

Alfredo M. Bonanno
Nicola Abbagnano
Critique of positive existentialism

Introduction

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An evening,
level crossing of Ognina Cannizzaro,
in Catania.

"If one admits that the category of not, a category existing in fact in the spirit, a positive and concrete procedure to weave and systematize our knowledge, is immediately put into action by the presence in us of certain affirmative judgments, and that it comes to mark with its specific character certain thoughts that result from these judgments, one will have with these considerations completely stripped the negation of any negative function. For negation is a refusal of existence. With it a being (or a mode of being) is placed and then rejected into nothingness. If negation is a category, if it is but a seal indifferently placed on certain judgments, how could it annul a being, make it suddenly arise and give it a name and then plunge it back into non-being? If the prior judgments are factual statements, such as those we have taken as an example, the negation must be like a free invention, which detaches us from this wall of positivity that encloses us: it is an abrupt solution of continuity that can in no case result from prior affirmations, an original and irreducible event. But here we are in the sphere of consciousness. And consciousness cannot produce a negation except in the form of consciousness of negation. No category can "inhabit" consciousness and remain there as a thing. The not, as an abrupt intuitive discovery, appears as consciousness (of being) consciousness of not. In a word, if there is being everywhere, not only Nothingness, as Bergson says, is inconceivable, but being could not even derive negation in any case. The necessary condition for it to be possible to say "not" is that non-being is a continuous presence, in us and outside us, it is that nothingness continuously penetrates being. But where does nothingness come from? And if it is the first condition of the questioning attitude and, more generally, of any philosophical or scientific research, what is the first relationship of the human being

with nothingness, what is the first annulling conduct? [...]. We are immediately tempted to consider being and non-being as two complementary components of reality, in the manner of shadow and light; it would be a question, in short, of two strictly contemporary notions that unite in such a way in the production of existents, that it would be vain to consider them in isolation. Pure being and pure non-being would be two abstractions, and only their union would be the basis of concrete realities. Such is certainly Hegel's point of view. In the Logic, in fact, he studies the relationship between being and non-being and defines this Logic "the system of pure determinations of thought. [...] The real concrete for Hegel is the existing, with its essence, is the totality produced by the synthetic integration of all the abstract moments that are overcome in it in demanding their fulfillment. In this sense, being is the most abstract and poorest abstraction, if we consider it in itself, that is, devoid of its transition to essence. In fact: "Being relates to essence as the immediate to the mediate. Things, in general, 'are' but their being consists in the manifestation of their essence." Being passes into essence; this can be expressed by saying, "Being presupposes essence." Although essence appears, in relation to being, as mediated, nevertheless essence is the true origin. Being returns to its foundation: "being surpasses itself in essence." Thus being separated from essence, which is its foundation, becomes "mere empty immediacy." And this is precisely how the Phenomenology of Spirit defines it, which presents pure being "from the point of view of truth" as the immediate. If the principle of logic is to be the immediate, one will find that principle in being, which is "the indeterminacy that precedes all determination, the indeterminate as the absolute starting point." But immediately the being thus indeterminate "passes into its opposite." "This pure being," writes Hegel in the Little Logic, "is the pure abstraction, and, consequently, the absolute negation which, also taken in its immediate moment, is non-being." In fact, the nothing is not perhaps, simple identity with itself, complete emptiness, absence of determinations and content? Pure being and pure nothingness are therefore the same thing. Or rather it is true to say that they differ. But always according to Hegel, "since here the difference is not yet determined, because being and non-being constitute the immediate moment, this difference for now cannot be defined, it is a pure opinion". This means concretely that "there is nothing in heaven or on earth that does not contain in itself being and nothingness." Being] is reduced with Hegel to a manifestation of the existent. Being is connected to essence, which is its foundation and origin. All of Hegel's theory is based on the idea that a philosophical procedure is necessary to find at the origin of logic the immediate from the mediate, the abstract from the concrete that grounds it. But we have already noted that being is not related to the phenomenon as the abstract is to the concrete. Being is not one "structure among others", a moment of the object, it is the very condition of all structures and all moments, it is the foundation on which the characters of the phenomenon are manifested. Likewise, it is not admissible that the being of things "consists in the manifestation of their essence." For then a being of this being would be necessary. On the other hand, if the being of things "consisted" in manifesting, it would not be understood how Hegel could fix a pure moment of being, where we would find no trace of this first structure. It is true that pure being is fixed by the intellect, isolated and individualized in its determinations. But if the transition to the essence constitutes the primary character of being and if the intellect is limited to "determine and persevere in the determinations," it is not understood how it does not determine being precisely as "consisting in manifesting". It will be said that, for Hegel, every determination is negation. But in this way the intellect would limit itself to denying that its object is other than what it is. This is enough, no doubt, to embarrass any dialectical process, but it should not be enough to make even the germs of overcoming disappear. Insofar as being surpasses itself in something else it escapes the determinations of the intellect, but insofar as it surpasses itself, that is, it is in the innermost part of its being the origin of its passing, it must instead appear as it is to the intellect which configures it in its essential determinations. To affirm that being is only what it is should at least mean leaving being intact insofar as it is its own overcoming. Here is the ambiguity of the Hegelian notion of "overcoming" which seems now a development from the depths of the being considered, now an external movement by which this being is dragged. It is not enough to

affirm that the intellect finds in being only what it is, it is still necessary to explain how being, which is what it is, can only be that: such an explanation would draw its legitimacy from the consideration of the phenomenon of being as such and not from the intellect's denial procedures. Heidegger, in his most important work, has demonstrated the legitimacy of the questioning of being; this no longer has the character of scholastic universality that it retained in Hegel; there is a sense of being that must be clarified: a "preontological understanding" of being that is closely linked to all the conduct of "human reality," that is, to all its projects. Likewise, the aporias that arise when a philosopher arrives at the problem of nothingness all prove to be without scope: their value lies only in limiting the use of the intellect, and simply showing that the problem is not within the competence of the intellect. There are, on the other hand, numerous attitudes of "human reality" that imply an "understanding" of nothingness: hatred, prohibition, regret, etc. There is also for the "Dasein" a continuous possibility of being "in front" of nothingness and discover it as a phenomenon: the anguish. However, Heidegger, while establishing the possibility of a concrete perception of nothingness, does not fall into Hegel's error, he does not give non-being a being, not even an abstract being: nothingness is not, it is annulled. It is sustained and conditioned by transcendence. [...] Every determination, for Heidegger, is overcoming, because it requires a retreat, a stance. This overcoming of the world, a condition of the formation of the world as such, the "Dasein" performs it in the direction of itself. In fact, the characteristic of hypeseity (Selbstheit) is that man is always separated from what he is by the whole volume of being that he is not. He announces himself to himself from the other side of the world and goes back to internalize himself in himself, starting from the horizon: man is "a being of distances". It is precisely in the movement of internalization, which traverses the whole of him, that being is formed and organized as a world, even if there is no priority of movement over world, or of world over movement. But this appearance of the self beyond the world, that is, beyond the totality of the real, is an emergence of "human reality" in nothingness. Only in nothingness can the overcoming of being be completed. At the same time, precisely from the point of view of the self beyond the world, being is organized in the world, and this means, on the one hand, that human reality is formed as an emergence of being in non-being, and on the other hand that the world is "in suspension" in nothingness. Anguish is the discovery of this double and perpetual annulment. And it is precisely from this overcoming of the world that Dasein realizes the contingency of the world, that

is, it poses the problem: "On the basis of what is there something rather than nothing?". The contingency of the world thus appears to human reality insofar as it has placed itself in nothingness in order to perceive it. Here, then, is the nothingness that surrounds being on all sides and, at the same time, is expelled from it: here is the nothingness given as that by which the world receives its world contours. Can this solution satisfy us? Certainly it cannot be denied that the apprehension of the world as world is annulling. The world, by appearing as world, presents itself as non-being that it is. The necessary counterpart of this apprehension is therefore the emergence of "human reality" from nothingness. But where does the power that human reality has to emerge from non-being come from?

Undoubtedly Heidegger is right to insist on the fact that negation draws its foundation from nothingness. But, if nothingness grounds negation, it also encloses within itself as its essential structure the not. In other words, it is not as an undifferentiated void or as otherness that poses itself as otherness that nothingness grounds negation. Nothingness is at the origin of negative judgment because it is itself negation. It founds negation as an act, because it is negation as being. Nothingness cannot be nothing except by expressly annulling itself as nothingness of the world: that is, by expressly directing itself, in its annulment, towards this world, in order to constitute itself as a refusal of the world. Nothingness carries being in its womb. But in what sense does emergence explain this annulling refusal? It is certainly not transcendence, which is "projection of itself beyond...", that can ground nothingness; on the contrary, it is nothingness that is in the very bosom of transcendence and conditions it. Now, the characteristic of Heideggerian philosophy is to use in the description of Dasein positive terms that conceal implicit negations. The Dasein outside itself, "in the world" is a "being of the distances", is

"restlessness", is "its possibilities", etc.. All this means that Dasein "is not" in itself, "is not" with respect to itself in immediate proximity, and "surpasses" the world insofar as it posits itself as non-being in itself and as non-being the world. In this sense Hegel is right against Heidegger when he states that spirit is the negative. Only one can ask both the one and the other the same question under barely different forms; we must say to Hegel, "Is it not enough to posit the spirit as the mediation and the negative, must negativity be shown as the structure of the spirit's being in order to constitute itself as the negative?" We may ask Heidegger, "If negation is the first structure of transcendence, what must be the first structure of 'human reality' in order for it to 'transcend the world'?" In both cases we are shown a negating activity and do not bother to ground this activity in a negative being. Heidegger, moreover, makes nothingness a kind of intentional correlative of transcendence itself, as an original structure. But, furthermore, what is the use of affirming that nothingness founds negation, if one then comes to formulate a theory of non-being that hypothetically deprives nothingness of any concrete negation, if I emerge from nothingness beyond the world, how can this extra-worldly nothingness found the small brackets of non-being that we encounter at every moment in the bosom of being. I say that "Peter is not there," that "I have no more money," etc., and that "I have no more money. Is it really necessary to go beyond the world towards nothingness and then return to the bosom of being in order to establish these daily judgments? And how can this operation be carried out? It is not at all a question (in this case) of making the world slide into nothingness, but simply, keeping within the limits of being, of refusing an attribute to a subject. Will it then be said that every attribute refused, every being denied is grasped by one and the same extra-worldly nothingness, that non-being is like the fullness of what is not, that the World is suspended in non-being, like the real in the bosom of the possible? In this case it would be necessary for every negation to have a particular overcoming: the overcoming of being towards the other. But isn't this surpassing precisely the Hegelian mediation? And haven't we already asked Hegel in vain for the annulling foundation of mediation? [One] cannot conceive of nothingness outside of being, as a complementary and abstract notion or as an infinite medium where being would be in suspension. It is necessary that nothingness be given in the intimate of being, so that one can perceive that particular kind of reality which we have called negativity. But being-in-itself cannot produce this intra-worldly nothingness: the notion of being as first positivity does not contain nothingness as one of its structures. And on the other hand it cannot be said to exclude it: it is without relation to it. Hence the problem that arises, now with a particular instance: if nothingness cannot be conceived either outside or from being, and if, on the other hand, being non-being, it cannot draw from itself the necessary force to "cancel itself", where does nothingness come from? It is therefore important that the questioner always has the possibility of detaching himself from the causal series that constitute being and can only produce being. If we were to admit that the question is determined in the questioner by universal determinism, it would cease to be not only intelligible, but also conceivable. A real cause, in fact, produces a real effect and the being caused is initially, immersed by the cause in positivity: to the extent that he depends, in his being, on the cause, there could not be in him the slightest germ of anything; insofar as the questioner must be able to accomplish in relation to the questioned a kind of annulling retreat, he escapes from the causal order of the world, he frees himself from being. This means that, with a twofold movement of annulment, he annuls the questioned in relation to himself, placing him in a neutral stage, between being and non-being - and he annuls himself in relation to the questioned by detaching himself from being, in order to be able to give birth from himself to the possibility of non-being. Thus, with the question, a certain amount of negativity is introduced into the world: we see nothingness looming over the world, coloring things. And at the same time, the question comes from a questioner who justifies himself in his being as a questioner by detaching himself from being. It is therefore, by definition, a human process. Man presents himself, at least in this case, as a being who makes nothingness appear in the world, insofar as he invests himself with non-being for this purpose. These observations can serve us as a guiding thread to examine the negativities of which we spoke earlier. There is no doubt that these are transcendent realities: distance, for example, imposes itself on

us as something that must be taken into account, that must be overcome with effort. Therefore, these realities are of a particular nature: they immediately indicate an essential relationship of human reality to the world. They draw their origin from an act of the human being or from an expectation or from a project; they all indicate an aspect of being as it appears to the human being who engages in the world. And the relations of man with the world indicated by the negativities have nothing in common with the a posteriori relations that develop from our empirical activity. Nor are they those relations of use by which the objects of the world are discovered, according to Heidegger, to "human reality." Rather, all negativity appears as one of the essential conditions of the relation of use. In order for the totality of being to be ordered around us in forms of use, in order for it to be subdivided into differentiated complexes that refer back to one another and that can serve, negation must arise, not as one thing among others, but as a categorical rubric, to preside over the arrangement and division of the great masses of being into things. The appearance of man in the midst of the being that "invests him" causes a world to be discovered. But the "essential and primordial" moment of this apparition is negation. Thus we have reached the first objective of our study: man is the being for whom nothingness comes into the world. But this question immediately provokes another: What must man be in his being in order that nothingness may come into being through him? Being can only generate being, and if man is involved in this process of generation, only being will be born of it. If he is to be able to formulate an inquiry into this process, that is, to question it, he must be able to hold it in view as a whole, that is, to place himself outside of being and at the same time to affirm the structure of being, of being. However, it is not given to "human reality" to annul, even temporarily, the mass of being that is placed before it. Instead, it can modify its relations with this being. For it, to put a particular existing being out of field is to put itself out of field in relation to this existing being. In this case it escapes it, it has put itself out of reach, it has withdrawn beyond a nothingness. To this possibility of human reality to produce a nothingness that isolates it, Descartes, after the Stoics, gave a name: freedom. But freedom is but a word. If we want to penetrate deeper into the question, we must not be satisfied with this answer, and we must ask ourselves at once: What is human freedom if through it nothingness comes into the world?"

(J.-P.- Sartre, *L'essere e il nulla*, tr. it., Milan 1968, pp. 46-62).

Introduction

By chance, when I was fifteen years old, Abbagnano's *History of Philosophy* was a guide book for six months of total immersion. For me, that book, with all the shortcomings that later became clear to me, was as if the messenger of an unknown world had appeared at the door, telling me that elsewhere, in completely unknown territories, there were young people who, around a teacher, were talking about things that I did not know and that fascinated me as they fascinate all mysteries beyond our reach.

So those pages took on the task of ferrying me into a world that I suddenly realized corresponded to my innermost desires, the world of philosophy, where I installed myself in a short time trying to understand where the mysterious heart that I felt pulsing resided. Ignorance and knowledge acted in concert on me, one soliciting the other, and vice versa, operating in different registers and making me face efforts that otherwise, i.e. not solicited in this mysterious and alchemical way, would have been impossible for me. The livid horizon of many philosophical theories, often difficult almost for their own sake, excited me to a struggle, to a cosmic conflict where I ended up preferring the illegible Aristotle to the readable Plato. What did it matter to me, who had by now bitten the fruit of knowledge, that I hardly understood most of it? Nothing, I went on anyway, and so my great hunger for knowledge imperceptibly suggested a method that many years later I learned had something to do with hermeneutics. That book was Abbagnano's - as I found out later - in a manner of speaking, being in essence a workshop product,

revised and arranged by the master craftsman, but what importance could it have for me? My physiological condition was more or less that of a sponge, there was no reading at the time that I did not quickly absorb, composing and recomposing the various parts in a continually boiling whole. Lightning-fast outlines, stenographic notes, diagrams and summaries, logical formulas and technical memorizations, an incredible jumble that shredded and recomposed Abbagnano's work, together with the immediately successive readings of Windelband and De Ruggiero. I have given an account of this adventure in the Introduction to the two volumes of (misplaced) Lectures on the History of Philosophy; it is not worth discussing it here.

Abbagnano, seen through (his) History of Philosophy was not at the time what one might call a novelty. The method and the choices were dated and traced a stale pragmatism, but for me, who could not know, it was fine. It opened up a perspective for me and that was excellent. Perhaps a teacher in the flesh would have opened my eyes to the many phony obstacles that I considered insuperable, but since the old priest, a friend of my father's, who had given me Latin and Greek lessons since I was eight years old, was tired of dealing with my engorged greed, I couldn't ask him either. So I became, taking possession of the endless matter that lay supine in that book, impatient of all advice and ready to make judgments that for the most part sounded at least strange. I had become an annoying and know-it-all young scholar, but I wasn't going to stop. Constitutionally lacking that presumed infallible shrewdness that characterizes know-it-alls, I was a know-it-all, but passing through, I never stayed in a cultural possession for long, I immediately put it back into play and therefore I damned it to get lost in an ever new adventure.

So I was quick to notice what wasn't in the book and to go looking for it. There was no culture outside philosophy, no poetry, no literature, no music, no science, no mathematics; in short, the world was missing, while everything seemed to revolve around the trappings of licensed philosophers. There could be no better invitation for me. To go elsewhere, to return to my thirteen volumes of Vallardi (*Storia Letteraria d'Italia*), to be amazed by sociology, to return to music, to be amazed by mathematics, and more. In short, Abbagnano had opened up an extraordinary universe to me and I, in a short time, had come to the conclusion that instead of being crowded it was too monotonous, it needed to be enlarged. I was amazed that he did not accuse himself of partiality, laziness and approximation. In this bizarre condition I persisted for all the years necessary to check these gaps in person, directly at the source.

Mine was not audacity, it was a self-confident project, immediately provided with cruel and ferocious comparisons with other authors much more rooted in the international culture of poor Abbagnano. Of course I was putting my feet in the plate, but it was a habit for me. Having taken possession of a knowledge, it immediately seemed to me asphyxiated and I tried to breathe elsewhere, in the harmonic correspondences that I thought were in another place. It wasn't really like that, but what did I care? Palpable was only the knowledge that I was acquiring by not dwelling on it like a dead body. Other, I was looking for other, what I was looking for I didn't know, and I don't know it even now. It was certainly not existentialism that I was looking for, I was still moving in the Crocian sphere, with some peripheral reading of Gentile.

The constant bubbling of readings was tearing Abbagnano's framework to pieces, replacing it with schemes that bore the indication that visitors were not welcome. I dramatized my solitary adventure and enriched it with heroic and insipid examples. In the end Abbagnano, in the form of a book, or rather of the only book of his that I had read, proved to be obtuse, while my exasperated pretensions spread in a certain exaggeration, in a refined clash between what I knew and what I wanted to know, in unusual and increasingly elephantine disproportions. I had almost nothing left of the book, much

instead I was investing in the person, obviously hypothetical, not being able to write letters or declarations of love to great men, presumed such. I had, after all, too much self-respect to do such a thing.

I had to set aside judgments and choices, and that was much more difficult. It required comparisons and weighing out of my reach. So I slowly began to carve out tiny frank territories, gradually resolving contrasts with direct readings of small passages or whole works of modest size. One example, The Discourse on Method. Annotations in the margins of the texts helped me to put new questions on the table. But who could give me the answers? Moreover, they were vague questions, sometimes overflowing or lacking a worthy topic. Peregrine and strange, some resolvable in hypothetical oppositions, often brief, sometimes more consistent, ephemeral but not stupid, according to what later became my more acclimatized judgment. I wasn't arguing one thesis but many at once, I wasn't describing states of mind but impulses and primal forces were giving themselves the same appointment in those annotated margins. The ultimate purpose was non-existent, I was moving blindly.

I was moving towards two existential conditions, the positive one of accumulation - knowledge, titles, social recognition - and the negative one of marginalization, directed towards preferring the particular to the general. I was beginning to be annoyed by the great systems, architecturally protected, which I did not yet know well but which I sensed were only available to convey better than others in the massacre, for example Schelling, strangely enough even more than Hegel. The unities held together by the connective force of the great intellectual undertakings made me suspicious and angry, perhaps because my parallel, modestly compiling fantasies had more or less failed or never really begun. The note in the margin thus grew in importance until, in the new draft, it was transferred to an autonomous writing, charged with a different meaning, tending to be extraneous to the heavy debt position of the beginning.

Like many others, I was influenced by the post-war period, a period of new and powerful decadence, when the old values shattered by the world conflict had not yet been recomposed into new mythologies, as would happen in the Sixties. And I reflected this generalized condition in my reading of philosophy, through Abbagnano's reductive prism.

I thought a different path was possible, practically a vagabond one, going in search of philosophical plots - even the historicism from which I was still affected could lend itself to use - scattered elsewhere, an infinite collecting wandering, with the aim of silencing my adventurous eagerness for knowledge and accumulating an alternative possession, not codified in Abbagnano's argumentative prudence. I dreamed of finding wild places - Baudelaire at that time was one of them - where it was not easy to understand the exact starting point of a path in the forest and where it would get bogged down, in a rhythmic and content ambiguity. I imagined breaking down every theory, starting with Aristotle and logic, and going down into the individual mechanisms, discovering appearances and laying bare the tricks that must have been there but of which the impassive Abbagnano was silent. I was reflecting on the road to take in order to dissolve that sense of suffocation caused by the theories capable of giving answers to everything, of organizing and commanding instead of making available, of giving.

Certainly I did not distinguish well what was new and important in each theory, the central nucleus to be safeguarded at all costs, and this was the reason why more and more often I fell back on the method, having little to say about the merit. Aristotle and not Plato. I couldn't get out of this reductive subjection - precision above all - by clinging to Abbagnano's book, I had to get rid of it. I couldn't do it on the spur of the moment, so I decided to go to Turin and confront him directly. But it was not easy, my job in a bank and the lack of an adequate degree prevented me from doing so. Solving these two

problems took a few years, but in the end, I succeeded. It would be silly to go over the painful journey of these instrumental efforts here, so I'll put it aside.

