the cave as they really arc. There is, second, the turning from the cave to the clear sky, where the ideas appear as the true and eternal essences of the things in the cave, illuminated by the sun, the idea of ideas, enabling man to see and the ideas to shine forth. Finally, there is the necessity of returning to the cave, of leaving the realm of eternal essences and moving again in the realm of perishable things and mortal men. Each of these turnings is accomplished by a loss of sense and orientation: the eyes accustomed to the shadowy appearances on the screen are blinded by the fire in the cave; the eyes then adjusted to the dim light of the artificial fire are blinded by the light that illuminates the ideas; finally, the eyes adjusted to the light of the sun must readjust to the dimness of the cave.

Behind these turnings-about, which Plato demands only of the philosopher, the lover of truth and light, lies another inversion indicated generally in Plato's violent polemics against Homer and the Homeric religion, and in particular in the construction of his story as a kind of reply to and reversal of Homer's description of Hades in the eleventh book of the Odyssey. The parallel between the images of the cave and Hades (the shadowy, unsubstantial, senseless movements of the soul in Homer's Hades correspond to the ignorance and
senselessness of the bodies in the cave) is unmistakable because it is stressed by Plato’s use of the words εἰδωλία, image, and σκιά, shadow, which are Homer’s own key words for the description of life after death in the underworld. The reversal of the Homeric “position” is obvious; it is as though Plato were saying to him: Not the life of bodyless souls, but the life of the bodies takes place in an underworld; compared to the sky and the sun, the earth is like Hades; images and shadows are the objects of bodily senses, not the surroundings of bodyless souls; the true and real is not the world in which we move and live and which we have to part from in death, but the ideas seen and grasped by the eyes of the mind. In a sense, Plato’s περισσωρίη was a turning-about by which everything that was commonly believed in Greece in accordance with the Homeric religion came to stand on its head. It is as though the underworld of Hades had risen to the surface of the earth. But this reversal of Homer did not actually turn Homer upside down or downside up, since the dichotomy within which such an operation alone can take place is almost as alien to Plato’s thought, which did not yet operate with predetermined opposites, as it is alien to the Homeric world. (No turning about of the tradition can therefore ever land us in the original Homeric “position,” which seems to have been Nietzsche’s error; he probably thought that his inverted Platonism could lead him back into pre-Platonic modes of thought.) It was solely for political purposes that Plato set forth his doctrine of ideas in the form of a reversal of Homer; but thereby he established the framework within which such turning operations are not far-fetched possibilities but predetermined by the conceptual structure itself. The development of philosophy in late antiquity in the various schools, which fought one another with a fanaticism unequaled in the pre-Christian world, consists of turnings-about and shifting emphases on one of two opposite terms, made possible by Plato’s separation of a world of mere shadowy appearance and the world of eternally true ideas. He himself had given the first example in the turning from the cave to the sky. When Hegel finally, in a last gigantic effort, had gathered together into one consistent self-developing whole the various strands of traditional philosophy as they had developed from
Plato's original concept, the same splitting up into two conflicting schools of thought, though on a much lower level, took place, and right-wing and left-wing, idealistic and materialistic Hegelians could for a short while dominate philosophical thought.

The significance of Kierkegaard's, Marx's, and Nietzsche's challenges to the tradition—though none of them would have been possible without the synthesizing achievement of Hegel and his concept of history—is that they constitute a much more radical turning-about than the mere upside-down operations with their weird oppositions between sensualism and idealism, materialism and spiritualism, and even immanentism and transcendentalism imply. If Marx had been merely a "materialist" who brought Hegel's "idealism" down to earth, his influence would have been as short-lived and limited to scholarly quarrels as that of his contemporaries. Hegel's basic assumption was that the dialectical movement of thought is identical with the dialectical movement of matter itself. Thus he hoped, to bridge the abyss which Descartes had opened between man, defined as res cogitans, and the world, defined as res extensa, between cognition and reality, thinking and being. The spiritual homelessness of modern man finds its first expressions in this Cartesian perplexity and the Pascalian answer. Hegel claimed that the discovery of the dialectical movement as a universal law, ruling both man's reason and human affairs and the inner "reason" of natural events, accomplished even more than a mere correspondence between intellectus and res, whose coincidence pre-Cartesian philosophy had defined as truth. By introducing the spirit and its self-realization in movement, Hegel believed he had demonstrated an ontological identity of matter and idea. To Hegel, therefore, it would have been of no great importance whether one started this movement from the viewpoint of consciousness, which at one moment begins to "materialize," or whether one chose as starting point matter, which, moving in the direction of "spiritualization," becomes conscious of itself. (How little Marx doubted these fundamentals of his teacher appears from the role he ascribed to self-conconsciousness in the form of class-consciousness in history.) In other words, Marx was no more a "dialectical materialist" than Hegel was a
"dialectical idealist"; the very concept of dialectical movement, as Hegel conceived it as a universal law, and as Marx accepted it, makes the terms "idealism" and "materialism" as philosophical systems meaningless. Marx, especially in his earlier writings, is quite conscious of this and knows that his repudiation of the tradition and of Hegel does not lie in his "materialism," but in his refusal to assume that the difference between man and animal life is ratio, or thought, that, in Hegel's words, "man is essentially spirit"; for the young Marx man is essentially a natural being endowed with the faculty of action (ein tätiges Naturwesen), and his action remains "natural" because it consists of laboring—the metabolism between man and nature.11 His turning-about, like Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's, goes to the core of the matter; they all question the traditional hierarchy of human capabilities, or, to put it another way, they ask again what the specifically human quality of man is; they do not intend to build systems or Weltanschauungen on this or that premise.

Since the rise of modern science, whose spirit is expressed in the Cartesian philosophy of doubt and mistrust, the conceptual framework of the tradition has not been secure. The dichotomy between contemplation and action, the traditional hierarchy which ruled that truth is ultimately perceived only in speechless and actionless seeing, could not be upheld under conditions in which science became active and did in order to know. When the trust that things appear as they really are was gone, the concept of truth as revelation had become doubtful, and with it the unquestioning faith in a revealed God. The notion of "theory" changed its meaning. It no longer meant a system of reasonably connected truths which as such had been not made but given to reason and the senses. Rather it became the modern scientific theory, which is a working hypothesis, changing in accordance with the results it produces and depending for its validity not on what it "reveals" but on whether it "works." By the same process, Plato's ideas lost their autonomous power to illuminate the world and the universe. First they became what they had been for Plato only in their relationship to the political realm, standards and measurements, or the regulating, limiting forces of
man's own reasoning mind, as they appear in Kant. Then, after the priority of reason over doing, of the mind's prescribing its rules to the actions of men, had been lost in the transformation of the whole world by the Industrial Revolution—a transformation the success of which seemed to prove that man's doings and fabrications prescribe their rules to reason—these ideas finally became mere values whose validity is determined not by one or many men but by society as a whole in its ever-changing functional needs.

These values in their ex- and inter-changeability are the only "ideas" left to (and understood by) "socialized men." These are men who have decided never to leave what to Plato was "the cave" of everyday human affairs, and never to venture on their own into a world and a life which, perhaps, the ubiquitous functionalization of modern society has deprived of one of its most elementary characteristics—the instilling of wonder at that which is as it is. This very real development is reflected and foreshadowed in Marx's political thought. Turning the tradition upside down within its own framework, he did not actually get rid of Plato's ideas, though he did record the darkening of the clear sky where those ideas, as well as many other presences, had once become visible to the eyes of men.