At the same time, my traces remained in the unknown, my improvised miniatures that were becoming more and more substantial, my cross-cuts in search of another meaning, not better but different. I was thus discovering that many people had found themselves in my condition of irregularity and that these had become a great number in periods of decadence such as the one in which I lived. I thus acquired a new sensitivity for identifying them. I began to orient myself in the reading of poetic and philosophical documents that would later be the basis of my *Essays on Existentialism* (Trieste, 2013). From Abbagnano, historian of philosophy, to Abbagnano, philosopher, the step was not short. In between there were other thinkers, more or less interesting, including Enzo Paci. The latter would deserve a long discourse that I cannot give here or anywhere else, as I do not have the time. This group had allowed itself to be imprisoned, with greater or lesser consent, in the positive sphere of existentialism, some of them pawing - Preti, Vedaldi - others bowing their heads - Chiodi and others. They did not tell me much, whether they were satisfied with their position or not, whether they went to phenomenological, Marxist, or not.

I needed a beginning, I was myself an incomplete beginning, I needed an icon somewhere, I couldn't be satisfied with a choir member, I couldn't just accept the pages written a hundred years earlier. This nagging transferred to the intensification of the readings but stuck at the crux of the choices. Where should I turn? In the absence of authoritative indications, I always returned to my methodological choices that made me feel safer, even if they did not fully satisfy me.

Even the encounter with Zarathustra did not say much to me, perhaps because of the translation or, to put it better, my ignorance of German. I felt that the era still spoke of those problems, the detail of those problems, no longer the pretended safe distinctions of Croce, I felt that I would have been happier among the pages of Gentile, but these were unfamiliar to me and the fascist connotation of its author bothered me, even if there was no precise leftist political coloring in me. Feeling just myself, with the company of the tremendous willpower that drove me to take hold of knowledge, I tended to sever the various ideal ties I was building in the course of my readings, as these ties became more solid and detailed and thus threatened to suffocate me.

After all, my encounter with Abbagnano was conflictual from the very first moment, because of this solitary choice of mine, a singularity that has never left me again throughout my life. I refused to be functional to a teacher, even if chosen by me, it seemed to me to be demeaning, and I pretended to be the one to give him the rhythm and not to receive it. I was therefore refractory to the role of learner and I was too well prepared to be caught in the role - which would have been more congenial to me - of an ignorant person reluctant to any education. I had the temerity of recklessness and perhaps even the most absolute disinterest in any form of career. Every day a singular manifestation occurred, attempts were made on my part to get me into trouble, and the failure of these attempts reinforced my idiosyncratic conviction that I was elsewhere.

I proceeded alone, that's the reality, and even with the specific German there were few instances in which I could be caught off guard. But this singularity eventually became a prison where I locked myself up every night after work, furiously trying to find that knowledge that would set me free and instead doing nothing more than turning the key in the cell lock. I ran the risk of becoming complacent with this solitude and not finding units of orientation to understand where I was going. The examples I had around me suggested the idea of a guide, at most of becoming a guide myself, after appropriate assessments of acquiescence, no one was telling me to go on alone. For my part, I didn't know yet, and

I would have learned it at a high price, that going on like this requires perfect lucidity and costs a lot in terms of life.

I didn't need any prodding and, by the same token, I didn't take any cautionary advice. To tell the truth, there was no such advice, but some indirect suggestion managed to filter through the curtain of my reluctance. In the end I ran the risk of becoming enmeshed in the gloom of someone who wants to empty the sea with a bucket. What saved me was the very multiplicity and chaotic nature of the readings. The coldness and detachment of the methodology, at that moment congenial to me as a matter of mere ignorance, were crumbling with the reading of French and Russian poets and men of letters, anything but cold or camouflaged in their estrangement from the world. Turning around the problem, I couldn't help but be attracted by existentialism, even if Abbagnano's version seemed to me, albeit from a distance, a form of euphemism that diminished the importance of the French and German versions.

I was not particularly attracted by the novelty, which was not entirely new in the advanced fifties, nor by the decadent modernity of some of the research I was doing. I was fascinated by the problem of being in all its nuances and I felt that none of the three current directions could have satisfied me, neither Sartre nor Heidegger nor Abbagnano. The nullism of the first seemed to continually apologize for its extreme choices, the linguistic analysis of the second seemed to me directed to demonstrate precisely the cancellation of being, the positivity of the third reminded me - wrongly - Croce and this for a former Crocian, was not a good presentation. The first two were ingenious, the second was even fascinating in its ability to dissect language and make it speak, the third was a premature aging, slow, without shocks, a kind of retirement sinecure. I chose the third for the simple reason that I couldn't choose the other two. Going to Paris would have been materially impossible for me and attending Heidegger was going against two obstacles, the ostracism he was subjected to because of his Nazi past and the language.

Going to Turin was still madness, but at least it was a feasible madness. And so I began to read Abbagnano's three canonical books: Introduction to Existentialism, Positive Existentialism and Religion, Philosophy, Science, which are the analytical object of this book, written more than fifty years later on notes and margin notes made at the time. The impact was fiercely negative, I say the one with the books, the next one with the person was better. Pleasant and captivating as he was, although lacking the intellectual acumen that characterizes men of genius. But let's go in order. I don't want to use the dull colors of my current palette to talk about the man, I want to close the accounts with the philosopher, that's all.

Mine was a rising sun, warm and full of thrills, his was a waning sun, badly aged, eager to make a mark somewhere in philosophy. I was devoid of purpose and scruples, he was full of both, as well as many additional aspects, which I discovered little by little, certainly not sympathetic. I hated refinements and nuances as much as he loved them, and I lived uncomfortably with a scholastic condition that always gave me weight and annoyance. I didn't care much for the positive acquisitions made in installments, the promises of future salaries, the neurosis of the expectations of prizes to come, the confessions of passions that I knew were as tepid as my own were ardent. I accumulated in an erroneous way - agreed - but I shunned cathartic fraudulence or ineffable inspired attitudes. I had no fixed ideas and did not consider myself an aspiring philosopher. I didn't accept passwords or even more or less long-term anointments or investitures. I was extremist and extreme and always held the gauntlet.

Behind me there was the complete absence of a tradition to protect, of stale acquisitions, in short, life was all in front of me, I could look at my destiny even without understanding it. That's why I was searching and not selecting, I was also looking for what would have damaged me and made it difficult

to go on, I was looking for the search itself, I was in love with my efforts, with the nights spent on books since I was a child, with the sense of power that the progressive acquisition of knowledge gives. I risked myself in the existentialist adventure as others saw in it an accommodation for life. My recklessness was spontaneous because it was dictated by the lack of ulterior motives, while that of others was fictitious because it was imposed by precise goals to be reached, hindered and conditioned by them.

The lack of method is not a real absence, an emptiness, it corresponds to the material being investigated and penetrated, my work therefore had more the air of a violent hand-to-hand combat than that of a real investigation. One cannot face a clash with such varied and preponderant forces without consequences on the concrete way in which one comes to terms with these forces. I dealt with philosophy precisely because this was the way I experienced what I was dealing with, my furious research. Whatever the object, it was the way I dealt with it that made it philosophical, made it part of my philosophy, part of my being. That is why the search for being ended up becoming central and, accidentally, even taking the name of philosophy of existence or existentialism. In this context, in the no-holds-barred, life-or-death struggle for learning, it was not just a matter of what I came to possess but primarily how I came to possess it. So, in the end, by making this acquisition my own, I found it difficult to distinguish what had become mine from what was not mine before. Each acquisition grew in me and was regenerated to the point of risking appropriating knowledge that I could not actually claim to possess in full, but only superficially.

I didn't have the ability to regress in the acquired knowledge in order to give it a clear and functional order and address to the realization of a purpose. Therefore, I lacked the ability to repair the leaks, to provide the necessary repairs, to establish foundations that were sometimes shaky. What threatened to remain obscure remained so and only accidentally and suddenly could receive a luminous flow from an unexpected source of unsuspected origin.

Far from me the concept of positivity, long and carefully elaborated by Abbagnano. I problematized all my acquisitions, not being able to insert them in a functional way in an overall context capable of receiving them, becoming more and more complete. I ended up giving life to intervention devices, that is, occasions of acceptance that provided provisional means and conditions of understanding, not real codified knowledge. Exactly the opposite happened to Abbagnano, who scraped together contributions by placing them in a bank deposit where they all gave more or less a modest three percent of income. I could never know what part of my already known self was willing to accept the new cognitive arrival and where he wanted or could place it. In fact, this particular receptive form has never changed throughout my life and therefore cannot be considered a childhood disease.

Each new element, even if chosen in a way that conformed to other previous elements, could never place itself in a set of rules and constraints that made it productive not only of new connections and reflections unthinkable before, but also of new rules and new constraints. Mine was not what one would call a scientific discourse; I had neither the inclination nor the ability. If he had wanted to, Abbagnano could have made a corrective contribution in this direction. He did not and perhaps could not. My personal monster grew out of all proportion, or rather, it grew within itself and was not validated or rationalized by an external unitary force, let alone an internal one, the latter absolutely opposed by myself. Devoid of paradigmatic meter I lacked an orientation. Later, much later, having arrived at an orientation, of which I spoke in the Treatise of Futility, I did not, albeit accidentally, receive stable paradigms capable of providing fixed articulations to my arguments.

I did not possess a theoretical structure identifiable with certainty, everything was possible, everything was in the process of formation, the accumulation of one day could be unrelated to that of the previous day and the connections inevitably provisional. I did not have the strength to address a theory from a solidified platform, I worked from below, from the lowest level, addressing the past without shyness but also without any authority. Devoid of a project, I was rich in means and techniques, among the latter those of memorization, and I thought, erroneously, that they, together with purely intellectual means, could replace it. Basically, I was an undisciplined omnivorous animal, not sharing any common matrix with that hypothetical union of the experts in philosophy, if we want to keep in the field that I was most concerned with.

Not knowing the main models to which the aforementioned experts continually referred implicitly in their theories, I was unconsciously free, as a butterfly is free to beat as it wants on a glass without crossing it. No uniformity of research, no sustainable judgments from the outside, no sacred traditions somehow introjected. The entire collection of arrivals was not pertinent to a model, less than ever to the existentialist one, it wandered gradually in an ever-widening galaxy that could not define its own boundaries. Not only the absence of rules, but also the absence of a priori correspondences, or pre-established projects. Every single theory certainly entered into an abstract partition, that of Abbagnano, including the latter's blunders. The one on Meinecke was sensational. But these partitions were, for me, groundless, empty ordering concepts, cases summarized together to make a category of themselves, convenient repeatability, tacit compartments for initiates. For me, uninitiated by definition, they were meaningless.

However, each arrival, each cognitive contribution, as a case in itself, even if I realized that, for example, many other philosophers derived from Plato, without for this reason fixing exactly the family of idealists. I was therefore ready to clear a theory from one grouping to another without giving it too much thought. These approximations horrified Abbagnano, and yet they were the constant way in which cognitive possession entered me, in my body, shaping me in a varied and concrete way, even if not directly catalogued from the outside. So it was not just a limitation due to my wild cultural state, or perhaps it was at first, then it became a way of being, my way of being, which in turn held up and provided meaning to my life.

I was being asked to normalize my attack potential in order to better manage myself, subjecting myself to the obvious school discipline that I was practically unfamiliar with despite my two high school diplomas, which authorized me access to university faculties. I had always been my own teacher, or almost, and now I had decided to choose one of my own, among the best - I thought - around. Many mistakes, one on top of the other. I had to put myself aside and focus on a learner's behavior that would distort me.

But my rejection, culminating after almost a year of suffering in the abandonment, could not have had only this motivation. After all, I was a hell of a machine and could have adapted to encompass any cognitive project. There was more to it than that. Disappointment in the first place. Not with regard to myself, that is, not being able to bow my head and put to good use the many sacrifices I had made that in perspective could open up the oppressive chain of work like few others, which I have never been disappointed in, but with regard to the myth I had chosen for myself. I simply had the wrong person or, as I later clarified, I had made a mistake in identifying the very possibility of a myth materializing in a philosopher in the flesh. Perhaps in a theory - and over the years I've realized that even this is not possible - but never in a man.

But I didn't give in right away. In almost a year, I had several opportunities to better explain my way of working. Incomprehensible reluctance on the other side. We could talk about anything, even about finding traces of existentialism in unexpected places, but not about method, or better, about a method that denied the rigidity of any method, not because of a theoretical bias but because of a physiological necessity, a real way of being alive, of breathing, of desiring. I wasn't declaring the discovery of something new, I was just explaining how I was made, I didn't want to alter the canonical forms of research, I was just asking him to verify with me a different way, maybe wrong, but to declare it as such and convince me to abandon it, he needed to put his feet on it. Nothing doing.

My explanation - which could not be called a method - was that the cognitive influxes had to remain free to associate and dissociate as they pleased, according to mutual suggestions and not according to pre-established scholastic categories. In this way they provided mutual support by fluctuating freely. Only to do this they needed an enormous amount of incoming cognitive material, huge and heterogeneous. If the acquisition had been sclerotized within one discipline, scholastically whole, let's say philosophy, the mechanism of mutual support would have jammed.

It seems to me necessary to underline here the concept of discontinuity that characterized, and in many ways casts its last reflections even today, my way of approaching knowledge. Not the discovery of truths but the free conflict of theories and facts, mutually convertible, not the revisitation of systematic structures to make room for new knowledge, but the continuous upheaval of reciprocal balances without worrying about their being plausible or acceptable in a pre-established perspective. Faced with this process characterized by the movement of arrivals rather than by the statics of cataloguing, I did not have the slightest knowledge of a government that was extraneous to the whole, a hypothesis of external regiment, of something that in some way, unknown to me, would keep the whole thing running by optimizing the results in the perspective of a theoretical goal to be achieved. From the point of view of discontinuity, I had only temporary and partial controls, immediately given to results that I had to decide whether to accept or not, and in any case to keep aside while waiting for future transformations. In the end, this continuous movement produced ungovernable chaotic upheavals and, in many ways, it still does.

My discontinuity unconsciously proposed a renunciation of the power of management that any structured cognitive organization guarantees at the very moment it is put into place. This is something different and more complex than the philosophically understood system; it is not enclosed in theory but extends to the cognitive whole of a single individual-small or large that this whole may be-to the point of constituting his or her vision of life. There is in the reorganization of inflows, continuous and finalized, an intrinsic form of power that ultimately determines the way of thinking and thus channels the cognitive choices and finalizes them to the management of the goals to be achieved. Ultimately, decidability with regard to inflows connects with purposes and is definitively captured by them.

Abbagnano's positivity was the product of a strong cognitive organization and of a reduction of inflows to scholastic routine, of which his *History of Philosophy*, my jailbird book, was a striking example. It was based on the concept of definitive acquisition, codified in many ways and safeguarded from possible subversive interpretations. It presupposed that something acquired could be demonstrated definitively and by choice become truth, critically approved and subject to modification, but always valid at the appropriate time. Behind all this there was an investigative procedure with objective characteristics, not a personal involvement, an astonishing fact that threw me into discomfort, since I was dealing, after all, with a philosophy of existence, problematic and restless. Only that these last two aspects were enclosed, fearfully, in the statements and not in the facts of life. Here positivity had the

better of them and they preferred to invest in a small publishing house the money earned under the distributive protection of a large publishing complex. What could have disgusted me more?

The philosophical practice of positivity thus led to a profession like any other, professor, publisher, smoke salesman, etc., in short an insertion into the world of positivity protected by the aegis of a kind of small and modest system of thought neither open nor completely sealed. Digging into the main statements one could thus discover the hidden philistine, careful not to take risks or accept games that did not have as a goal the management of his own power, meager and circumscribed, but always attractive.

In the chaotic interweaving of my influxes, a certain cognitive correspondence would suddenly acquire prominence, perhaps dominating the scene for a certain time, but then leaving room for other correspondences that were always new and often opposed to the previous ones. This temporary prominence, however, never came to impose a power of verification or control over the new influxes; it did not make itself the bearer of a superior modeling coherence. Everything could thus turn over into its opposite without achieving any epistemological stability, and this in spite of my contemporary methodological interests. The same influxes of logical content ended up being entangled in the same network and could only present themselves as a further cognitive contribution without extrinsic regulatory claims.

With all this I had no pretensions to constitute an alternative methodological criterion to the dominant one, which would always be a regulatory mode only of a different sign, I just wanted to assert my right to breathe in my own way, because for me knowing was like breathing, I could not condition myself to the point of living with an oxygen tank on my shoulders. I knew, and I know, well that no science can be based on the way I breathe and, conversely, I breathe to live not to lay scientific foundations. I knew, and I know, that the totality of my inflows would not have told others much, but they were unique and only within me did they take the life that I granted them, where it was my existence that allowed theirs and not another entirely different one.

Nor did I have any knowledge of a pure giving to me of the influxes, an autonomous movement that would in this way have the possibility of providing meaning to the acquisitions. It would have been a devious form of episteme while in me there was only the continuous and disordered effort to take possession of knowledge. The rest seemed to me an idle discussion that I only occasionally agreed to explore with myself. From what I did on a daily basis, I could never have the intention of imposing on myself guiding norms or postulates to continue knowing. In other words, I refused to unite in dominant figures the suggestions that the various influxes provided me and, on the contrary, I left the door open for them to interact with other knowledge creating new correspondences and new contradictions. The result was that I was never certain of what I knew, nor in control of the territory of its extent, yet a single reference solicited from me an ever-widening series of connections that, a priori, I would in no way have been able to determine. In the end, what I knew was implicit in the instantaneous connection and it overflowed freely without my wanting to capture it in a determined system.

Abbagnano, as we will see in detail, speaks of finitude and commitment, important words that express positive concepts but that do not find their explanation in this perspective alone, they can be overturned by being specular. It is the underlying project that chooses their content and not vice versa. Man is limited, a fact that does not automatically make him a fighter, other elements must intervene. Positivity casts on finitude an accommodating, sleepy, peaceful halo, so that the commitment placed next to it seems more or less like a walk out the door. On the other hand, the intelligibility of finitude can receive from the problematic nature of existence a very different, negative light, and thus arrive not at

disengagement or apathy but at a different type of commitment that it becomes banal to define with this concept. A little taste. The problematic context - the finitude of human life and of life itself in general - casts an oblique light on a set of problems, among which commitment can also fit, and makes them intelligible in different ways from time to time. There is no intrinsic statute of positivity except by decision of the philosophical demiurge.

In Abbagnano, positivity acts as a metaphor of the world and obeys the law of the transfer of meaning, loading with itself the contexts to which it applies, as happens when examples are made. It is an analogical form of sealing the various contexts that could get lost in the presupposed chaotic nature of the whole. Nothing of the sort could belong to me, at least as a module of behavior to which I could compulsorily conform, I could instead accept it as a simple object of knowledge. Once it was proposed to me as a single unit of measure, a source for the logical construction of the world, I could only reject it. If it had been an external logical element, a comparison and signifier for heterogeneous material to be reorganized, I could also understand and tolerate it, but it possessed something more than its own singularity, it was a sort of sacralizing formula. It was much more than a model, it was worldview in action, not a term of comparison but a foundation. There was nothing in positivity that could be reproduced, it was a unique whole that one had to accept or reject. Rejecting this sacralizing formula meant deactivating it, and that is exactly what I was doing on a daily basis by not suggesting a different analytical horizon but just pointing my toes at every possible opportunity. By reuniting reality in a new problematic context, intelligible and capable of self-reproducing, Abbagnano reset to zero the very problematicity he claimed to want to defend. I think he never realized this contradiction.

Without realizing it, I suggested a naively paradigmatic alternative, I proposed to approach the influx to the previous accumulation or, at least, to the most similar part of this accumulation, in other words, to bring the incoming part closer to the part that had already arrived, assuming - in the wake, this time consciously chosen, of Aristotle - that the part that had arrived first was better known to me than the influx. I don't want to say that I wasn't able to make deductions or inductions at the time. The internal movement that followed the juxtaposition worked by continuously integrating the two methods in an almost involuntary way, but the acquisition was completely casual and didn't respond to any a priori project oriented to reach a precise goal, even if antithetical to Abbagnano's positivity.

Certainly reflecting on the only passage of Aristotle that speaks of the example (*Analitica priora*, 69, a, 13-14) it must be said that for me the part most akin to the influx and best known, because it arrived previously, was not an example, but the functioning of attraction was the same. Today I could better explain the mechanism by talking about analogy, but it would be an update of an effort that at that time I could make only with the forces I possessed not with the ones I possess today.

My stubborn attempt was directed towards making sure that I remained myself, neither positive nor negative, neither Abbagnano nor Sartre. It is not that I did not prefer the latter and the hypothesis of nothingness - as I preferred to call Sartre's nothingness - to the positive solution, and my research intensified in this direction even while remaining close to Abbagnano, but above all I safeguarded my inner integrity, my self-consideration, indispensable elements to sustain the outsized effort to which I submitted myself. This led me to reject both the concept of synthesis and the related concept of higher synthesis. I did not yet understand the Hegelian mechanism well, but I did not accept it even as a provisional working hypothesis and, with the utmost impudence, I accused Abbagnano of wanting to clear customs of something similar, an accusation that was certainly unfair.

The most extensive image that I hypothesized at the time of my cognitive possession was that of a force field moved not only by new influxes but also by internal tensions that were continually being

composed and decomposed without me being warned by an immediately verifiable result. New formations within the field pressed not only at the level of acquisitive availability but also at the level of intensity of acquisition, thus orienting the cognitive processes that did not remain completely random, managing to link up according to correspondences that I could neither control nor foresee.

Was mine a method? Certainly not. Several times, later on, I had the doubt that I had obtained a method without knowing it as a consequence of my studies in logic and methodology. Even now, if I reflect on this doubt, I must conclude that I had neither a conscious nor an unconscious method. It was a way of life, and the acquisition of knowledge corresponded to the most consistent part of this way of life of mine. What I was defending was therefore not a method but my life, not being able to distinguish knowledge from the daily living of my truly inhuman condition of work and study. To be precise, the specific influx came into contact with the force field because this field was my life and here, together with my feelings, pains, labors and fears, it found the corresponding cognitive affinity, the corroborating example, with Aristotle or without him. As we can see, it was not - and is not - possible to formulate a rule from such an operational condition.

In Abbagnano the idea of positivity was not a paradigmatic example, it was a synthesis that allowed to interpret the cognitive influxes directing them towards a goal. The synthesis chooses, selects, accepts and refers, all control procedures that guarantee the functioning of the system. A new influx is thus identified as connected with a previous influx not on the basis of their affinity but on the basis of whether or not they correspond to the idea of positivity that constitutes the synthesis necessary for recognition. This method digs into the knowledge and takes exactly what is needed to complete the system, it does not let the single incoming elements flow freely and randomly. If it did so it would make synthesis impossible.

For my part, I was convinced that the placement of a cognitive influx within the synthesis could be done only by suspending from their significance most of the sense of which the influx was the bearer, that is, forcing it within a reductive scheme before the insertion itself and giving it back a diminished intelligibility but suitable to give it a different sense. The suspension of spontaneous accumulation, as it presented itself to me in my continuous experiences, was proved by the interpretation perfected from time to time in view of the purpose, i.e. the normative stabilization of a positive character. This assignment was therefore not a forcing, on the contrary it appeared completely normal, and this because of the prior reduction of the inflow within the required and known limits. Correspondence thus became automatic, and there was no need from time to time to produce certification of the reductive inclusion.

The strangeness of my condition was that I had no hypothesis to test based on new content that therefore did not undergo any prior selection or contraction, at least so I thought. I didn't realize that a process of reduction was taking place anyway, not in order to defend a thesis but because of the force of attraction exerted by the related content that attracted the new influx. It was not possible for me to suspend the attitude of a cognitive content in an absolute way and assimilate the latter in this abstract condition, an illusory empirical movement that attracted me by considering myself more or less like a coin-operated machine. A discovery that I was to make many years later but that did not revoke my criticism of the positivity of Abbagnano's existentialism.

Even if I maintained the illusion of completeness of cognitive access, this false vision was not the pivot of my controversy as much as the absence, or cancellation, of a dominant a priori hypothesis. That is, there was nothing hypothetical about my constant striving toward knowledge but a simple addition. I could not see the limitations of this reasoning but I could see well that there was no dialectical

mechanism underlying it, no take away and carry away in a higher synthesis. By exposing - more or less as such - the influx to accumulation I was putting it at risk of annihilation and deformation, and of this I was becoming convinced as the force field grew out of all proportion, but I did not intend to subject it to an a priori governing hypothesis. My intelligibility was therefore, in any way you want to consider it, opposite to that of Abbagnano. Even the precomprehension of which Heidegger speaks, known to Abbagnano through Chiodi's intermediation, ended up distorted in the positive mechanism. For Heidegger it was a hermeneutic circle in which the knowledge of the single phenomenon presupposed the knowledge of the whole and vice versa. But the knowledge of the whole, in Abbagnano, intervened only through the dominant synthesis and not as an anticipatory structure of the influx capable of making the latter comprehensible and determinable within the possible of knowledge. In Heidegger there was something else, which Abbagnano did not detect, in that the precomprehension not only selects and determines but also upsets the structure of the influx, adapting it not simply approaching it. It was necessary to see how this precomprehension was formed, whether from the field of forces or from a vicious circle that always presented the same part to enter and exit. For Heidegger, as I later came to understand, the understanding of the influx is possible because the precomprehension affects the new material the indication of belonging to the existential structure of those who seek to understand.

And another thing I came to understand later, much later, that accumulation, precisely because it is a force field, is not a simple summation, nor does it massively oppose the influx, nor does it establish a hermeneutic circle with it, but it is the reciprocal dynamic connection of individual influxes, chaotically set in motion in such a way as to form a whole capable of creating multiple and simultaneous cognitive attractions, both in the face of a single influx and in the face of several simultaneous influxes that press in. There is nothing that stays for a certain time next to it, the same juxtaposition is a way to say what is not perceptible, being the influx a continuous movement and the force field where an unenclosed or sealed entity enters. These two units are not perfectly isolatable except to provide an illusory method of individuation, to know on which territory one is moving and to meet which monstrous entanglement the influx is directed. Considering these movements in the average trend of their knowability, there is not one of them that is fixed in the past and one that is fixed in the present. As the influx takes place the force field enters the matter under learning and recognizes it, that is, it identifies it and, as I said, understanding it late, conditions it allowing it to enter the field as part of an unstoppable constellation.

The time has come to close my accounts with Abbagnano.

Alfredo M. Bonanno

Finished in the prison of Korydallos (Athens) on February 16, 2010

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Rater sa vie, c'est accéder à la poésie - sans le support du talent.

Emil Cioran

"The house has a sunny facade and one in shadow. On this depends the distribution of the "rooms" and, within them, the "arrangement" of furniture according to use. Churches and tombs are arranged according to the rising and setting of the sun - regions of life and death - by which the Essence itself is determined in the world as to the possibilities of being more its own. The caring proper to being (to which, in its being, this being itself always depends) preliminarily discovers the proximities in which it

finds its decisive fulfillment. The preliminary discovery of the proximities is cooriginally determined by the totality of satisfaction to which the usable is referred in its encounter with being. The preliminary usability, inherent in the individual proximities, possesses the character of intimacy without surprises in a sense even more original than the being of the usable. This usability is only ascertained when the prescient environmental vision is taken by surprise by the usable that presents itself in the defective ways of caring. When something is not found in its place, environmental proximity is made explicitly accessible as such. Space, which in the being-in-the-world guided by prescient environmental vision is discovered as the spatiality of the set of means, is always proper to an entity whose place it constitutes. Pure space is still hidden. It is shattered into places. However, this spatiality has its own unity through the totality of worldly fulfillment of the spatial usable. The "world-environment" does not settle in a previously given space; its specific worldliness articulates, in its meaningfulness, the fulfilling complex of each concrete totality of places assigned by the prescient environmental vision. The individual worlds always discover the spatiality of the space that is proper to each of them. The encounter with the usable in its environmental space is ontically possible only because the being itself is "spatial" in its being-in-the-world. It is clear that the spatiality we attribute to the being, its "being in space", must be understood from the mode of being of this entity. The spatiality of Essence (which is absolutely different from mere presence) cannot mean either its presence in a place of "cosmic space" or its being usable in some place. The one and the other are spatial modes of the intramundane being. Essence is "in" the world in the modes of commerce that takes care of the entity encountered in the world. The spatiality of Beingness will therefore only be possible on the foundation of its in-being. This spatiality reveals the characters of dis-removal and directive orientation. By the expression dis-removal, as a mode of being of the Being in its being-in-the-world, we mean neither remoteness nor distance. We use the expression dis-removal in an active and transitive sense. It signifies a constitution of the being of Beingness with respect to which the pure and simple distancing of something, the placing far away, represents only a particular modality. Dis-allocation [Ent-fernung] means making distance disappear [Ferve), that is, the remoteness of something, it means approaching. Beingness is essentially dis-removing and, insofar as it is the entity that is, always lets the entity be met in proximity. The dis-removal uncovers the distance. Both distance and dis- distance are categorical determinations of the entity that does not conform to Beingness. Vice versa, the dis-distancing must be understood as an existential. Only because the being is in general discoverable by the being in its being-distant, the "distances" and the distances between an intramundane being and another become accessible. Two points and, in general, two things cannot be in a relationship of dis-distancing because neither of these two entities can, as a result of its mode of being, be such as to dis-distance. Between them there is only a distance, which can be ascertained and measured only on the basis of dis- distance. Disentanglement, first and foremost and for the most part, is an approach guided by the prescient environmental vision, a bringing into the vicinity, such as we have in the forms of procuring, installing, taking into our hands. But certain ways of discovering the being in a purely cognitive form also have the character of approach. Beingness has an essential tendency towards closeness. All forms of speed acceleration to which we are today more or less forced, tend to overcome the distance. With the "radio", for example, today's being implements a dis-removal from the "world" which is not yet clear in its existential meaning, but from which derives a widening of the everyday world-environment. The dis-removal does not necessarily imply the explicit evaluation of the distance of a usable from the Essence. Remoteness is not understood there as distance. When distance must be evaluated, it is from the dis-removals in which the being maintains itself on a daily basis. From the point of view of calculation, these evaluations can be imprecise and changeable, yet they possess their own determinacy and general comprehensibility. Let's say, "it's a walk away," "it's a pipe smoke away," "it's a stone's throw away." These measures demonstrate that there is no intention to "measure" and that the distance assessed is proper to an entity that is accessed under the guidance of the prescient environmental vision proper to caring. Even when we resort to more exact measurements and say, "It's a half hour from here to home,"

it is still an estimate. "A half hour" is not thirty minutes, but a duration that has no "length" in the sense of quantitative extension. This duration is always established in terms of "daily care". Even where "official" distances are known, remoteness is always assessed first and foremost by prescient environmental vision. Since the entity that these evaluations dis- distance is always a usable, it always retains its specific intramundane character. It also follows that the paths that lead us to the dis-removed entity have a different length from time to time. The usable of the world-environment is never a simple presence contemplated by an eternal measurer, freed from the structure of the being, but offers itself to the prescient environmental gaze of the daily care of the being. The Being that travels its paths is not a simply-present corporeal thing that takes measurements; the Being "does not devour kilometers"; approach and detachment always respond to a way of being characterized by taking care of what is approached and detached. An "objectively" longer path can be shorter than another "objectively" shorter one, if this one is, for example, "very arduous" and appears interminable. Only in this way of "appearing" is the real world actually usable. The objective distances between simply-present things are not identified with the distance and proximity of the usable intra-worldly. Even when they are known with exactitude, they always remain a blind knowledge and foreign to the function of approaching the world-environment proper to the discovery that characterizes the prescient environmental vision. This knowledge is useful only to an entity that takes care of a world of which it "cares" and that, therefore, is not simply measuring distances. As a result of the anticipated privileging of "nature" and "objectively" measured distances, there is a tendency to view these assessments and this way of understanding distance as something "subjective." But in this case it is a matter of a "subjectivity" that discovers what is perhaps most real in the "reality" of the world and that therefore has nothing to do with "subjective" arbitrariness or subjective "opinions" about an entity that otherwise exists "in itself". The dis- distancing, proper to the prescient environmental vision of the everyday life of the being, discovers the being-in-itself of the "true world", of the entity at which the being, as existing, is already from always. The interpretation that sees in the measured distance the primary and exclusive aspect of distance hides the original spatiality of being-in-being. What is "closest" to being is not at all what has the least distance "from it". The "closest" is that which is distanced from the average reach of our perceptual, visual and prehensile apparatuses. It is only because Beingness is essentially spatial in the mode of dis- away that its commerce is constantly maintained in a "world-environment," dis- away from Beingness within variable boundaries; and it is for this reason that, first of all, we direct hearing and sight beyond what is "nearest" according to measured distance. Sight and hearing are senses of the "far" not because of their reach, but because Beingness predominantly maintains itself in them as a disallocation. For example, for the wearer of spectacles, which, in terms of measured distance, are so close to him that they are "on his nose," this means of use is environmentally more distant than the picture hanging on the wall opposite. This medium is so close that it is often not even perceived. The means of seeing, or the means of hearing (for example, the telephone receiver) has the character of non-surprise, which we have seen to be proper to everything that is first of all usable. The same can be said for the road, the means of walking. When walking, it is trodden on at every step, and is apparently the closest and most real of the usable things at our disposal; in a certain way it slips under a part of our body, under the soles of our shoes. And yet it is far more distant than the friend who comes to meet us "on the street" at the "distance" of twenty steps. It is the taking care of the environmental vision that decides on the distance and proximity of what is first of all usable in the world-environment. The entity at which the care-taking dwells preferentially is for that very reason the closest and regulates as such the dis-removal. When, in caring, the being brings something close to itself, this does not matter the transfer of this object to the place in space that has the least distance from its body. Close to oneself means: in the sphere of what is first of all usable from the prescient environmental vision. The approach does not move from an I-thing equipped with a body, but from the being-in-the-world taking care of what surrounds him first of all. The spatiality of Beingness is therefore not determinable through the determination of a place in which a thing-body

would be simply-present. Of course, we say that Beingness also always occupies a place. But this "occupying" is fundamentally different from being-usable in a place within a proximity. The occupying of a place by Essence must be understood as the dis-empowerment of the environmental usable in a proximity pre-discovered by the prescient environmental vision. Beingness understands its "here" from the "there" of the ambient world. The "here" does not mean the "where" of a simple presence but the "near-that" of a dis-far away being-present ..., in one with the dis-far away itself. As a result of its spatiality, the being is never first of all "here", but in that "there" from which it reaches its "here", and this, again, only insofar as it interprets its being-taking-care-of from what "there" is usable. All this becomes completely clear if we consider a phenomenal characteristic of the structure of the dis-removal proper to in-being. Beingness, as being-in-the-world, essentially maintains itself in dis-removal. This dis-removal, and the related distances, cannot be crossed by Beingness. Certainly the distance of a usable from the being can be seen as distance when it is determined in relation to a thing thought of as simply present in the place the being previously occupied. The "in-between" of distance can subsequently be traversed by the being, but only on the condition that the distance itself becomes for the being something distant". (M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. it., Torino 1978, pp. 186-191).

Introduction to Existentialism

The philosophies are means and not ends, the history that lists them is therefore a repertoire of means to be used if we want to dominate the future. Abbagnano develops the positive concept of philosophy claiming that this alone gives concreteness to every doctrine and guarantees the freedom of man. Escape from the apparent void, run towards the pragmatic concreteness of existence. By dint of naming it in a certain way, the world ends up being configured in a limited number of components that seem to correspond to its objective existence. They only seem to be.

Abbagnano affirms: "But just because in this sense philosophizing is a human act, an aspect that we must presume to be essential to existence, the problem of it is the problem that man poses to himself around himself, it is the very being of man as a problem of himself". (Introduction to Existentialism, IV edition, Taylor Torino publisher, 1957, p. 16). In short, a self-interrogation. But about what? About himself, making a problem of himself, entering the primordial forest that still thickens in the life of every man. He does not say it because he does not think it, since his forest is evidently a thicket of greenery. In this way, the search for being appears to be a scholastic walk while it is an unknown penetration into territories where sounds and ghosts are rampant. This is how the future is dominated in the dogmatic dream of philosophers, even though they claim not to sleep, to be problematic and not to assiduously supply the cave of massacres.

The problematic form does not save from contradiction, indeed it reinforces it. It does not save because it insists on relying on the power of choice, or decision, it makes no difference here, and because it insists on risk. The mere naming of reality is already a danger, it could crumble before us, it does not happen but it could happen. My whole acting and doing, my whole being is at risk, not only the important decisions of my life. In a small gesture, crossing a street, can flow all the strength I possess, my whole life can be entangled forever. The so-called existential decisions are summations of trivial choices, many of which are not choices at all. The indeterminate power that determines me and against which I always struggle, without interruption, wanders everywhere.

Thus Abbagnano: "Now, what constitutes the nature of this indeterminacy or problematicity, is that it is present in any existential act as an effective knowledge, which determines from within the nature of the act. I know, in any case, that I face a risk and this knowledge of mine is present in my decision and constitutes a necessary element of it. My decision is not a decision, to which is added from outside the

abstract consideration of the problematic nature that accompanies it and therefore of the risk implicit in it, it is instead a decision that has been made on the basis of the problematic nature and the inherent risk and of which therefore the problematic nature and the risk constitute the essential element. Indeterminacy does not come after that decision, but is within it, it constitutes it in itself. Every existential act is an act of problematic indetermination." (Ib., p. 18). Here the foundational element is knowledge that determines action. But action is produced by the totality of consciousness that encompasses the entire previous world in which I am chaotically immersed. There is no organization of knowledge that can guide me, it can take the form of a sacred world and compel me to an oath of belonging, or of a profane world and sharpen my nails, but these are fields that cannot be assimilated to a knowledge, an organized knowledge. The decision is one side of the question, and the courage it requires to act transforms it into action, that is, concrete intervention that is qualitatively different, not a simple choice between various possible openings. Indeterminacy is in the only passage available for action, the going beyond. One does not go from something to something, from a beginning to an end, discrete elements can only be found in the simple doing, which Abbagnano seems not to take into account in the definition of existential decision.

"My decision tends to make the future be, under the aspect that refers to it, what I want it to be by the very act of the decision. If it is an authentic decision and not a desire or a mere wish, it moves towards the future with the claim to weld it with the past in a unity that realizes the total meaning of the decision itself". (Ibid.). Unfortunately, the decision is always incomplete, indecisive and hesitant. It does not exist in its fullness; it is not enough to say "I want". To want is a condemnation, not a strength. We need more, we need an interpenetration with reality, not a selected separation in its various elements. What prevails is not the objective but the courage; it is not problems at the outlet but at the source. If I am looking for guarantees, it is because I lack courage; if I lack courage, I need something to rest my feet on. There is no bridge between past and future that guarantees continuation. The formless body of the future wants to be interrogated in a certain way in order to open up and the secret lies in the total involvement of the individual not a risk as much as possible guaranteed.

"But in the existential act this movement that unifies past and future in the present of the decision and that constitutes, in the future, a situation that may not be, but must be, is the foundation and justification of the situation that has been. This movement proper to the authentic existential act, this welding together of a future situation which is indeterminate in its possibility, but which nevertheless must be, with an initial situation, can be called structure." (Ib., p. 19). This is a dense paragraph in which Abbagnano better reveals his thought. The problematic nature, having captured the future, is transformed into a solid, mocking structure that is visible against the invisible future as if particular circumstances made the miracle possible. But a structure must be imposed and in this way it cannot express authenticity in any way, it resets the problematic and changes it into static and guarantee. That is, it carries in the womb of the future the hypothetical certainty of the past, an operation that is immediately punished by the repetitiveness and stupidity of possession that wraps around itself until it suffocates. To elect structure as one's own purpose compromises freedom, and it is not worth affirming the persistence of its problematic nature. Here we are dealing with words, but the point around which everything revolves is the confirmation, the election of a confirmed, accomplished and consolidated choice, even if the back door of an eventual disappointment remains open and will require a structural adjustment. This seems to complicate the life of the structure, but in fact it simplifies it, makes it certain within the sphere of human certainty, makes it true, worth living and all the other respectable junk. I know well that nothing is definitive, but to choose a structured world is something more comfortable than writing these lines at the end of one's life in a Greek prison.

Abbagnano's authentic decision is still a decision. He writes: "The existential act of which we have spoken is the authentic existential act. It is a decision of which the consideration of risk and of the responsibility that risk implies is an integral part. But other acts are obviously also possible for man, acts in which the decision is lacking or defective, and in which man prefers to avoid the risk and not face the responsibility of a decisive choice. In these cases, man allows himself to live, so to speak, without deciding, without choosing, without seeking the weld between the past and the future, without proposing in the future to justify the meaning and to realize the nature of his own past. Man lives, then, in a state of dispersion; he does not possess himself, nor does he truly possess his possibilities. His existence is not anchored in the circle of structure, it is not truly fulfilled, nor does it truly open up to the future. Structure implies for him only an appeal to decision and choice, not an actual decision or choice. Let us try to discern the whole meaning of this alternative, in which man is continually placed between his structural constitution and his dispersed life." (Ib., p. 21). But when do I possess my possibilities? When do I realize them? Certainly not. I possess them when I go beyond them, when I go beyond them, when I leave them behind, when I open to the future and do not allow myself to be indicated or predestined by an external force. If I close myself off from the defense, I am condemned to follow the procedures up to the secondary recesses, I am captured or at least pursued with ferocious fury. I am the different without structure, the batter perceived as a danger, the one who is difference and not concordance, I am a unique one who does not accept props or justifications.

What a painful conclusion the realization proposal is. I concretize the possibility by realizing myself, I make it mine, therefore I am the certain closure of my word spoken to the future, I am the monotheistic law and I feel morally superior, in a lethal certainty without counterweights. The structure, by constituting me, protects me and elects me its protégé, at the same time it condemns me. These two aspects complement each other. I am isolated and this pushes me to throw back my courage. Possibilities close again after having given me the illusion of openness.

Abbagnano writes: "In the constitutive decision of structure, man truly identifies himself with the possibility he chooses. In that possibility that he makes his own, he places and recognizes himself: in that possibility, he realizes himself. By acquiring possession of it in the decided action, he truly acquires possession of himself. He no longer feels balanced by different possibilities and no longer runs after one or another possibility at random, abandoning it immediately afterwards. He has recognized it as his own, that is, as constitutive of himself, of his personality: and he realizes in it, precisely, this personality in its unity. He has decided on that possibility, because he has decided on himself, and he has decided on himself in the sense of his unity. He has decided to possess himself; and to possess himself in that privileged possibility which he has made his own, in which he has recognized himself." (Ib., pp. 21-22). But how can I privilege a possibility? Can I not elect it, if anything it is it that elects me by condemning me to chase it for life without ever catching it, a cloud catcher? Whatever this primary and all-enveloping possibility may be, how can I recognize it? Am I the possibility of myself? But, in this case, I only have to limit myself to living my life, and in this the structure gives me a hand. Do I possess myself in this way? Certainly not. I cannot lock myself in a chest, fear itself prevents me from doing so. And what would my unity be? Perhaps my uniqueness? But then would the process condemn the structure by killing it in order to guarantee precisely this last eventuality? This cannot be answered. It is not true that only unity is real while multiplicity is apparent. If anything, the opposite is true, and this is indubitable if we exclude uniqueness, which is linked precisely by structured presence.

These critical considerations are supported by Abbagnano's following words: "The structural movement is therefore the realization of man's unity, of his personality. It is the movement by which man commits himself to the sense of his unity and remains faithful to himself. Fidelity truly expresses the sense of structure. In the structure, man decides to be faithful to himself, to truly be himself, to self-possess.

Through it, man acquires a destiny." (Ib., p. 22). Fidelity to the structure is the indispensable seal of election, it is the irruption from the outside to the inside with all the rights of the former over the latter. Fidelity is indispensable because braggarts have no right to the structure; they tell fables and swear falsely, that is, they take for their own what is not at all. They are dangerous and must be eliminated. They are without destiny. This is the logical conclusion of the proposition on fidelity, which proves what the positive version of existential problems is made of. In the end, I discover that the possibility I choose to structure myself is the one I am obliged to choose, which proves, as if it were necessary, that every choice is forever locked in banality not authenticity if it is not directed towards transcendence.

But fidelity must involve transcendence. Here is Abbagnano: "The transcendental possibility is the reinvigoration, the strengthening and the foundation of one's own initial possibility; it is, in a certain respect, the same initial possibility, but in its entire meaning, definitive and fully expressed, in the meaning proceeding beyond, towards the future. The transcendental possibility constitutes as my final form my true self." (Ib., p. 23). Possibilities have thus disappeared, their search now takes place in the lap of the gods, that is, it proves elusive. From uncertain and open, it is now enclosed within the realm of truth, of a true possibility. There is no longer the risk of an imposture, there are no risks, but everything is brought back into a certainty aggravated by fidelity. Freedom has been granted to me by this transcendent possibility and sealed by fidelity; I am not free - as Stirner would say - but I am a freedman. In order to escape dispersion I had to submit to the condition of self-possession, of self-possession. Now I soar above difficulties, I no longer run the risk of failing in my decision, I am a decisive person, that is, I have set the coordinating stakes of my life. I have finally realized myself, that is, I have managed to root myself in reality. Not only that, but this condition lies crammed among other human conditions that conculcate each other, determining themselves in the conviction that this is the best way of being, that is, they constitute this society. Now I can no longer even have the idea that I am not appropriate for my condition, I am my reality and I am my energy, these two aspects radiate off each other. But there is a further, wider dimension.

Here is Abbagnano again: "The being of which I, in my finitude, am woven, continually goes beyond me, continually takes me beyond myself with the very continuity of the movement with which I decide about myself. If the constitution of my individuality is expressed by the possession, which I realize in it, of being, it is evident that it simultaneously implies the constitution of this being. The single and definite possibility which I take possession of by my decision becomes my possibility only because it ceases to be mine alone, in order to belong to a sphere which proceeds beyond my finitude. The ontic possibility is such only because it is at the same time an ontological possibility. My possibility is such only because it belongs to a being that proceeds beyond myself. My decision is the establishment of a relationship between ontic possibility and ontological possibility, a relationship necessarily connected with the act of my authentic constitution. Choice can be defined precisely as this relationship. It founds in being the possibility that is proper to me and that becomes the proper possibility of being". (Ib., pp. 24-25). Here it would seem that a hint of overcoming makes its way in, but this is not the case. This never goes so far as to abandon the possession where I am now rooted. It is what gives me the recognition of others, the sign of my belonging to the society of humans. The being that goes with it is the stake never really risked because I am cheating. How can I take possession of being through a choice that by definition is not given to me except in a random way? The fact of defining it as authentic does not make it any less uncertain. How does it become ontological and oppose an ontic possibility? How does it go beyond that if I don't really put myself on the line and hold on to the possession of myself? There is a tension here that does not exist in reality but only in the metaphysical void, nevertheless serving to give appearance to a triumphant entry of being within me. Pondering one's involvement for a long time means not identifying the opening hidden somewhere, it means exacerbating the action in a continuous hesitation waiting for an external support that guarantees me

together with my possession. This support can be living in society with other men, but it cannot go beyond socialization according to certain rules, it cannot transcend my condition rooted in possession, limited and fearful.

On the other hand, Abbagnano confirms: "A being who belongs to me and isolates me would annul me as an individuality; but the being who defines me in my individuality opens me to coexistence and determines an infinite sphere in which there are infinite possibilities of encounter, that is, of intelligence and understanding, between me and the other". (Ib., p. 26). This definition - which applies here beyond any doubt, it seems - opens me up to coexistence. Which evidently can only be a contractual agreement, a mutually delegated declaration of authority, not the indication of a common afflatus, of the common presence of being and not the deceptive appearance. I did not see in this connection - many years ago - anything but a reflection, metaphysically deformed, of the social contract, and I see no way now to change my impression. It seems that here Abbagnano wants to refer to the strength that everyone has, to a greater or lesser extent, to express himself, a strength that can weaken until it is completely silent, but this is an indistinct matter and cannot justify an ontological foundation.

In the end, transcendental possibility assumes a position of command, it is it that imposes on man not being, which would not be sufficient, but ought-to-be, that is, it imposes on him the pure normative matter, preceding and authorizing every other meaning. Man's commitment is thus summarized in his own belonging and in belonging to the society that contains, limits and marks him. Everything else is deceptive. Man's authenticity is therefore a duty to be, a commitment that seals his own finitude with fidelity. Abbagnano concludes: "Normativity expresses the deep, substantial aspect of the structure; what the structure is in itself. But what the structure is in itself, is the norm of what I must be and of what I am in myself, in my own finitude. If man were to say that the norm is in himself, he would lower it from its essential superiority and nullify it as a norm; but the norm is what man truly must be and therefore it is being itself that grounds him in his finitude, justifies him and brings him to his integral realization." (Ib., p. 28). Being is thus identified in a freely chosen obligation. And since we know that freedom is a transcendental donation, being is an obligation confirmed from above. Every action thus receives an investiture and a sign, an election that indicates it as belonging to being and, in this way, is postponed to infinity, unconcluded, in need of continuous recognition. To escape the constitutive uncertainty of the world, being is forced into the straitjacket of an investiture from above. In fact, in what way could one speak of structure if not in this way? Man, being and the world are the same thing seen from different quantitative angles, qualitatively it is only being that is under discussion. Instead, Abbagnano speaks only of a close connection.

Thus he writes: "Man, in the coexistence of men and in the common participation in being, implies the co-presence of himself as well as of other men and of being, in an unconditioned totality, which is the world. The world is therefore a fundamental determination of the structure of man since this, by transcending man, places him in a necessary relationship with being and with men and therefore in an unconditioned totality that includes him. The nature of the world is thus determined by its being the totality of which man is part, by virtue of the same structure, as a transcendent structure. The condition of the simultaneous co-presence of man, being, and coexistence in the world is corporeality, that is, the placing of man and being in a connected and yet externalized multiplicity, such as is proper to bodies." (Ib., p. 29). Compresence as unconditioned totality, as world. But how can something be unconditioned that is determined by the structure of man? Is this not the sufficient cause of determinacy? Therefore, if this is the case, where there is structure there is no lack of conditions. Amazing flip-flop. A general impression of foreignness, of necessity rained down from above. The body is therefore the result of a metaphysical operation. Something terribly intimate vanishes in the vagueness of a system that, starting

from choice, returns to choice because it is incapable of choosing. And in this it demonstrates not so much its metaphysical poverty - which would be little - but its existential poverty, its fear of getting involved to the full. The author, raising his paw to the world, shows his tail.

That corporeality is non-apparent being is a colossal blunder. Abbagnano writes: "Corporeality is irreducible. It cannot be reduced to appearance, because it realizes a fundamental aspect of the structure that requires the co-presence, in a systematic totality, of man with being and with the coexisting community. Corporeality cannot be devalued, cannot be reduced to nothing, cannot be neglected in any way by an effective understanding of human existence, and must be understood as corporeality, not as a veil or appearance of spirituality. The existential connection between man and being, which is manifested in the corporeality of the world, means that man, as a body, needs the things of the world. Need expresses, within the limits of man's corporeality, man's necessary connection with his constitutive being." (Ib., pp. 29-30). It is precisely the body that suffers the most severe setbacks from inability to fix being. The visionary sensation is a fantasy of what is extraordinary that happens in the involvement - attention, not on the decision that is always directed to do - and has an influence of enormous magnitude on the body, which remains astonished and transfers the appeal calling into question the appropriate physiological processes. In the end, by moving forward in acting, by no longer deciding in accordance with the rules of safeguarding, one crosses the point of no return and the body enters into a physical and mental state of disintegration and is dragged away. One could say that Abbagnano needed to ignore these problems by speaking of actual, concrete corporeality, and not of veil or appearance. If man needs the world in this way, the parallel that comes to mind - given the place I am in - that the prisoner needs the prison, imposes itself. Between man and the world there are two modes of knowledge, the first is doing with its quantitative collocation, the second is acting with its dynamically qualitative perspective. Neither man is above nor the world is below, or vice versa. Instead, Abbagnano states: "The world is the domain of man's knowledge insofar as it is knowledge of things, it is the domain of the perception and use of things as instruments, it is the domain of science that observes and measures things in their instrumentality". (Ib., p. 30). None of these statements escape the idea of domination, and the repeated use of this word clearly indicates what the philosopher is a procurer of, the cave of massacres. But domination, like possession, are philosophical concepts that escape the control they presuppose. The more the world tightens, and for me the other is the concrete image of the world much more than the vague and controversial nature, the more it slips away, it appears drastically different every time, it reacts, it counterattacks, it does not let itself be possessed, it claims its inviolable otherness. And every domination has no return. The relationship started badly and ends badly, its affirmations, I keep them with me, in my possession, are extreme and unrealizable. The twist that has been imposed on the other is therefore irreversible, the relationship is forever conditioned by it, it remains unbalanced. Putting aside the pretensions of domination, things change, the world remains problematic and the other continues not to give himself up, but for different reasons, because he wants to be looked for by me, and I have to go looking for him in order to be with him, not to possess him but to involve him in going beyond doing as a simple quantity, to design the possible quality of our relationship. In this sense, the world and the other are the same thing.

By confusing doing with acting, Abbagnano places in the decision more future than it can be, so that it expands and appears to be what it is not. He writes: "The act with which man tends to constitute in being the possibility that is his own, is also the act with which being comes to meet man in order to found him in his finitude. This coming together of being with man is the future, as the fundamental determination of temporality. But it is a problematic coming together, which does not eliminate the risk of man and therefore is precisely a future. The problematic nature in its temporal aspect is the possible nullity of the possibilities of man, that is, the possibility connected to all the possibilities that man chooses and makes his own of not being able to be founded in being and of being lost. Man's decision,

when it is authentic, commits him and therefore guarantees him in his constitution, but it does not eliminate the problematic nature of man, indeed it reconfirms it". (Ib., pp. 30-31). How can being move towards the decision of the individual if it is a mere doing? Abbagnano realizes that there is a contradiction here and speaks of "act", but the word is not enough. Obviously, I cannot decide to act, I can only decide to do. Time, which from the future becomes present in order to then be past, can very well slip unnoticed in my doing, nothing assures me of this passing of time, on the contrary, there is an industry that builds mechanisms to improve the pastime, and this is the amused life in the sense of Pascal, the administered life that if it maintains a certain consanguinity with life lived in a conscious way, qualitatively conscious, it is not able to look at destiny and speak to it. The future can certainly hold surprises, but this is aleatory and not problematic. The zeroing of the possibility of choice was at the source, not at the mouth, and there is no "authentic" decision that can avoid it. Action involves me, and vice versa, but it does not authenticate me, it does not guarantee me, and here it seems that temporality flows in view of this foundation. This is not a difference in style but in substance. I am not expelled from doing because I remain a prisoner, but I can be sent away from acting and find myself faced with the "enough" that kills quality. How can I entrust time with the task of sealing my fragility up to the last line if I don't remain on the threshold and on guard, but instead I shut myself away "keeping faithful"? I suspect that one wants to keep problematic the very thing that was previously secured in the attic.

How can one agree with formulations such as the following: "Nothing really happens in man's existence without his choice. The structure of man is essentially freedom, freedom that is not indifference, but normativity, duty to be: duty to be of the finite personality of man and therefore of the universal being that founds it, and of the community that in this being finds its ground of encounter and mutual intelligence. Man is continually faced with the crucial alternative between being and not being, between the possession of himself in the possession of his own possibilities and the dissipation and trivialization of these possibilities, between an anonymous and insignificant life and an intense and meaningful life rooted in history". (Ib., p. 32). If the equivalence between freedom and norm were true, the statement written by the Nazis about their camps that "work makes you free" would also be true. There is a difference, and it is substantial, not a thin line, a negligible threshold, and this difference is encountered everywhere. It is terrifying to conflate these two divergent realities. Having to be is not being, and on this Hegel's irony cannot be forgotten. There is no universal being - perhaps we are talking about life? - that can found the particular being, meeting it in society. Abbagnano continues to speak of community, but I suspect, maintained by the distant years, that there is some confusion here. Universal life is a spurious, dangerous and biologically uncertain concept, if only with regard to the limits in which one can speak of life and those in which one must speak of death. Is being and dispersing not being, or does the latter appear only by contrasting with the former? I don't. I wouldn't put the contraposition in those terms. Is the trivialization of one's life dying? I don't think so. Is teaching in a great university, philosophy or economics, a crucial alternative to writing these lines in a Greek prison cell on a warm February night? I don't think so. Something envelops my life and tells me with a flash of lucidity that quantitative accumulation, success and guarantee are not life. I'm tired and old, my feet are sore from lack of blood circulation and I have a sharp pain in my left shoulder but my heart is steady and my brain has no lulls of torpor. I have nothing to contend with the ancient master, but my accounts do not add up by conducting them in his method. How do I root myself in history through my authenticity? If there is something that allows me or facilitates me then it is not me who enters history but it is a kind concession, nothing to do with my freedom. If this something is my authenticity, then it is always about my choice, and so we are back to square one. And here is the amazing conclusion: "Man's freedom is guaranteed by the incessant renewal of this call. Of course man can also fail to heed it, and this possibility is real and effective; it is the possibility of sin." (Ib., p. 32). This is the appeal of authenticity. Here we remain on the hit, there is no way to justify this passage.

And so he continues: "Sin is dispersion, superficiality, abandonment, throwing oneself into life as it comes, the inability to coordinate and dominate it and therefore the inability to dominate and possess oneself. Sin is an actual possibility, inherent in the structure. It is linked to temporality, which is the foundation of the possible nullity of the constitution proper to man. By trivializing and dispersing man's possibilities, sin renders his life anonymous and insignificant, prevents the constitution of his personality, isolates him and hides him from being and from coexistence". (Ibid.). In other terms, finally evident, sin is the form of life that is not guaranteed either directly or indirectly, the free life that undergoes continuous metamorphoses, that does not accept the gloom of the enclosed, that does not register, that is incapable of founding something and declaring it its own possession. Sin is the life that is worth living, that enters without asking for permission, that does not exercise metaphysical spells because it does not need them, that does not drown in the delays of an interminable doing. And the demonstration of this negativity of sin is that life is not positive preservation of itself but enlargement, involvement, chaos, dispersion, movement, going beyond, everything that can be thought of as contrary to preservation. To preserve is to mummify, to die, to deny life. In fact, Abbagnano affirms that in order to "overcome sin" it is necessary that "man be faithful to himself" (ib., p. 33), in other words, permanence. Further amazing statement. "To subtract oneself from dispersion, to overcome sin, is possible only by a choice that decides man's fidelity to himself. This fidelity is man's fidelity to his own finitude. Finitude must not be misrecognized and denied: it must be recognized, accepted and realized to the full. If it is denied and misrecognized, it is a chain that drags on unknowingly, but which hampers every movement and makes every creation impossible. But if it is accepted and recognized, if it is fully realized, it becomes the very substance of freedom. Man then becomes self-limiting in his own finitude, becomes capable of passion." (Ib., p. 33). Passion is a claustrophobic measure of life, self-limitation. Torturing thought. Choice is free and passionate. Banality to be rejected, any content worthy of the name is precluded. Let's stay where we are, for goodness sake, let's not even make noise, it might wake up the negativity and draw us into a wasteland. There is no way to understand how faithfulness can install man in his own destiny. What is the meaning of these words? Does it not thus mean choosing a hidden and prudent life and covering it, for further caution, with a curtain that deludes the future about our possibilities? Doesn't it mean mistaking as true a demeaning counterfeit?

As proof of these unresolved distances, which overlie the many levels of Abbagnano's theory, there is the passage about passion that should revive doing in order to make it become action in the face of the possibility of death, which is always present, not as a veil that covers reality but as its operative component. He continues: "As a fact it [death] is foreign to us, as a possibility it determines our entire nature and our entire existence. The sense of death is in fact the very sense of the problematic nature of existence and therefore of its temporality. All the possibilities of man are such that they may not be, and man himself, in the general form of his existence, is such that he may not be. This possibility is always there, determining the essential problematicity of our constitution. The nature of temporal problematicity is in fact in that, that it can cease to be problematicity, can degrade from its essence. Man is not what he is with the added possibility of death: he is what he is precisely by virtue of this possibility". (Ib., pp. 34-35). One can agree with considering death as a fact not pertaining to our doing, but this means affirming a tautology. Dying is not a doing, only killing oneself is, but it is even less a doing. Referring to the possibility of man not being here the wrong word is chosen. Not being is not a possibility, but again a fact. In any case, it is not the other side of being, its dark face, its sordid side. All it takes is a moment and to testify to death, in the very moment, its full reality appears as the absence of life, operating in the upheaval of any precautionary arrangement. Death is the nothingness that surrounds life and not the contrary, if it enters into life it does so as a fear, as a limit, as a warning - the skull on the table of the mystics - however, as a stranger, always present and always absent, of the absence of which the nothingness has body and consistency. Death can be considered a possibility, it is certainly a possibility of every doing, even the most homely and guarded, it is not a possibility of

acting. In involvement, death is not taken into consideration, even the mortal risk, physically full, is almost always higher. To live is to be aware of living, that is to go beyond the vital appearances of doing, where in any case hovers the shadow of the cemetery. To live is to act, to do is to live resigned to the shadow of cypresses.

Therefore, Abbagnano concludes: "Whoever resolves not to think about death, runs anxiously after the possibilities that present themselves to him without possessing any of them and without possessing himself in any of them. Whoever decides to think of death as the only alternative of his life, loses his own possibilities and himself and disperses in anguish. Whoever accepts death as such and fears it out of danger, remains attached to the possibility he has chosen as his own and makes it his mission and his fundamental task for all his strength and beyond his strength. Fidelity to death expresses, in this case, the authenticity proper to the existence that has been realized in the structure, constituting man in his proper unity, that is, in his necessary relationship with the universal being and with the coexisting community. It is the only attitude worthy of man." (Ib., pp. 35-36). (Ibid., pp. 35-37) Not thinking about death is typical of doing (Abbagnano does not emphasize this, but he does touch on it). Thinking about it deeply, always in the act of doing, already means having lost one's strength of life, living in fear. Accepting death as present even before involvement is a disposition to openness - in Pascal's sense - and therefore not to let it enter into one's action, not even as a borderline eventuality, not even when it is the action itself that makes it more palpable, closer. In acting, death is no longer there, it is an invisible force that touches but does not condition action, that does not write on every page of our lives, as happens in doing. This fact does not concern the authenticity of being but only its overcoming, its passage from doing to acting, its request for a different substance, without apparatuses, guards, apparent safeguards, reassuring proximity. The attempt to act is free from fear, therefore also from the fear of death, and action is in this territory that exists, that is, it simply is. On the side of doing dwells fear and the need to guard what one possesses, whatever this possession represents, power and money, love or knowledge, everything is put in a safe, and here it rots.

And here we come to existentialism proper, as a philosophical doctrine. Abbagnano writes: "The first reason for the strength of existentialism is that it is not only a philosophical doctrine: it is not only realized by philosophers who work to clarify its reasons to themselves and to others". (Ib., p. 38). Element of strength of existentialism is therefore both its being a philosophical theory and its being an "attitude" deviant from the tasks that man must fulfill in the world. Already this position cuts off a small piece of existentialism and reduces it only to the form of the positive philosopher who cannot but impose obligations and tasks on himself. How else would he supply the cave of massacres? In short, existentialism is a philosophy of life together, to which the individual must bow, don't you think?

"The second reason for its strength is that it includes and enforces in the concreteness of individual existence all the requirements of properly human life. Nothing that is human is foreign to it. Science and religion, art and politics, also find their foundation in the actual existence to which it appeals". (Ib., p. 39). The ancient Latin saying recurs punctually (Terence's phrase says: "Homo sum: umani nihil a me alienum puto"). All relationships should be admitted, only inhuman ones should be excluded and never admitted. This is why prisons and asylums exist. Sometimes the line of demarcation overlaps and then the relationships are exasperated, they become elusive or overflowing, in any case deceptive. Existence is everything, appearance nothing. But since appearances do not exist, even though we continually encounter them, doesn't everything become nothing in the unification of being and appearing? To me it seems so.

"The third element of strength of existentialism is its ability to make the philosophers of the past relevant in their truth. It realizes the true historicity of philosophy, because it avoids on the one hand

the arbitrary adaptation of the philosophers of the past to our present needs and on the other hand the impossible sacrifice of present needs to the claims of a perennial philosophy that posits itself as such independently of any relation to us." (Ibid.). Here there is a peroration pro domo sua. Abbagnano takes into account his History of Philosophy, where the hypothesis contained here is made explicit at the end of the work. Only he fails to be convincing in claiming to be able to recognize the "true" personality of a philosopher in the act in which "we affirm our personality in the urgency and strength of its claims". Below is the coda of the professor who juxtaposes his work with his life, undoing this in order to save and justify that. What about a present that wanted to propose itself - I won't say stand up - by standing out alone in a different way? How to cope with the cataclysm of a method slightly different from the aforementioned paradigm? It is not true that it is automatic to establish contacts between different models of approaching knowledge, because this is what we are dealing with here. There may be a territory with only one inhabitant, well, if so, this subversive danger must be swept away. No comment on the enterprise, the flow to the cave of massacres remains constant.

Concerning the objective consideration of the problem of being, Abbagnano writes: "The fundamental impossibility that man can know himself and that therefore the search for his being can be reduced to knowledge, lies in the fact that knowledge supposes that the self and the world are already constituted in their separation, while the search for being includes the problem of their constitution. Knowledge always presents a polarized situation in which the object is distinguished from and opposed to the subject; it supposes the totality of which subject and object are part in their correlative polarization. But this totality, the world, cannot itself be the object of knowledge. Why there is a world and why I, in the act of knowing, become rooted in it is a problem that knowledge gives rise to but cannot resolve". (Ib., pp. 40-41). Here one might see some agreement with this thesis were it not for the final concept of rootedness. In the act of knowing, how do I root myself in the world? Already, in this more-than-announced perspective, the difference between self and world is spurious and should be rediscussed. The object and the subject are usable instruments, i.e. logical only when knowledge gradually becomes systemic, i.e. becomes systemic under the solicitation of a systematic thrust. Otherwise, one can only note comments in the margin. Knowledge flows and does not ask for permission in an endless journey. The approach to the accumulation of the already known and the influx of what is being known are two adjacent organizations or fields of forces that come into contact, otherwise it is not the world that disappears but knowledge and everything drowns in the fog where the screams of the damned resound.

Regarding the subjective consideration of the problem of being, Abbagnano says: "Subjective consideration takes away all meaning from the problem of individuality and its destiny, that is, from the problem of the truly existing man. By reducing being to rationality, it removes and nullifies the possibility of a problem of being, because it substitutes a rigorous necessity, a compulsory connection of determinations and moments for that instability, that fundamental indetermination from which the question what is being? This question has a value only for existence and in the existence of the individual. But the individual, in the case of the total immanence of being to subjectivity, has lost all consistency: it has been assimilated and digested by universal thought." (Ib., p. 42). If being is only reason there is nothing but necessity and no problematicity in life, which is blatantly at odds with even superficial observation. Doing itself is insecure of itself, it has a somewhat obtuse but easily vulnerable sensibility, ready to sharpen in action suffering greatly in the face of an impossible transformation. But, even eliminating an absolute deterministic connection, in the positive version of problematicity there is a basis that raises the demand for well-founded certainty, for fidelity. Being can neither close nor be closed, these two versions are equivalent and are separated only by a delicate spider web, and Abbagnano does not notice this. If subjectivism thinks it is what it is and cannot not be, positive problematicism thinks it can capture being in such a way that what it comes to possess - thanks to the authenticity of choice and the fidelity of rootedness - remains what it is. If the former does not ask, the

latter asks a rhetorical question or, at least, a question that awaits a guaranteed answer. Reason wants to dominate, both in the universal concreteness and in the particular one. In any case, one is never able to assess the lethal consequences of its extension. The guillotine raises and lowers the axe always guided by reason, this is the law of the cave of massacres. Transcendence, starting from myself, comes - or can come - to some foundation without myself, according to existential metaphysics, only through authentic choice, but it is also always a trip to universal reason where being seems to dwell, waiting to be snatched away and brought into the troubles of limited and contradictory coexistence. I move towards being and I take it with me in appearance, in this way I initialize it by unifying it in myself. Abbagnano reverses the reasoning. Being is not in the appearance of the inauthentic, by authenticating myself I grasp it and I take it with me, but I do not deny it because I am no longer the lost I but the one who has found himself thanks to the authentic choice. And here Abbagnano mentions transcendence and says: "The individual cannot exist unless he transcends himself and moves towards being; but this implies that being is not immanent to the subjectivity he embodies. Existence is indeed the constitution of a relation between myself and being; but this relation is established precisely in the act in which I proceed beyond myself, in which I limit myself in order to go beyond myself. Universality is constituted by this relation with being, which founds individuality, not annuls it. Universality is in the surpassing that I make of myself by existing, not in myself. Universality is the scope and direction of my existential movement that seeks being and relates to being: it is not the immanence of being to my reason." (Ib., p. 43). All right, but to go where? To stay in one's home, here is the answer, to cross the threshold of one's home and then re-enter through the window.

By rejecting objectivism, Abbagnano abandons the cognitive foundation, by rejecting subjectivism he abandons universal reason, and thus he subtracts strength both from the cognitive capacity - and this is his radical opposition to my way of approaching knowledge - and from the constitutive and selective reason that organizes and sustains thought. In this way he polemicizes with Heidegger and with Jaspers. He wants, in other words, to pose the problem of the relationship with being, the search for being, and this as a response to a tension towards being. Here lies a misunderstanding that was not easy for me - at the time - to resolve. It seems that here we are heading towards the conclusion that by going from appearance to being, as a supreme tension, I would be unified in nothingness. This is not the case, let us reassure ourselves. Abbagnano takes care to disillusion us, specifying his position and distinguishing, a bit roughly to tell the truth, in the following way: "In the first place, I can consider as the foundation of existence the fact that, in order to relate to being, it detaches itself from nothingness. In that case, detachment from nothingness and ultimately nothingness itself determine the nature of existence. But since existence never detaches itself from nothingness, insofar as it never identifies itself with being, so it is defined in this case by the impossibility that it is not nothing.

"Secondly, I can consider as a salient feature of existence, its relation to being, its transcending towards being. But since the relation to being that existence can establish is never attainment of being and identification with being, existence is defined in this case by the impossibility that it is being.

"Third, I can consider as a salient feature of existence the very relation to being in which it consists. In that case existence is defined by the possibility that it is the relation to being." (Ib., p. 45). Heidegger concludes for nothingness as being grasped by existence, Jaspers for the impossibility of being to exist outside of nothingness, Abbagnano from the possibility that defines - note this verb - the relationship between being and existence, concludes for a positive identity of being in life, even in doing that remains itself and does not go beyond in acting.

To go beyond - if this movement ever crossed Abbagnano's mind - makes sin easy, that is, the loss of possession, the breath of security, the breath of fidelity is missing. Positivity moves downwards, it

agrees with the reassurance of doing, it makes the rift with acting impassable, it closes life within the dark walls of fidelity, where it is not easy to get lost. For Abbagnano, Heidegger cannot detach himself from nothingness, so he embraces an inferior, chaotic, insignificant life. He sings around it, he sublimates it into a system by chiseling the words with the use of hermeneutic play, he closes himself in a flash of warlike blades. Jaspers, on the other hand, has no way of reattaching existence to being, so he wanders in the uncertainties of the many substitutive situations that offer appearances until they cancel themselves out. A rendering of meaning without consistency and coexistence, attributes that fade into the fog, incomprehensible physiology of an unbalanced body, substantially negative, impenetrable. In both cases, Abbagnano continues, for these philosophies: "They reduce existence to a fundamental impossibility - the impossibility of detaching oneself from nothing, the impossibility of attaching oneself to being, that is, to necessity and determinism. With the denial of the problematic nature of the relationship and with its reduction to an impossibility, indeterminacy and freedom are denied. They reduce existential decision and choice to deciding what has already been decided, to choosing what has already been chosen. They strip existential commitment of its freedom, they reduce it to a predestined determination." (Ib., pp. 46-47).

Denial of freedom and predestination. Here Abbagnano overturns some of the flaws in his approach - which he has practically already made known to us - to Heidegger and Jaspers, accusing them of determinism and speaking, for the first time, of "free fidelity", a contradiction in terms that invalidates his critique in a more serious way than he could have imagined. The imbalance of the life of possibility - which remains a guarantor modulation of appearance - is immedible, because of it nothing is safe anymore, not even the safety of the high walls that surround this Korydallos prison. Indeed, more often than not, it is precisely the insurance insistence that precipitates the imbalance into the outsized wrong way. Fixing - or trying to fix - is often worse than undoing it altogether. On the contrary, according to Abbagnano, my life cannot enter reality, that is, it can only be realized in the authentic possibility of a relationship with being, or better, "with the original, transcendental problematic nature of this relationship". He writes: "Existence has no other way of realizing itself properly than that of realizing itself as the possibility of the relationship with being, that is, as the original, transcendental problematic nature of this relationship. Existence is not abandoned or launched towards being, so that it cannot recognize itself except in the impossibility of attaching itself to being or detaching itself from nothingness. Existence places itself in the relation to being by recognizing itself as the pure possibility of this relation and by remaining faithful to the problematic nature of its structure." (Ib., p. 47). Life must look at itself, at its relation to itself. It cannot consider nothingness, or rather nothingness, as I would say, where there is a profound difference in condition, nothing from which it moves or being from which it moves, but to the relationship it establishes with itself and to the fidelity of this relationship. Here it seems that it must remain faithful to its own uniqueness and problematicity, but this is not the case. In fact, it is consistency that grounds existence in itself, preventing dispersion in nothingness or the impossibility of being. It is therefore a substance that must be recognized in its original problematic nature. But this substance, if it is determined, can be known, then recognized, that is identified, if it is indeterminate, it remains a raw and decomposed aspect, very similar to the chaos of being, elusive and unsuitable for modeling. Trying to discover gaps in this crowd is like identifying someone from a strict isolation, from an airtight closure. There are no possible subtractions, the beat is persistent and secure, immovable. Substance is the classical appearance of metaphysics, there is no substance where there is no cause and there is no cause that is cause of itself apart from God. If being is the cause of life there is a circle that closes, if the cause is nothingness the circle does not open, if the cause is life itself the circle does not exist. All three solutions are metaphysical, that is, they have their own justification in the mists of a system. In fact, Abbagnano is forced to clarify: "If existence is defined with respect to its relationship with being, the need to consolidate and ground this relationship acts as an inner norm in the constitution of existence and as an evaluative principle of the possibilities

offered to it. I must choose what consolidates and strengthens me in my relationship with being, that is, what guarantees the possibility of this relationship: I must choose to be the original problematic of that relationship. If that relationship constitutes, because of its problematic nature, my substance, I must remain faithful to my substance and realize it in my decision. The problematic substance of my existential structure is thus the norm of my decision, a norm that removes me from the indifference and equivalence of possibilities and collects and evaluates them on the basis of their substantial unity". (Ib., p. 48). Where metaphysical words par excellence such as "consolidates," "strengthens," "guarantees," "constitutes," "remains faithful," "norm," and "foundation" sound deadpan. How can one speak of freedom under these conditions of administrative recruitment? All that is provided is a safe-conduct to justify the supreme metaphysical concept, that of substance, a theoretical gesture as ineffective as any other, which can achieve no rooting except in the appearance of doing, a sort of official sale of indulgences that proposes a linear sharpness at a formal level, only to drown in the stagnation of the repetitiveness of doing that provides the cave of massacres.

There is no doubt that Abbagnano is good at formulating and rephrasing his thesis. "Certainly, for me who exists, being is a possibility of being and, as a possibility, it can also be nothing. But my existence does not properly depend either on nothingness or on being, but on the possibility of being in which I constitute myself: its substance is therefore only the transcendental foundation, the condition of possibility, that is, the problematicity by which it is what it is. And my task will be to guarantee and strengthen the possibility of my being by consolidating it in its transcendental condition, by realizing it in its original and ultimate problematicity." (Ib., p. 49). Having discovered the positive mechanism - let's say, once again, homemade - one can only see the patina of skill, a matter of craftsmanship achieved on the doctrines of long-studied philosophers. Since it cannot imprison being and appearance, it imprisons their unification, nothingness. Life is this nothingness - empty of quality - if it is not truly lived beyond its quantitative limits. This could be implied by the problematic nature of the authentic choice, but it should not lack the indication of the partiality of doing, which is missing in the passage to being. The precariousness of the problematic relationship can only remain such, nor can fidelity be given that can change it into something stable or authenticity that can make a corpse live. A problem, in itself, dies in the solution, if this presents again the problem was not a solution but an appearance. If being is quality and appearance is quantity, the problematic relation is placed in other terms. But here Abbagnano remains distant, and I was with him at the time, far from these conclusions.

Thus he notes: "The problem of being defines the state of an entity of which being is not a possession but a possibility. As the state of an entity, the problem does not need to be formulated abstractly or verbally in order to subsist as a problem. It constitutes the entity in the sense of determining from within all the manifestations and all the concrete attitudes of it. Doubt and certainty, expectation and fear, action and despair, are all individual and concrete modes of the problem of being because they are all determined by the instability of the relationship between being and being. The happiness of a discovery and of a possession, which is as precious as it is subject to the risk of loss, the bitterness of a defeat, the anguish of an impossibility, victory and disaster, all enclose the profound and total sense of the problem of being, of the instability of the relationship in which the being is with the being, of the precariousness of its possession, of the risk connected to it. The problem of being lives not in the conceptual and verbal encapsulation of philosophical doctrines, but in the very constitutive being of the entity: in its temporal life, in its limitation, in its destiny". (Ib., p. 50). This entity - ailing metaphysics - is man. Man's characteristics constitute his life. Deficiencies and gaps, doubts, uncertainties and fears, all of these are rampant in the desire for quantitative possession and in the unfulfilled scope of quality. In doing almost always one does not even know in what territory one is lost, one gropes in the dark. Disorientation and bewilderment. Astonishment and expectation of guarantee. If the possible loss of a possession is a present risk, but one that one wants to avoid, one barricades oneself inside, the risk

disappears because it is not inherent in the overcoming and everything remains as before. There cannot be the happiness of touching this uncontaminated possession, as Abbagnano suggests, because no real risk has been taken, but only the appearance of a risk, an intellectual risk. What kind of checkmate can there be in risking one's life in a university classroom or in the offices of a publishing house? An inapparent frustration stops life and is thus mistaken for a risky game, for putting oneself at stake. Philosophical thoughts, not a real risk of one's own life in front of the overcoming of doing. To affirm that the problematic nature of being lives in the constitutive condition of man is to see things from the outside, with the appropriately graduated lens of the entomologist. In fact, Abbagnano declares: "Man can also reach the security and peace of a possession of being; but he can reach it only on condition of conquering it and only at the risk of losing it every moment. Man can rebel and escape any determination; he cannot rebel and escape the problem of being because the very possibility of rebellion, as of acceptance, is in this problem which constitutes his nature. To accept being something, or to refuse to be something, is possible only to an entity for which being is a problem and to which the relation to being is given in the form of a fundamental instability." (Ib., p. 51). Security and Peace. Cemetery symbols once again, but precious symbols. However, there is something mocking about this incongruous conclusion based on conquest and possession, warlike terms. As if man can never escape from this crystallized and childish perspective. It is a disconcerting perspective that is frequently found in Abbagnano and that I hope is advanced as a positive response to a probable loss or negative perspective.

The specific condition of man is therefore contrary to all determination, and peace and possession cannot be elements of this condition. He thus counters, "Indeterminacy is the proper state of man as a possibility of being. Man, in the problem of being, is in the state of indetermination because he has been indetermination. Man is constituted in indetermination only insofar as indetermination has already been, only insofar as it is in the past, already surpassed and transcended. The state of indetermination supposes a movement beyond indetermination. The overcoming of indetermination, the exit from it is the existence (existence). Man exists insofar as, constituting himself with the problem and in the problem of being, he comes out of the indetermination that it implies and moves towards the recognition of it. Existence is the act by which man recognizes the indetermination of his nature and therefore poses as his nature the problem of being. Existence is an overcoming of indetermination only because it is a return to indetermination. Evidently, existing is the concrete movement in which indetermination is posed and constituted as a point of departure and as a point of arrival. Existence is the proper and authentic position of the problem of being because it is the constitution of this problem as the proper and original nature of man." (Ib., p. 52). Important affirmation. For Abbagnano, the circle of being is tautological in nature. It is born and ends in indetermination. Where can one find assistance and salvation? Indetermination is at the basis of the relationship between man and being, therefore life is this undetermined relationship with a disruptive potential because it is based on transcendental possibility. If this is enclosed in the obscurity of simple doing, the gift is rejected and transformed into a right. There is no way to go beyond this pretended right, which thus continually rolls over on itself, confusing repetitiveness always identical to itself with new possibilities of choice. Man's nature is not at all that of going beyond his horrendous identity as a slaughtering animal; freedom generally frightens him, just as life outside the cave, the dangerous life in the forest that requires courage, frightens him. He ventures there only if he involves himself in action, and it is then that he recognizes his own limitation, which presents itself to him in a qualitative form, therefore under the species of diversity, not as an additional quantity to defend. Indeterminate is only the life that is qualitatively brought into play, continuously relaunched, which does not miss an opportunity to be outrageous with regard to authoritarian accommodation, to the meticulous procedures of control and survival, to the regulatory ramifications, to peace and security. The "concrete reasoning" of which Abbagnano speaks, which "must" not ignore or deny, but rather realize indeterminacy, on the contrary, are very sensitive

and fierce in denying it, in restricting it. The fact that Abbagnano continually refers to the "constitutive problematic" proposing to consider it "as original" is an exhortation that the ferocity of man rejects like all the beautiful and vague exhortations to good and self-improvement. It is not true that this exhortation produces an understanding of life, rather the opposite is true, that life makes a mockery of this and other exhortations, not because they are trivially subjective facts, but because they do not realize a real decision, the only one possible, the one that matures in the different consciousness and explodes in the overcoming. What exists in a qualitatively different life is unknown, it is the wind of the desert that brings death and the word of destiny, the absurd wind of chaos that does not allow claims or delicacy typical of doing, conditions in which everything is commensurate with conservation, reproduced in formulas and divided into accessible and justifiable parts, in short, ready for use.

But Abbagnano is even more extremist in the chiseling of his thesis on original problematicity, where the emphasis is on this originality. His main purpose is not to highlight human indeterminacy, but to dominate it and finally to possess it. Here is how he clarifies this point: "The unity and identity of my self, what I truly am in myself and for myself, is determined in that act, by virtue of my decision. Because of it, I am not abandoned to indeterminacy; but assuming it as my nature, I dominate and possess it. And possessing it, I not only possess myself because I am originally that indeterminacy, but I also possess the being that is my own in the form, in which it is my own, of indeterminacy. The decision establishing possession and conditioning my own constitution, however, is nothing arbitrary and the choice implicit in it is not at all a choice of indifference. I cannot decide about myself except on the basis of what I am, that is, on the basis of the original indeterminacy if I want to be myself. But I am originally nothing but indeterminacy: indeterminacy is therefore my true being; the in-itself, the substance of myself; it is therefore in it and through it that I must realize myself. The recognition of indeterminacy implicit in the position of the problem of being is the recognition of the very substance of my being. The confession of what I am is the affirmation of the substantiality of what I am; it is the commitment to the future". (Ib., pp. 54-55). Everything revolves around the concrete refusal to live the risk of indeterminacy and is opposed only by the recognition of its original condition. If I decide about myself, it is because I know what I am and what I want to do - and this is acceptable - but if I know this, mine is an appearance of decision, not a real decision. It is but a formal nomination of my human right to possession of myself, a bureaucratic practice. On the other hand, if you shake off the veneer of doing, you immediately see abuse of power, prevarication, murder, elements that lie beneath that practice and give it substance. Realizing oneself is to mystify oneself, to make being apparent so that it is accepted in the society of ghosts, where the law of the dominators hovers and does, feeding the cave of massacres. If my substance is indeterminacy, it is as indeterminate as me who is constituted by it. So why talk about substance? Doesn't all this cast around it a grim and distrustful light? No, it does not. Abbagnano does not realize this, he uses the most trite paraphernalia of metaphysics, the old tools of his trade. Here it is: "The substance is undoubtedly the foundation and the guide of my choice, the sufficient reason for my decision; but this does not mean that in it my choice is already chosen and my decision is already decided. That substance is in fact itself indeterminacy and problematicity and only as such can be valid as foundation and norm of my decision and my choice. The in itself of substance is pure, original problematicity, absolute, transcendental indeterminacy, the condition of all other indeterminacy. It implies no choice already made, no decision already taken. Certainly I can decide only in conformity with what I originally am; and so I must decide. But what am I really? The answer to this question will be given only by my choice. The act by which I decide will be the act by which I recognize myself, my substance. The decision is the recognition and the recognition is the decision. Existence is not the abstract consideration of equivalent possibilities among which I am balanced; it is the passion that engages me in the fundamental possibility, at the bottom of which I find the realization of my substance." (Ib., pp. 55-56). "Foundation" and "guide," "sufficient reason," "in itself," dated concepts that resurrect here to shore up a supposedly different speculative plane. It is a dubious

behavior on which many conflicting hypotheses can be advanced, but in any case it is a suspicious behavior, given the indeterminacy. If the transcendental in itself is problematic and indeterminate, why is it substance? And what is it substance of? If it is my substance, it reveals its merely metaphysical consistency at the very moment in which I recognize that my indeterminate existence is devoid of real substance in the banal daily routine and hides behind the mask of appearance. If I accede to quality, this is not a new and different substance, but my own personal jeopardy, an involvement that cannot ground me in any way, so much so that sooner or later I fall back into doing and I can only remember it, not crystallize it in a permanence. The status of stability does not belong to different experience.

Why is substance a condition of reality? Abbagnano writes: "Existence is for man an individuating relation. By relating himself to substance, man individualizes himself, defines himself and acquires the maximum importance of which he is capable. But individuation is possible only insofar as the individuating movement transcends the limits of individuality. Man individuates himself only in relation to substance and beyond his individual finitude. The movement in which the relation is established determines at the same time individuality and what transcends or embraces individuality: being and the world. The individual is not such if not in relation to a totality that includes him. Man cannot place himself as man if he does not place himself in the world. Man's consolidation in himself, his return to interiority, his tendency to realize himself and only himself, place him in a necessary relationship with the world, that is, they determine his existential situation". (Ib., p. 59). But what do I individualize? If I remain in the daily routine of doing, I identify the identity of the walls of my prison, of my single finitude, I have an apparent vision, the one projected into the cave of massacres. It is not true that this is how I place myself in the world, this is how I place in the world the distrustful vision of my possession that making continues to produce. My life is consolidated in this way around a parody of itself. There is no truth that can emerge in the qualitative vacuum, and truth is a quality of life not of doing. There is no clarity that I can make around me surrounded as I am, besieged, by my defenses and by my own cognitive means, both emanations of the cave to which the theories I produce flow. No position of mine in the world can be so real, it is defined in this way, as Abbagnano says, that is, it is regulated, accepted by the world which is pleased with it, but it is never allowed to go on its own, it cannot undertake the long and difficult journey towards overcoming. In turn, the world shows me its truth, which is a lie and infamy, its way of being, which is what finances and corroborates the accumulation of the underground lake of blood. We are two accomplices who look each other in the face and walk together in the crowded territory of pettiness disguised as reality and consistency. Normative substance, as Abbagnano says, cannot push me "from within," it can only pathetically comfort me from without. I have no well-founded hope of looking at destiny and my engagement is only confined to the productivity of doing; this is the decision that grips me and cannot free me. Engagement is exactly the opposite of commitment. The latter seeks a quantitative dimension, it finds me and marks me in the world, it is my modest fortune that I must safeguard, my peculio that I go to place in the most remote place. For the rest, I am absolutely devoid of quality, I wander around inside my "individuality" in the sense of Abbagnano, trying to furnish it as best I can, but in these forced conditions I am a person capable and expert only in minutiae. The qualitative essentials escape me, and if I try in these conditions, that is, bringing with me the baggage of my experiences of doing, I am thrown out.

In fact, and here Abbagnano seems to have a suspicion when he writes: "The world remains for me an appearance, until I have made up my mind about myself. It offers me only the changing and fickle prospects of equivalent possibilities among which I am without guidance. It is devoid of consistency and seriousness, it is a futile game in which meaningless events take place, leaving no trace. But when I have decided to be what I am called to be, when I commit myself to realizing the substance of my being, then the world arises and reveals itself before me as a stable and consistent reality, in which what

happens is not indifferent to me, because it affects me or my tasks and in which therefore nothing useless happens". (Ib., p. 60). And so it is if my decision is simply that "I have decided to be what I am called to be". Here there is the suspicion of a marker that can make the decision other than what it normally is, a factual choice, that is, a prisoner. But what is this marker? Only my commitment? Not possible. My commitment is not a "call". Who calls me? The substance. It is therefore this entity that brands and marks my life in a certain way. This sounds like reading Augustine. But I know that this is not true. Abbagnano is not Augustine. It is a small imbroglio of words. There is no one to mark me, only my fear seals me in the world of forced doing and makes my situation precarious. So Abbagnano concludes: "Whether the world is appearance or reality, whether the totality in which I live, the beings with whom I am in relationship, are insubstantial and fallacious phantoms, or valid and effective realities, is not a theoretical problem that can be solved by an investigation of thought: it is an existential problem that I must decide, by deciding about myself". (Ib., p. 61). This is a courageous affirmation, but it is misleading because it always falls back on the decision that, by choosing, safeguards and does not put everything into play. Here, right here, remains the most extreme contrast between my theses and his, not so extreme at the time of our frequentation, much more extreme today, but this is now of little importance. What matters is the current disposition of thought, his crystallized, mine in continuous transformation. I have never gone beyond the point of no return, even if recently, during my last imprisonment in Greece, I came very close to it, almost to the point of smelling the rancid odor of death; he never raised his sails, he died without realizing he was dying because he had already died before and one cannot die twice.

"Why am I what I am and not something else?" asks Abbagnano. And he answers: "In any circumstance of place and time, I would be what I am, if what I am is the substance of my being. My vocation places me above the variability of circumstances, facing a task that is not susceptible to being modified by them. What I must be, the substance of my being, cries out to me from within with such an impassioned and irresistible call that I am unable to admit any other effective direction for my existence. I have chosen to be what I essentially am: my destiny is decided". (Ib., p. 62). Once again the words of his craft betray him. "Vocation," "task," "I have chosen to be what I essentially am." Nothing with this outdated paraphernalia can give color and strength to what "urges", a concept that is certainly not philosophical, at least not necessarily, and that gives the idea of something catapulting out of me that remains compulsory and prisoner in me. But there is no vocation for freedom just as there is no destiny already decided. A sign that distinguishes freedom has never been identified, there are no recorded free behaviors in doing, there are small movements of the chain, gilding or lengthening, not abolition. Nothing indicates a being called - Abbagnano here repeats himself - to freedom. There are no free men and that's it, there are courageous attempts, overstepping and remembrances that provide indications regarding the paths to freedom. The same for destiny. Talking to destiny means addressing a message to it that concerns one's own life. If this is forced, destiny will also be forced and dumb. Things will be different in the case of overcoming. The desert wind, after all, reaches him. Movements subtracted from the will to possess are envisaged. In front of destiny, Abbagnano attempts a sort of rigorous reduction to the original element of the problematic open with the decision. He writes: "Once again the position of a question on the theoretical level reveals an existential insufficiency that makes its solution impossible. Once again it is a question of existing, that is, of deciding. The choice of destiny is the decision I make about myself. If I feel and am an ordinary man, any fate or event would suit me. But if I am truly myself and have committed myself with all my being to the task that is proper to me, the matter is already settled: this is what I would be in any case, in all circumstances; this, and nothing else". (Ib., pp. 62-63). The operation fails, it is too open, too superficial. Life is not subject to the feedback of a periodic table, it does not reshuffle props, these fall like pins at the first gust of wind. On the one hand, we look for the minimum components - the choices - and we identify one of them as transcendental, on the other hand, we consider destiny as a counterpart and we try to capture it by

chasing it in its meanders, placed in the future as if it were leaving behind a phosphorescent strip. In the attempt to create a safe haven in the making, it closes the door to destiny which thus reveals itself for what it is, the continuation of a bad business, a safe construction as safe as a coffin from which the corpse has no intention of escaping. To reason about destiny from the starting point of making is madness, a macabre dance to remember a dead life. But there is another way to talk to destiny and it is from the desolate territory of the overcoming, where every possession is put in question, put at risk. Not the theoretical risk that Abbagnano suspects, but the real risk in which life is at stake, not the appearance of a status that could be compromised. In the extreme game of qualitative research, freedom comes towards me and can crumble all my certainties, all guarantees, all protections. This is the voice of destiny that suddenly arrives and thwarts the science that has illuminated my doing up to that moment.

Why do I have to live in the world considering it as a task to be fulfilled? Abbagnano poses the problem and does not solve it, he goes around it. "Existence is the movement that continuously takes me beyond myself, not only in the world, but also among others. By its very individualizing character, existence establishes my vital connection between myself and others: for my individuality is bounded and constituted by a complex of determinations that go beyond me and necessarily include other men. My existence, by the fact of being mine, is existence with others. I cannot attribute to myself a task, modest and limited as it may be, that does not include, as its necessary condition, my coexistence with others. I do not arrive at the existence of others by means of any discursive or theoretical procedure; it is connected to my own existence in a vital way". (Ib., pp. 63-64). Here my dignity and that of others, of all others, coincide. Good. But why should this take place as the fulfillment of a duty, under the protection of a norm? Shouldn't freedom regulate everything in the world? But freedom would put me in a game that is too random for me to be fulfilled in the world. So here I grant others the same rights as me, the equality of the common minimum. If I choose the appearance of doing, my relationships with others will be factually apparent; if, on the other hand, I involve myself - that is, I neither choose nor decide - but am the very overcoming of the forced world that imprisons me, if I access quality, I drag the world with me into an adventure whose outcome I do not know. There is no guarantee for me or for others. All solidarity is denied me, so I am an outcast watched on sight. The world becomes suspicious of those who reek of danger, isolates them and accepts for them only the symbol of secular funerals. "Interhuman understanding," "effective and working solidarity among men bound together by a common historical task," these democratically bleak formulas are Abbagnano's most certain contribution to the cave of massacres. After all, in freedom and in the quality in which freedom reaches its maximum tension, man is alone, and Abbagnano has very harsh words against isolation. He writes: "Existential isolation is proper to a dispersive and improper existence. Isolation is the breaking of human solidarity, it is incomprehension. It has nothing to do with the solitude in which man gathers in order to better hear the voice of other men, whether near or far, and to devote himself freely to the task he has chosen. Isolation is voluntary blindness in front of oneself and in front of others; it is the misrecognition of what we are for ourselves and for others and of what others are for themselves and for us. To isolate oneself is to turn one's back on one's substance as a human being and to deny oneself fulfillment. Complete isolation is madness, whereby man is lost for good in the disorder of total incomprehension." (Ib., p. 65). There is not a single word of this diatribe that I agreed with at the time I first read it, more than half a century ago, and I still disagree with a single word today. To insulate oneself from the appearance of solidarity is to be in solidarity, where to be means what is and cannot not be. The solitude of the visionary makes me smile, and I think Abbagnano made him smile too, but to isolate oneself from the doing that unites all men in their busyness around murder is the only acceptable condition of life for a man who does not consider himself a coward. In fact, solidarity has been absorbed in the world in appearance and takes the repulsive form of assistance and the enslavement of labor if not of imprisonment and is satisfied with the delegation of each, in the political

slime all have a way of making their small contribution to the lake of blood that is always filling up. In this way we understand each other in indifference and extraneousness, society - abusively defined "community" by Abbagnano - is a mixture in which sordid corners grow and spread, where obscure businesses have taken the place of human feelings, disguising them as clownish attitudes. Svidrigajlov's bathroom is the world, the cobwebs are its excrescences, its tumors, its markings. The world is merciless with those who challenge it and it is necessary that it be so because that challenge that expresses freedom could question its foundations, the very foundations of order, while it is founded only on the iron execution of certain rules, on the implementation of certain correspondences. Time, history, life and destiny are only part of these rules and correspondences. Woe to those who question them; they are immediately expelled and locked up in a suitable place, prison, asylum, etc. Abbagnano knows all this but goes on his way. For him, destiny can be possessed and therefore, possessed, it constitutes a knowledge in the sense not of a known but of a decision that commits him to face time.

Here is how he expresses the problem: "Man is placed by existence in front of the choice between time and eternity. Time is the very nature of the indeterminacy of his state. Indetermination is, as we have seen, the fundamental instability of man, the problematic nature of his relationship with being. The problematicity means the possible nullity of the relationship, the possibility of its resolution. Because of the instability that is constitutive of him, man can lose and lose each and every one of his possibilities of being and is therefore defined by death and time. Time is the possibility that each and every one of man's possibilities be lost; death is the possibility that all his possibilities be annulled and that he himself be annulled. Death and time or, in general, temporality, therefore, essentially determine the nature of man insofar as it is indetermination and problematic. Temporality is not an accidental circumstance of man's existence, a provisional state of his being, from which it is conceivable that he could be removed. Temporality defines the nature, the ultimate constitution of man, because it is the very problematic nature of his being. Everything that man is, he is by virtue of his problematic nature; and this is temporality itself. An entity that was not subject to time and death would not be a man. Any consideration of man is devoid of truth if it prescind from his constitutive temporality." (Ib., pp. 66-67). There is no possibility of anchoring in the eternal. The very concept of "eternal" is contradictory to that of "temporality". This proposes a development and a strong compromise of one's certainties; that is simply it. It is time that overlaps the eternal and covers it, swallowing it up. Abbagnano, in his need for security, turns the relationship upside down and uses the majesty of the immovable to articulate the foundation of the uncertain that moves by erasing its extreme consequences, which are those of chaos. It is this - which he improperly calls "nothingness" - that dwells at the doors and that urges man not towards the eternal, in which the solicitation is lacking, but towards an acceleration, towards extreme compromise, towards the quality that is a different world, neither eternal nor temporally codifiable, but punctual. In doing, the eternal is not even visible, everything is contingent, but it is precisely this precariousness that makes us see how the eternal could only be a continuous, immutable, forced doing, a kind of winter without spring, long, cold, immovable, monotonous. In the doing there are no appreciable differences, as in the eternal of which Abbagnano's anchors fabulate, there are no gradations, everything is devoid of color and flavor, dull and gray. And the eternal provides the appearance of a safe harbor without storms or pigmentation.

Looking for this impossible safe harbor, which is not found on any nautical chart, Abbagnano writes: "Because of the indeterminacy of my state, the future comes to me and I do not know what it brings me. My being is a possibility of being that can launch me in many directions and also into nothingness. This dispersive and nullifying possibility is part of me, indeed it is myself. But recognizing it as myself means bringing it back to me, unifying it in my unity and for my unity, that is, subordinating it to the task I have set myself and to the choice I have made. I anticipate this possibility with my decision and I lead it back to the past; and so I place my past as my future, I escape the threat of dispersion and

establish the unity and consistency of my self. That possibility of being, at first sight obscure and threatening, is illuminated in the light of my past. I am to be what I have been. The substance of my being normatively welds my future with my past; and therefore it constitutes my past in the future by making it the norm of myself. I will have to be in the future what I really have been, what I have always been: I will have to be that me who has overcome and won the momentary dispersions, not the one who sometimes got lost and dispersed. The reduction of the future to the past is also the constitution of the past in the future. This reduction and this constitution form a simultaneous act that is the historicity of my being." (Ib., pp. 68-69). The eternal is thus welded to the past. I "must" be my past, which sounds more like a condemnation than a true opening. It is the "substance" of my being that "normatively welds" the future and the past. Note the legal term chosen here to better fix the concept. My "historicity" is this rootedness, the present that "defines" itself in its particulars, that draws me out of chaos and makes me be myself. This would be freedom as opposed to the dispersion that rushes into me if I disregard temporality. Abbagnano welded a cosmic circle and closed himself inside it. Every overcoming is made impossible, indeed avoided as a danger. The dimensions of doing apparently multiply in their fictitious diversification, but it is only appearance, their being is the eternal frozen and gray winter. But even if we were to accept this forced condition as good, it does not at all guarantee the foundation sought. In fact, inside of it hatch forces that cannot be restrained, they are camouflaged in the eternal repetition, but then something of them breaks the magic circle that hypnotizes it and goes towards the opening. In every man, even in Abbagnano, the power that can access quality is hidden; it is a matter of seeing whether the opposing forces, those of fear and the desire for security, do not end up getting the better of them. It is not a matter of decision, it is not the sphere of wills that can be more or less involved, but consciousness, man in his autonomous solicitation for completeness, this is what moves. If Abbagnano says: "The decision takes me away from temporality as dispersion and insignificance and leads me to historicity as unity and permanence of meaning. The historicity in which I place myself with the effective decision realizes the unity of my own individuality and at the same time the universal meaning of being with respect to which my own unity is defined. Historicity thus realizes the simultaneous constitution of my true self and my true being: in a word, the substance of existence." (Ib., p. 70). It does not explain why "historicity" constitutes "unity and permanence." The forces of chaos have not disappeared at the mere sound of the word "historicity," they act freely and wildly, they dance on my heart, they challenge me to go further, not to let myself die in the tedium of forced doing. There are no guardians of freedom. The great theorists of philosophy - this is not the case of Abbagnano - have tried in every way to present themselves as the archons of this ideal, they have all failed, their contributions have ended up in the cave of massacres. Abbagnano is more modest, he knows very well that he is not a great philosopher - then, in everyday life, everyone has the illusion of being what he wants - and he seeks a simpler level. The tools of his reasoning, as any careful reader of these pages can see, are sometimes of a disconcerting banality. There are not the elements for a theory that can make the word "being" resonate in our hearts, the technical formulas soften the same element common to his theses, the indeterminacy, which had fascinated me so much, and this happens because the concept itself has no way to develop towards its natural conclusion, freedom. The philosopher intervenes first and takes precautions, he avoids that something dangerous can bud, acquiring intensity that then would not be traceable to control.

But the surprises are not over. Abbagnano continues: "The movement that realizes the authenticity of existence by taking it from the insignificant dispersion of temporality to the meaningful unity of history, from threat to risk, from self-denial to self-intelligence, can be described in its totality as an existential interpretation of substance. For in it the original substance of existence is realized as a return to itself that is an act of self-interpretation. The return of substance to itself is not an act of reflection to which the self to which it returns is already presupposed, but it is an act that poses the problem of the self to which it must return. I must remain faithful to myself, to my substance; but until I have

effectively decided on this faithfulness, I do not have a self, a true substance of my being. The return implicit in the decision is at the same time the act of the recognition and the constitution of my original substance: which therefore by this act is interpreted in its truth". (Ib., pp. 70-71). The movement by which certainty takes root is therefore hermeneutical in nature. The thing is not clear but it performs a kind of sealing task. What I used to do by deciding now I do by deciding behind an interpretation of my deciding. My substance is not only decided by me but also interpreted in the truth that grounds it. Why then decision-making hermeneutics can bring out the truth from what I am, my self-sacrificing being remaining in the coercive doing, is unknown. In the end, interpretation merely reconfirms and consolidates - still reassuring verses - my substance, and thus seals it in its "normativity". What if someone decides to burn this tombstone that weighs on the doing and makes it compulsory? What if he decides to burn it and go beyond a decision that affects his life, not that makes it possible to look at it while I am deciding? What if he refuses to accept a historical document on which his fate is written? Abbagnano's answer is disarming: "Interpretation has eliminated the threat, not the risk, of existence. The risk demands that I remain vigilant in the task with which I have identified myself: that is, that I continue and renew the act of interpretation, deepening it incessantly with a repetition that is not simply its reiteration because it is the same vital continuity of my fidelity to myself". (Ib., p. 71). "Vigilant," what a word dense with policing meanings. In many ways one can delude oneself, but this is one of the most repugnant, and it is necessary that each of these recuperative words be embraced in its scope and breadth of implication.

How can it be that "The interpretation of substance is the realization of the transcendental"? (Ibid.). Hermeneutics solicits a word, a theory, even a condition, it also solicits it incessantly from within, it enlarges its acta, until even it becomes an immense accumulation, until it never stops taking a circular form, but how does it realize the transcendental? Perhaps the doing travels towards quality even when I see myself surrounded by the walls of a prison? Perhaps, but Abbagnano seems to me unaware, and safe, of this doubt. Originality for him is not an a priori but an interpretive return. So here hermeneutics has only something intimate, a sort of sollicitation of immediate consciousness? It is not easy to say. He states, "The relation to being constitutive of existence, is by the interpretive act brought back to its original possibility and founded on that possibility; this possibility is the transcendental condition of that relation and that is of the whole existential movement." (Ib., p. 72). The circle is thus welded, but only apparently; it is metaphysical technique at work. Transcendence is the producer of normativity and shapes the value of every statement in such a way that everything remains confined to the happening of what has already happened, so that the real, concrete risk remains outside the door. The feral privilege of blocking the doing in its compulsory continuity, in the end, belongs to the interpretation or, if you prefer, "the transcendence of the substance becomes the transcendent of existence". This is an all-encompassing, eminently abstract movement that subsists independently of any attempt to prevent it. Abbagnano does not realize this, but with his own metaphysical concepts, he is describing the functioning and the feeding of coercion in its relation to the cave of massacres. Here the murder accumulates and settles beyond the benevolent intentions of philosophers and their more or less consenting students.

From the many articulations of Abbagnano's existentialist philosophy, the positive cut emerges. In particular, he speaks about it in greater depth when he deals with the constitution of the ego. Here are his words: "The authenticity of the problem opens the way for existential analysis to a positive consideration of human existence as such. Relationship, indeterminacy, problematicity, constitute existence in its fundamental positivity. This positivity expresses the capacity of existence to consist in itself and to decide and define itself by itself. This capacity is revealed primarily in the constitution of the "I" as the final term of man's relationship with himself. The position of the problem of existence on the plane of authenticity immediately leads to placing the problem of the self on the same plane. The

fact that existence is intimately constituted as a problematic relationship immediately implies that man himself is inwardly constituted as a problem of his own finitude, as the problem of the "I". The constitution of the "I" does not precede or determine the problematic relation, but occurs precisely in that relation. The "I" is constituted in the act in which it recognizes as authentic and faces the existential problem. This act is a placing of the ego before itself, it is a recognition, the ego realizes that it is not given to itself, that it does not enjoy the placid and exclusive possession of itself." (Ib., pp. 83-84). The reasoning here develops in the most familiar procedures. The acting subject this time is the self that seeks a unity of foundation so as to escape dispersion. Whether it is man who recognizes himself as I in the unity that overcomes the chaotic nature of possible attitudes or vice versa, the thing is the same. Recognizing its own fundamental problematicity, the "I" returns to itself from dispersion. Metaphysical attempt to come out of the multiplicity without end and without purpose, which is not apparent, of doing. The incessant swarming of ephemeral appearances in life governed by doing cannot be arrested by anchoring the ego in metaphysical ground. It is necessary to look for another kind of movement, more irregular and difficult, to brake this tidal motion of doing and to go beyond it. It is necessary to move towards a more intimate force. Towards a different consciousness that seeks a different world, not just a different way of anchoring the same world of compulsion. This condition is as cruel as the nakedness of the qualitatively other is cruel. It tends to overwhelm the doing at the heart of its greater productive engagement. For its part, doing must be forced to break its own chains; it cannot do so on its own. The will governs it rigidly, forcing it to want to repeat itself. This is not the dispersion from which the self must return to unity, but it is precisely unity. Chaos, on the other hand, is freedom, the different qualitative world where man cannot enter unless he acquires a different consciousness, and this is the negation of positivity in the sense in which Abbagnano understands it.

But let us go back to this positivity. In order to exist, it must be recognized as founded on reason, it is not only one of the two ways of evaluating the reality in front of us. For Abbagnano reason is the self itself: "The problem of the self, considered and placed in its authenticity, is connected to the problem of reason. The act with which the ego withdraws from the dispersion of its incoherent attitudes to the substantial unity of its problematic nature, is the very act with which it faces those attitudes as a principle or judging activity, as intelligence or reason. Realizing himself as original problematicity, he realizes himself as judging reason. Having found the norm of his constitution, he makes this norm the criterion of an active and constructive judgment of himself and of the world. This active and constructive judgment, this intelligence that man makes of himself, this reorganization that he undertakes of the attitudes and situations to which he is bound, constitute his rationality, his intelligence". (Ib., pp. 85-86). Anchored in its own constitutive condition, made certain of itself, the ego becomes judging reason, that is, judgment on the world and on things, reorganization and reorganization, rationality and intelligence. And yet this cautious and circumspect definition is not convincing. If I understand it well, it tries to subtract the ego from something extraneous and refractory, something illogical, that attracts it and wants to conquer or entice it. A grain of logical insolvency dispersed in the world of doing totally covered by the correspondences of the a poco a poco. Abbagnano seems to be aware of the stranglehold that the ego has on the neck when it considers itself in front of the compulsion that administers it, but he does not understand that the one who feels this stranglehold is also caught by the neck by something else and that he is seen by something else while he too is caught by the neck, and so on and so forth. The world is this infernal circle of forced action in which one communicates by grabbing oneself by the neck. There is no harmony in this but violence, not reason but oppression. Or, if there is reason, it is violence and oppression.

Abbagnano realizes the validity of this incongruous relationship when he writes: "In reality, rationality does not constitute by itself the way of understanding and penetrating the nature of man and his situation in the world. Considered in itself, it appears either as a dialectical and objective organization,

or as an absolute subjectivity that is the act of this organization. In either case, the problem of rationality escapes the domain of rationality; yet this problem is fundamental to the very constitution of rationality, which is not active and constructive except because it constitutes itself problematically, emerging from the dispersion and disorganization of the self and the world." (Ib., p. 86). A condition in which the "I" would be deprived of any possibility of anchorage, it would remain at the mercy of the aforementioned concentric circles, where each circle reproduces the previous one and enlarges it but does not deny it, indeed it confirms it. More. Within this mechanism the "I" would not even see the circles, it would not have access to them, it would be strangled and strangled without anything helping it to understand, just as it would be an unaware provider of the cave of massacres.

In this way, the aberration called rationality - says Abbagnano - would necessarily be condemned to live the same nightmare. "Rationality placed as the foundation of itself, that is, of the intelligence of the self and its situation in the world, would get out of the way the authenticity of the existential problem because it would render the problematic nature of existence meaningless. The law of the constitution of man and the world would be fixed in advance. It would not be up to man, nor would it be up to him to decide, not even to recognize this law which would act infallibly in the very interiority of his constitution". (Ib., p. 87). In the solution proposed, one would find not only a way out of the infernal circles mentioned above, but also a reconstructive way, blocking access to the cave of massacres. Reason is in charge of this pious illusion. The moment the ego recognizes its nature, reason is born, that is, its rational unity. The passage and the opening that have been outlined in this way are wasted in the relapse into the world of forced action. In Abbagnano there is not a hint of going beyond. The unity that grounds the rational order is the same unity of the self, that is, the problematic unity of its nature. Yet Abbagnano notes a difference, that the unity of the self is constituted by the commitment to decision, but not realizing that this decision in doing is subject to the power of control, he cannot but accept the dominant reason, which is also organized and administered by that control and power. Doing is an application of the power of control of the world and reason is the way in which this power becomes the concrete power to do according to certain rules. That man is not automatically reason but can be does not shift the problem if he remains within the domain that controls the unity chosen by the self. Man is obliged to this choice not because of a dispersive attitude, on the contrary precisely because of his commitment to produce and guarantee the product from the uncertainties of destiny. The great ocean of power that administers everything according to the rules of the cave of massacres, must be faced with the courage of overcoming. Man and his life are in quality, in quantity they languish and die.

Abbagnano's statement is not at all surprising: "Nothing can be objected, in a certain sense, against the Hegelian aphorism: all that is rational is real, all that is real is rational. The being of the self is unity; and unity is rationality, the principle of judgment and evaluation. The being of the world is its order, and order is rationality." (Ib., p. 88). And it matters not that the self must transcend if it is to come to being and the world to come to being needs the self if then both drown in the slime of the cave where the lake of blood is. It does not seem to bother Abbagnano that this extraordinary factual commerce wanders around in the depths of everyday life, impregnating with itself the human life that, in slavery, drowns in excrement, surrounded by splendid architecture or by peeling plaster. There is something crazy about all this metaphysical tinkering to defend prison structures, tutelary and guarantor settlements, small patches of small lives, all this misery. In fact, looking back, Abbagnano says: "The recognition of the existential problem allows the integral preservation of the results that philosophical speculation has achieved over the centuries by proceeding along the path of reason. But these results are enriched and systematized on the basis of a true intelligence of man". (Ib., p. 89). And what are these results? Why do they make the eyes of the old philosophy professors glisten as they are glued to their academic desks? They are the supplies given to the murderers. The ignoble descent, more or less conscious, to the cave of horrors. In this claim of definitive and progressive accommodation there is

something crazy, something that shines in the sun of every theory but that does not give at all the impression of a noble task as much as of an ascent to the underworld, since the objective is blatantly reversed. The generalized suffocation does not allow to breathe, we should go further, but the sovereign power of control and guarantee prevents it.

How can the "I" reach the intelligence of its unity with the world through the authentic setting of the existential problem? Abbagnano answers with a repetition: "in the relationship with the world". This is the same as saying in relation to oneself. He writes: "The truth of the world, that is, the revelation of the being of the world (of its reality) is conditioned by the realizing decision of the self. It is certainly not the 'I' that posits the world, nor is the world in any case immanent to the 'I'; the world has its reality its being-in-itself. But the reality or being-in-itself in the world can only reveal itself to the I in the act of its authentic constitution. Before and independently of this act, the world is an insubstantial appearance, it is a scattering of insignificant events, it is a disordered succession of facts. Coming to being the self as a unity and placing itself, by virtue of this unity, as the principle of objective evaluations, the world is revealed in its being-in-itself. And thus revealing itself, it constitutes itself in its unitary organization and offers the ego the guide to lead itself in it and to dominate it. The constitutive rationality of the being of the world thus finds its transcendental condition in the unity in which the "I" gathers with the act of the realizing decision. The being of the world is transcendent, just as the being of the self is transcendent. In any case, being is transcendent. It is the final term of the existential relationship, the term towards which existence continually transcends when it returns to its original problematic nature. Only in the act of recognizing itself in this problematicity, that is, in the act of realizing it as original, does existence establish and ground the transcendental that is at the basis of all being." (Ib., pp. 90-91). A mutual revelation as being-in-itself, the self and the world. The world - with its ferocity and absurdity - is rationalized in the hesitant little soul of the philosopher who contemplates it by transcending his own problematic nature. For a long time, when I was little more than a boy, I sat in front of my work table, my head in my hands, reflecting on this passage. I don't want to resume the same position. What can I do in the face of two transcendences meeting in mid-air in a triple flip? Nothing. Here the closing of the argument is entrusted to the ghosts of philosophy, servile nightmares of demons resuming their work in the subterranean streams of murder. One cannot prove unfounded an argument that does not exist, one can only say that its author is cheating at the game. The key to the world is not found in a transcendental movement that in the most benevolent of cases means a generalization, it is just not found. It is the world that opens me up like a can of sardines and makes me perform puppet movements, clown stunts, whatever you want, and it is precisely this that corresponds to the world, that is corresponding and supportive to me. If the clash becomes concrete, it is because I am the one asking the questions, not some medium in a philosopher's palandrana. And if my courageous rebellion as a man who seeks and is unable to be satisfied with what passes for the convent, goes beyond the forced world of doing, then no transcendence is possible and it is not worth putting obstacles or rewards in the name of order and stability. If the different consciousness spreads, the interplay of forces that clash is between the chaotic and free quality and the "I" that is no longer such, because now it lives a different life, even if only for a moment, a life of which it will be able to remember something and not simply recount an experience as one recounts a train journey. Quality and quantity, acting and doing, can also ignore each other and man then builds his own theater where Chinese shadows materialize the appearance in the wall of the cave of massacres. It is easy to imagine how these shadows can mimic the different qualitative being for a long time and how the annihilation of the quantitative appearance can last for a long time.

The confirmation of this unresolved dichotomy is given by Abbagnano with the problem of corporeality. Here it is: "But that man is an element of the world implies that the world is a totality of elements of which man is a part. The existential relationship thus determines the constitution of a

totality of elements, in whose order man is inserted by virtue of the same relationship. By virtue of this insertion, man is conditioned by the world: he needs the elements of the world for his own realization. Man's situation in the world is therefore defined by the need in which his sensitive nature is expressed. Need implies the mutual externality of the elements of the world among themselves, and with man as an element of the world, that is, it implies the corporeality of these elements and of man himself. The consideration of the elements of the world in their corporeal objectivity is knowledge: and insofar as knowledge is systematically organized, it gives rise to science." (Ib., pp. 92-93). Need is an expression of man's loss in the world of doing, of the everydayness and vanity of his efforts to survive. All this, as we know, is far from life, that is, from being. Abbagnano realizes this but does not understand why. He affirms that "man is not being, nor does he have being, but he is in relationship with being", but he does not explain that this relationship, if it were authentic, would give man the life he deserves, one that is qualitatively satisfying. Instead, it is precisely the need that nails him to dependence on the world. It is a fiction that in the long run becomes true reality. Closed up in doing, huddled on the defensive, sealed by the opacity of the philosophers' affirmations, where can man find the courage to go beyond this condition of dependence? Abbagnano answers: "Man can clarify to himself his necessary dependence on the world only in the act of affirming his freedom: that is, only in the act of recognizing in the problematic nature of his relationship with being his original nature. The authenticity of the existential problem allows man to confront his dependence on the world without bitterness and without illusions, and to transform this dependence into dominion ever more effectively through science." (Ib., p. 93). This is not an answer is a petition of principle. The qualitative adventure is something else, it cannot remain locked in the control room and it cannot be triggered by any transcendental metaphysics. If we wait for a sign from philosophy books, it will never come. Basically we spend our lives waiting for a sign, a way forward, a satisfaction of needs. This is why life is exhausting. We all flare up asking for something. We are given coercive doing, a substitute for living, we all wag our tails contentedly. Humanity is a boundless mass lost in the darkness of quantity. From time to time a flash breaks the leaden horizon, someone has broken the banks at his peril. Abbagnano does not see how something like this could happen. For him, life is a problem for man because it is a problem in itself, and only in this way does it realize the foundation of itself and of man. However, the process can be reversed. No break, just an existential circle. The most serious problem that has ever occupied the mind of man is trivialized into a transcendental correspondence between existence and coexistence.

He writes: "If existence did not transcend man, man would be in his finitude the totality of existence. There would be no existence beyond the individual, beyond me. But since existence transcends man and is given to him only in the relation of transcendence, the finitude of the individual does not exhaust existence. Existence is transcendence of the individual toward existence such transcendence is coexistence." (Ib., p. 94). But what existence is he talking about? Certainly not the quality, different experience that man can live totally in involvement, putting his life on the line, trying to be freedom himself, the supreme quality of all. Certainly the life of doing something forced corresponds to Abbagnano's clarification, but is it life or is it an appearance? He continues: "The fundamental problematic nature of existence is therefore the root of its coexistential nature. If the existential relationship were given to the individual in an exclusive and total form, there would be no coexistence. But it is given to him in the form of finitude, that is, of problematicity and transcendence. Therefore, the individual cannot proceed towards the being of his ego and of the world unless he proceeds originally towards the being of the other individual, of the other ego and of the common belonging to the world. Coexistence expresses the original form of existential transcendence. The relation with oneself and with the world is originally the relation of the entity with the other entity, of man with man." (Ib., pp. 94-95). I know this brotherhood of outcasts well, it has been my daily life for months in the Greek galleys where I am writing these lines. But when will someone be able to show the hidden intention that lies within every appeal to democratic coexistence? When will someone be able to show

the monster that lives inside this mausoleum of respectability? When will the invisible tribes take aggressive form and break the chains? If it were true that man searches for his being and that of the world, he could not accept to live with his mouth watering, instead he searches in doing only that much air that allows him not to die, or better to die in installments. There is no authentic foundation of the existential problem if not by breaking the chains of possession deriving from forced doing.

Abbagnano insists: "The problematic nature must be pushed to the bottom and recognized in its ultimate root, which is not the instability and indetermination of being, but the instability and indetermination of existence itself. Because of this ultimate problematic nature of existence, man needs man, not as the things of the world, which are the means and instruments of his realization, but as his very existence, which intrinsically constitutes itself in the relationship with itself; that is, of man with the other man, of I with you". (Ib., p. 96). Right, but not present in the world; here, on the contrary, man is nexus and instrument for man, and doing produces the other man, and the relations that bind me to him, in the same way that it produces commodities. There is no difference between objects and relations in the world of forced making. Here man needs man as he needs any object, here lies the claustrophobia of the world in which the administered and not the lived dominates. Everything is governed by the prohibition and every breach of this prohibition causes the lack of balance necessary for control. If I look for the other in a different way, that is, not reducing him to an object, I must give him an appointment in quality, not in quantity. Abbagnano, however, insists: "The originality of this relation is the foundation of the rational nature of the self and of the world. We have seen that the "I", constituting itself as a unity, acts as a principle of judging reason and determines the rational organization of the totality to which it belongs. But judging reason has no other norm or criterion than the unity of the self, which is a single, concrete and unmistakable unity. How can this unity be valid as the foundation and criterion of universal evaluations? The foundation of such universality is in coexistential transcendence." (Ibid.). Once again a fictitious overcoming, that is, a transcendence - Hegel had done better with his dialectical removal - not a transcending. Nietzsche slipped like oil on Abbagnano. Judgmental reason, thus the authentic way in which one chooses, is given, and controlled, by the principle of coexistence. No one should disturb, freedom is an administrative matter like so many, the product of a clash of opinions. It can be spoken of in this way only because philosophers do not know it. And here is the conclusion: "The constitutive transcendence of unity, founded in the constitutive transcendence of coexistence, realizes the universality of unity. This universality is not an abstract requirement: it is the concrete transcendence of existence towards existence. It is constituted by reason, but it has its foundation in the existential relationship. Once again reason refers to existence, and precisely to its ultimate root, to the transcendence of existence towards itself." (Ib., pp. 96-97). Universal unity, the union of the self and the world in transcendence, is thus realized in reason. Terror always comes in this way, the process that moves from unity to reason is a process of strengthening power in the world of doing. No massacre has ever had its reasons lacking. Something treacherous crawls underneath these reasonings and drives man to eavesdrop at man's door not to face him bravely in the sphere of qualitative involvement. The shapeless mass of doing is directed crawling towards the cave of slaughter. Bad fury is mistaken for loving brotherhood amidst the dust of forced doing. Hypocrisy advances by stealth and takes possession of the heart of man.

The root of existence is identified by Abbagnano in birth and death, once again life is at stake, but without specifying or distinguishing between doing and acting. This risks reducing everything to biological corporeality and therefore not realizing how many living dead populate the world. He writes: "Birth and death refer to the coexistential foundation of existence. Existence is born from existence, man from man. Birth is the possibility that man creates man, existence existence. Death is the possibility of man being taken away from man; existence from existence. Birth and death are not the extreme terms between which existence runs: they are fundamental determinations of existence,

constitutive of its essence. Existence is, in its very nature, birth and death". (Ib., pp. 97-98). Of course, biological reduction is only this, but man is also something else. Reducing man to the root means stealthily annihilating him, while affirming something that can be considered obvious. And any flattening of man to his incontrovertible animality is gloomy and lacerating, although this is perhaps the most suitable description of a factual life, closed in the limbo of quantity. Man is not birth insofar as he is death, and vice versa; between these two poles there may be innumerable other constant births and deaths, unnoticed or felt. One can be born to a different life and continue to live dying a little every day without realizing it. Abbagnano does not say this, but he suspects it when he affirms: "Birth, then, is the recognition and the decisive realization of the originality of the coexistential bond and the resolving of fidelity to this bond in its concrete bonds that condition any transcendence towards oneself and towards the world". (Ib., p. 98). But it is not fidelity that guarantees membership in society - Abbagnano insists here on speaking of community, which is something else with another kind of relationship - but, on the contrary, the abandonment of the coercive bonds of coexistential doing, the acceptance of an opening towards quality. The same misunderstanding affects the reflection on death. He says: "On the other hand, the recognition that existence is, by its essence, death, means the decisive acceptance of the negative aspect of the existential problematic, insofar as it is the possibility of loss. The relation of existence to itself, being purely problematic, can at any moment be lost and destroyed. Possibility is always, also, the possibility of the non-possible. The threat of the resolution of the coexistential relationship always hangs over this relationship; and the threat also concerns man's relationship with himself and with the world. Existence can always be torn from existence; man from other man, as well as from himself and from the world. This threat must not be illusorily veiled, but must be recognized and looked at in the face: it must be assumed as the ineradicable risk of every truly human attitude. The acceptance of risk implies the acceptance of finitude." (Ib., p. 99). What about the death that is experienced every day as a forced condition of existence and that is called life? The pure and simple life of every day is assimilated to death if it does not receive the flash of quality. The misery of this life, in the long run, accustoms us to live fleetingly but concretely a miserable existential certainty, what is lightness and superficiality from simple appearance becomes being, concreteness, existence. But not for long because an immense fatigue and an irrepressible boredom hit the doing and condemn it to the supply of the cave of massacres. Existential solidarity, the counterpart of risk-taking, is no longer there. Everyone tends to survive his own destiny and the ferocious oppression that marks it.

In Abbagnano's formulation, freedom seems to be an obligation and not an involvement that puts one's life at risk. Thus he writes: "Consider man's situation in the world. He is thrown among the events of the world, subject to luck, chance, adversity, and the wills of others. Things determine him through the need he has for them. Other men determine him in a thousand ways, influencing him in his innermost feelings. In the very interiority of his consciousness he is subject to a thousand different and dispersive solicitations. Interests, aspirations, passions, influence in the most subtle and devious ways his attitudes and therefore ultimately enter into the formation of his character and his very nature. He cannot break the thousands of invisible threads that subordinate his inner movements to extrinsic determinations of every kind. What he concretely is and does seems entirely reportable and referable, as in its own sufficient reason, to the situation to which he is bound.

"On the other hand he must be free for his task. The situation itself, which seems to determine him, demands freedom from him. The tasks before him are such that he cannot abandon himself to the easy course of things. If he limits himself to being the wheel of a mechanism, he becomes unequal to his tasks. Commitment, decision and energy are required of him. A heavy burden is imposed on him which he will be able to carry only if he feels and is truly free for his mission. Operating enthusiasm, fidelity and sacrifice are required of him. And he would not be able to give these things if his existence did not have the attitude of freedom and was not, intimately, freedom". (Ib., pp. 103-104). Here everything

revolves around the word "must." But how can one have the duty to be free? When one is not directly and fiercely oppressed, one tries to forget one's painful condition in entertainment, in escaping from reality. This alternation of pain and disengagement is an absurd but consistent condition, it is a set of forces that act on man forcing him to do, to exhaust himself in doing, even when he supposes he is no longer doing anything, even in idleness and dreaming. Man's life is exactly captured as what Abbagnano says it must in no way be, as the wheel of a mechanism. To ask man, as Abbagnano does, for fidelity and sacrifice is to break down an open door. He is faithful to the chain - how could he not be? - and is sacrificed on the altar of possession, of which he deludes himself that he is the holder. Small trades of doing develop tensions not commensurate with their smallness, even a modest obligation can become an unbearable burden. On the contrary, the smaller and almost insignificant are the forces that force man to do, the more evident are the elements that concretize this obligation. Freedom dwells elsewhere. Valuable are the tensions that push us to go beyond, and anxiety about the life we lead is one of them.

Abbagnano, although he too is based on the concept of duty to be free, does not accept Kant's thesis. Referring to this thesis he writes: "The principle of freedom as objective rationality has found its most rigorous expression in Kant's work. Man is free insofar as he acts out of duty; and duty is the law that derives from his own personality insofar as it is reason. Reason is universality and objectivity." (Ib., p. 105). But this thesis, as it radicalizes, shows its consistency as a legal study. Reason limits and denies the multiplicity of motives of free human life. And so Abbagnano concludes: "Such a solution is not an answer to the existential problem of freedom. It does not concern my concrete situation in the world, from which that problem arises. Accepting the concept of intelligible freedom in the Kantian sense simply means eliminating the problem of freedom because it means referring freedom to an intelligible world that is the pure and simple negation of human existence as such. The problem of freedom is not properly addressed." (Ib., p. 106). Negation which, in a different way, is dressed up as reduction in the hypothesis in question. The missing quality whispers its breaths of desert wind and develops dreams and appearances which, on the side of doing, remain just that, yet they are still suffered, interpreted, connected to daily misery. It is in this way that a different consciousness is born, one that looks with other eyes at a repetitive and monotonous scene that in the beyond is only a bad memory.

But not even subjective reason can establish freedom. Here is Abbagnano: "Freedom cannot be understood on the basis of an objective rationality. Is a subjective rationality better suited to found it? Consider in man the absolute subject, the universal spirit or the self-conscious Idea. His life will appear as the manifestation in time of this absolute subjectivity. The fundamental determinations of existence will be entirely referable to the moments of the absolute subject; while in their inevitable oscillations, in their instability, in their imperfections, they will be accidental and negligible elements. Man's freedom will then consist in his coincidence with the absolute spirit, in his returning to it entirely, eliminating all accidentality and all empirical character. Man's freedom will coincide with the necessity of the absolute Subject. The order of the moments and fundamental determinations through which the life of the Absolute unfolds will be the condition of human freedom. Man will be free only insofar as his life identifies with the life of the Absolute and with the necessary order of its moments." (Ib., pp. 106-107). The rejection of this identification-which in Abbagnano is more frightening than the previous one-is given by the presence of a fundamental and constitutive element of man's freedom, his problematic nature. This element cannot be absorbed by any dialectical necessity. Fair statement. But it is not that the relationship with the absolute is not guaranteed because it is problematic, it is not guaranteed because the absolute does not exist. Even less is there a problematic absolute in the beyond, where freedom is grasped in its qualitative bearing. It is a different experience that we cannot deal with unless we involve ourselves fully. If we recalculate, everything is lost in a return to the seduction of what is already guaranteed. The different experience is not an enjoyment of doing, it is another

perception of the world. Lived, it can disappear forever or leave a trace that must be understood and that has no fixed relationship with doing but can affect the chains, making them not weaker but more intolerable. And it is in this experience that man understands that freedom can be neither in forced doing, marked by the order of the goals to be reached, nor in the absolute subject, in which appearance measures a hypothetical foundation of being subtracted from doing, but only in an illusory form, a form that does not need courage or involvement, in fact it is precisely the solution chosen by weak spirits, just as the previous one was chosen by lawyers.

For Abbagnano, freedom is more modestly a relationship with being. He writes: "The possibility of the relation with being is the only possible foundation for an understanding of man as freedom. And if this possibility defines man's own mode of being, that is, existence, it must be said that existence is the only possible horizon for an understanding of man as freedom." (Ib., p. 109). But this is a first line. Between remote transcendence, not directly attainable, and human limitations, specifically for me those of doing, how to fix a relationship? Further, a relationship that is free, how to fix it? And, on the other hand, if existence does not identify itself with being, it means that it does not manage to detach itself from nothing. This hypothesis leads to the conclusion that freedom is freedom for nothingness, that is, for death. From this derives the fear, the fear of living outside of the administered life. But Abbagnano rejects this conclusion. Here is what he writes: "To define the relation with being by its impossibility of identification with being as the impossibility of detachment from nothingness, means to deny the very possibility of the relation, that is, to deny existence. In this case, the interpretation of existence is the negation of existence. The interpretation of existence implying the recognition of the impossibility that it emerges from nothingness, would imply the denial of the relationship with being, that is, of existence itself. The relationship with being is impossible in existence, if existence is nothing but the impossibility of detaching itself from nothingness. And if the relationship with being is impossible, the recognition of this impossibility is not an act of freedom, it is not a choice or a decision, but a passive acceptance of the nature of existence, which is and remains an impossibility, that is, a necessity. Choice then becomes choice of what is already chosen, decision of what is already decided. Freedom is lost in the most radical necessity." (Ib., p. 114). It is impossible to establish and give guarantees by denying. In this dense page, Abbagnano is too arrogant, but in the end he is right. For him, who is in search of a positive foundation, nothingness cannot satisfy him. For him, the suffocating and narrow process of doing is always better than nothing, which appears as something incomprehensible and abstract, since here there is no effort to have or form any idea of being of which nothing is the sum of appearing. Here there is not even the vitiated air of repetitiveness, there is little more than an empty affirmation. As if to say that existence could be nothing, that is, death, but as long as it lives it is not. For those who are afraid the desert wind is terror, more, it is terrifying all that is outside their room, which thus, without knowing it, communicates with the cave of massacres. And the more stories are told about the dangers of quality, the more the fear increases but also the satisfaction of staying warm.

The solution to the problem of freedom is indicated by Abbagnano in the following way: "The intelligence of freedom will be achieved only if existence, even in its simple configuration of relationship with being, is able to find in itself a fundamental positivity, a substance". (Ib., p. 115). The point, then, is positivity, that which assigns and justifies what man must do. This is the point of arrival - and, if you prefer, the highest point - of Abbagnano's speculation. Existential analysis must be, Abbagnano continues, "intelligence and realization of freedom". But positivity cannot solve all the problems of human capture in doing. How long does the winter of dullness last? All of life, one might answer, a long, insistently monotonous life. Even in the best moments of doing, the sky is leaden. To drastically oppose any transformation is the rule of positivity, it lends a hand to appearance only to better dress the bride. Its prerogative is to reduce fear in immediacy, that is, to guarantee and protect, and this makes one happy and ebullient much more than one thinks. Doing offers many different

opportunities, none different, the latter to be faced in the risk and courage capable of abandoning the certain for the uncertain. The atrocious foundation of doing is the foreclosure of destiny. In essence, this is only future identical to the present, repetitiveness and boredom. This is self-sufficiency in misery, there is nothing outside, only further doing. In the world there is a deep uniform wound that leads like a river into the underground of massacres. On this river pass theories and wars, noble and absurd thoughts and cold-blooded murders, and there is not even real resentment or revenge, everything is apparent, only pain and blood are real and constitute that part of being that offers itself to the union with appearance to give life to nothing. The world without quality is nothing. Every savagery, even the most heinous, and with the worst consequences, is born from appearance and dies in nothingness. Savagery, murder and death are not qualities but products of doing. All doing is forever linked to doing, the existing, the being is elsewhere.

Abbagnano continues: "In the relationship with being, transcendence is not presupposed, but recognized and established. Being is posited and revealed as transcendence precisely in the relationship and in virtue of the relationship. And the relation itself in turn is transcendence; it moves towards being, it aspires to conquer and possess being. If transcendence were such beyond and before the relation, the relation itself would be impossible: existence, which is this relation, could not even constitute itself. But that it constitutes itself means that the relation is possible, and this possibility is the positivity of existence. As a relation to being, existence is fundamentally, essentially the possibility of this relation." (Ib., p. 117). Indirect reconfirmation of a possibility of positive existence. For Abbagnano, existence cannot choose "the impossibility of not being nothingness" or even "the impossibility of being transcendence". That is, in its own positivity. And yet things are not like this. Doing is the realm of appearance, which is not yet nothing but can in the long run find its annihilation in the being that could sum it up by annihilating it. Acting is not transcendence insofar as it is not somewhere waiting for me but I must be the one to give it life in the transcendence. My acting in the quality goes beyond the doing and therefore leaves on this side a lack that is wedged as a dangerous contradiction within it. The remembrance of the adventure in quality remains a mystery to the doing, however deeply this clandestine void caused by my abandonment may be engraved, it is incomprehensible to the appearance. Being is always far from appearing because it fears the annihilation that would result from an excessive closeness.

Abbagnano is afraid that something could escape him, that is, he is afraid of the void that the search for quality would create. Here it is: "Now, the possibility of the relationship with being places this relationship on the level of problematicity. The relation with being is possible: this means that it can exist and it can not exist. But this means, first and foremost and fundamentally, that it must be there. If existence is the possibility of the relation, in that possibility it immediately finds the norm of its constitution". (Ib., pp. 117-118). Once again, when fear grows in intensity, the concept of "duty" comes into play. To ignore the relationship with being is to lose oneself and disavow one's existence. The extreme and contradictory part of this fact is that in doing it is this very relationship that is ignored, and if words have any meaning at all the relationship with being could otherwise be said to be a relationship with quality. But this statement is a mere stretch. Yet there is another passage that comforts me in this respect. Man can never be only quality, he would be burned immediately going beyond the point of no return. Abbagnano also says: "Certainly the relationship with being can never produce identification with being. It is precisely from the relation, in fact, that being is established and constituted in its transcendence; and that relation is itself transcendence, in the sense that it moves towards being as what is beyond itself. But if the relation to being is never identification with being, existence can have no other final term of realization than recognizing and strengthening itself in its nature as relation. The initial possibility of the relation must be recognized not abstractly or objectively, but by an act of realizing decision, of final fulfillment." (Ib., p. 118). There is a strange point of closeness here, but only

on the condition of considering being as a quality, which is not authorized by any element of Abbagnano's analysis. Obviously this would be a stretch. The sticking point is the lack, or at any rate the remoteness, of being from doing. This resides in a world as if it were a tiny, dark, underground chamber, works not far from the cavern of massacres, does not want to be disturbed in its mechanisms, and shuns the attention of anyone. Its strength lies in the public secret of life administered, impoverished, constantly brutalized by errands to be fulfilled, often gripped by the terror of losing its own mechanism.

Abbagnano realizes that freedom is not a possession of doing, though he does not come to understand how it can be a quality. He prefers to enclose it in a decision of man, but a choice is not an involvement; we have encountered the difference several times. The quantitative dimension of choice does not access the unitary condition of involvement where there is no way to separate what is to be risked from what is to be preserved and guaranteed. Thus Abbagnano: "It is evident that the problem of freedom cannot be solved by considering whether freedom is an attribute or a capacity proper to human nature. One cannot understand freedom, or, more properly, understand man as freedom, by means of an objective analysis of human capacities or the generic consideration of man's powers. In no case is freedom a capacity or a power that man enjoys as a matter of fact. In no case, therefore, does the problem of freedom present itself as the problem of whether or not man is free in fact. The problem of freedom really arises before man only in the act in which he seriously confronts the possibilities of his existence and decides on them. To be free or not to be free is for man an option, indeed the fundamental option. To be free means for him to recognize and actualize himself in the original possibility of his relationship with being, that is, to consolidate and ground himself in this possibility. Not to be free means to disregard and lose that original possibility and therefore to make existence improper and dispersive. But in its very constitution existence includes the norm that must resolve the problem and decide the option. If it is relation to being, it has no other way of being and realizing itself except by consolidating and founding the relation". (Ib., p. 119). But the option is precisely the most canonical choice there is, that between two roads to take. After all, the decision lies in man's very constitution, in his existence. Man must do nothing more than establish a relationship with being and guard himself well against encountering both being itself and nothingness. A balance is always a positive fact, as was to be expected. Not only balance but the consolidation of choice. Now, that this is a simple way of doing, does not take Abbagnano off guard, not even grasping the problem, he goes ahead looking in the same place not only for consolidation but also for foundation and norm. He repeats this concept in a few lines four times. He intends with this absurd reiteration that the same is fixed deeply in the reader. Having done this, he returns to insist on a presumed being of freedom, which would then be the reality or the option of freedom. Here the "I" recognizes itself and founds itself by escaping dispersion. He writes: "The option of freedom immediately removes man from the uncertainties of a life devoid of a dominant interest, and restores him to the fullness of his energy. Man becomes available for his task; he is no longer distracted or dispersed by ever new ambitions, he is no longer thrown into the world without direction, nor abandoned to insignificant events. He lives gathered in the unity of his dominant interest and leads the variety of events back to this interest, as a fundamental measure and criterion". (Ib., pp. 120-121). This would mean that the relationship with being, by consolidating itself in the option of freedom, grounds man's relationship with himself. It is as if to say that a blind possibility - a choice - only one, the choice that could be defined as the choice of life, founds man's life as something that happens upstream of all the conditions that govern and mark this life, including the dispersion and repetitiveness of doing. In this demonstrative trend there is the rhythm of mythology. The context is not dealt with critically, but is continually taken up again with small variations and narrated once more, as if the narrative proliferation around the nodal point of the relationship with being could give the latter greater strength of conviction. Recombining the same elements in order to present a different discourse that remains the same is an old habit of philosophy and Abbagnano is not immune to it. But the

rhapsodic modulation of the same theme is nothing but the counterbalance of the repetitiveness of the world where they have a perfectly adequate air. The philosopher knows that this ritual of circumlocution is his job and, in the end, he doesn't even notice it; on the contrary, he supposes that there, right there, lies the core of the demonstration, the ultimate level that ensures the soundness of his task. These theoretical movements, of which Abbagnano here, as in other places in his work, gives ample demonstration, are concretions of doing, products of the darkness of life that survives in the darkness of forced production.

But freedom, for Abbagnano, cannot be free, it must be chained to a task. Thus he writes: "Freedom means unity of the self, unity of its task, unity of the self and its task. This threefold unity is really only one unity: the unity of proper or authentic existence. But it does not concern only the "I". The "I" is not free (that is, it is not "I") if not in unity with its task; and its task does not concern it alone, but also the world in which it must be realized. The constitution of an "I", free for its task, implies the constitution of a relationship between the "I" and the world, for which the world stands before the "I" as an order of instruments and means suitable for the realization of that task. The unity of the self and its task determines the unity of the world. This unity is an order in which things are situated according to their availability and use for the human task." (Ib., p. 122). Unity means order, order meaning control. As if to say that freedom is control. This is truly a nightmare born in the underground where the orderly desires of philosophers flow. The opposite, for Abbagnano, would be the loss of the ego in the "scattering of its attitudes". This would correspond to the loss of the world in an "objective determination" of instruments and things. But what does unity of the world mean through which the world has being? Nothing. The world is encoded in misery and everything is wandering around amidst desperate, and disparate, attempts to survive. The world lives indoors and when it confronts nature first it subordinates it to its own closed conception of life. The freedom of the world is called prison, where one is free to move around in three square meters. The digressions of the world are modules of appearance, small walks in the air of the prison, provided for by law and not of ancient institution. This nightmarish universe incessantly produces things and dreams, it makes no difference because everything is apparent, but its final production, to which the things and the dreams related to them flow, is the compact surface of the walls of the cave of massacres. Here nothing leaks out of the external trammel, it seems like another world and instead it is really the world of making in its most intimate productive belly. Within this unity that makes the world compact and comfortable - just like the cell of the Greek prison where I am writing - appearance speaks of being and shows the ghost it produces projected on the impassable wall of the cave. The words used to produce and evoke these appearances are always the same, monotonous repetitions of an I-want forced to want and unable to free itself. The soul of these words is the maniacal dedication to the product, the addiction to the mechanism.

Abbagnano is, however, outside of these considerations that radically penalize his way of seeing. He insists: "Freedom calls man to the unity of the self, the world to the unity of a necessary order; and in this order, because of freedom itself, man is inserted as an element that participates in it and dominates it at the same time. He participates in it insofar as he himself is an entity in the world, insofar as he himself places himself in nature as nature. He dominates it insofar as he uses its order and laws for his own ends and subordinates it to the accomplishment of his task. Rooted in the world and making the world a consistent reality, man can find in it the path to freedom. Recognizing himself as nature, he can realize himself as nature and thereby determine nature itself to reveal itself, which happens in art. But both as a necessary order of things available and usable, and as nature participating in human existence and revealing itself to it, the world finds and consolidates its being only through freedom. Only the unity of the self and its task determines the order of the world, that is, its true constitution." (Ib., p. 123). But how to break this order? How are all the orders that seal the world broken, by revolt. There can be no freedom in the world through the unity of the relation between self and being. No "necessary

order" will ever deliver freedom, except the freedom that slaves have to die under the whip or to be killed at once, in order to no longer be slaves, by rebelling. A heap of available and usable things is but the world of quantity from which quality has been taken away. This does not accept the idea of summation, of accumulation, its message is directed to me, which is that of freedom, and it is I who must go beyond my forced condition if I want to reach it, even if for a different experience that will never be quantifiable. The quality is the extreme rarefaction of the word, there is no space to say in the sunny territory, one can only sense that one is free, something like living chaos in action. It is not a matter of decision but of involvement, one does not stop to see how things are going and which party to choose. One is in action because one has gone beyond the level of control of immediate and active consciousness and has entered another level, that of a different consciousness. Here one is being, not in relation to being. Here one is free and every mistake is paid for with life or with a return to order. Here there are no duties or tasks or order. The wind of the desert blows and no one can store it. Acting is not only overstepping but it is life, that is to say being, that is to say refusing everything that waits for a signal from someone to move sleepily and dreamily. To act is to suddenly stretch out one's hand, what decent people consider an irremediable vulgarity and of which they have a sacred fear. But in the action, the contact with the being is not even felt, everything flows away fluid and new, like the water of a spring, without exaltation but also without hesitation. The mortal danger is not visible, it is implicit in the being itself, in the movement of the force field that constitutes it, and in my presence in the quality. And it is the danger of non-return. After all, I am not made for quality, my life is quantitative, only that a quantitative life is not life, and that is why I go beyond it and access quality with my different consciousness. I have to wait in the mud of doing and prepare the most unsuitable instruments - knowledge is the most remote thing there is from quality - because at the right moment they too can be my instruments of overcoming and I will live them differently from how I live them in the world of forced doing.

In conclusion, Abbagnano writes: "Freedom is the movement by which existence returns to its original nature, recognizes this nature and, by recognizing it, truly realizes it. And since existence is the relation with being, this recognition is directed towards the possibility of this relation and is its foundation and consolidation. In this way existence finds, through the work of freedom, its inner positivity, its substance. It is subtracted from dissipation, appearance and insignificance. The "I", constituted as a unity, is rooted in a world that is order and reality, at the center of an effective coexistential solidarity. With this, the relationship with being, constitutive of existence, is realized in its authenticity. It becomes such a relationship that truly in it, being is placed in existence: the self, the world, coexistence come into being and are determined as the historical future of existence. Freedom founds the historicity of existence. In this historicity, being is not immanent because it is constituted incessantly in its transcendence; nevertheless, the relationship with it is not elusive, apparent or inconsistent, but authentic and true". (Ib., pp. 126-127). Everything fits together, this condition announces the highest suspicion in philosophical theories. Abbagnano wanted to close his theoretical project in a sealed way and he could not do otherwise. The same premises imposed it. And this closure shows, among other things, the fictitious problematic nature of the starting point, the dream of something that remained a dream, that's all. Freedom, even risky freedom, cannot be "conquest and possession". The basic trouble is that the professor has remained attached to his habits and is therefore disarmed in the face of the problem, which is as difficult as ever. By restricting freedom within the framework of order, he transforms it into a gear for transporting material into the cave of massacres.

The order Abbagnano is looking for is found in historicity. He states: "There is no historicity that does not move towards a permanent order in which the multiplicity of experiences and facts finds its necessary unity. But there is no historicity that does not move from this multiple. The necessity of an immanent reason that reveals itself in the individual determinations and concatenates and justifies them

all, and the freedom of the individual that affirms itself in the singularity of its destiny, also enter to constitute historicity. Historicity enforces the universality of meaning that transcends every particular determination to affirm itself in the totality of the succession: but it also enforces individuality in its absolute singularity and irreplaceability. Historical research can conserve and enrich the conquests that man gradually makes; but conservation and enrichment presuppose at every moment that those conquests can be dispersed or lost. It tends to reveal the ideal eternal history; but it can only reveal it by tracing it in the courses and recourses of temporal events. History is absolute necessity and rationality; but if this were all it were, if necessity and rationality were not born of the contingent and the insignificant, there would be no historical research and no history at all: there would be the permanence of a reason or a necessary essence that is always the same". (Ib., pp. 128-129). The clash of many opposites produces historicity where it achieves the steadfastness and unity of a "necessary order." There is still an anchor that can be lost, hence the need for a search that saves the past and conditions the intelligence of myself. It follows that for Abbagnano history is absolute necessity and rationality. This is where the pragmatist (and perhaps Crocian) background comes back, immersed in the contingency and partiality of the distinctions and differences on which life is based. But why is it that interrogating the past results in both the chatter of documents and the ever-changing hermeneutical ascent of insiders? Because the past is shrouded in a silence that repels. Yet, if driven back, man returns to the past because he can find there the key to involvement. But he must know how to distinguish between what was merely doing and what was transformative action. History must be distinguished from remembrance where quality is spoken by the risky word of a different consciousness, where with a thousand faults a different light emerges in history, a different ascent. Is it meaningless to remember one's own adventure in quality? Is it meaningless to remember that of others? Then history is only an exercise for researchers of necessity. By taking eternity for granted, Abbagnano critically opposes anti-historicism and historicism. Against the former he says: "The controversy between anti-historicism and historicism presents two typical ways of destroying rather than solving the problem of historical research. One can consider, in the first place, decisive and fatal the contrast between time and the eternal and reduce history to time by separating it from the eternal. The rational order then appears as a superworld of values or ideas that has its own accomplished reality independently of history. And history appears as a succession of contingent and arbitrary events in which only at times does a reflection of the eternal order make its way. History proceeds between vicious turns and comings and goings from failure to failure, from error to error: the order that it should realize is beyond it; and, if it were realized, it would stop and annul history. Man in this case can derive nothing from history. The consideration which can guide him is not that of the idle comings and goings of the past, but that of reason which discovers for him the necessary order which is beyond history. Man's realization is, in this case, linked to the negation of historicity and entrusted to a reason that affirms and imposes an immutable and necessary order that is valid for itself, beyond any reference to the mutability and contingency of time." (Ib., p. 130). Salvation alone, the necessary order that is absolute in itself denies historicity, this is anti-historicism. Basically, Abbagnano says something similar, but he says it in a different way. Against historicism he says: "For historicism, every reality is history, that is, it is rationality, order, dialectical development determined by pure concepts or categories. Time does not exist as the domain of the individual, of the contingent, of the arbitrary. The individual itself is such by virtue of the logical force of the universal which is an individualizing force; the contingent and the arbitrary appear to be such to a superficial and improper consideration, but they reveal themselves in their necessity to a thorough and truly historical consideration. The irrational and negative do not exist in history. Certainly in it only the individual acts; but in the individual acts the universal, the eternal, the category, and the deeper one scrutinizes the individual, the deeper one finds the universal. And the universal is essentially immutability." (Ib., p. 132). Here again, the eternal and necessary order denies historicity as a process and provides salvation in exchange for determinism. The two results are essentially the same, identification of time with the eternal. Denying time is possible only in the

productive sphere of doing, where it is reduced to appearance. Abbagnano rightly states that assigning time to the "domain of the individual" is an appearance and a denial of being. It is the same for historicism where history is the unity of absolute reason. Yet, he himself remains within a historicist pragmatism (contradictory, of course), not absolute but problematic. For Abbagnano, man's place is in history because this is the only reality. But what reality is he talking about if we only have the history of massacres? If philosophical and historical theory shake hands in the cave of the lake of blood? Is it true that history gives meaning to life or is the exact opposite true? Is looking at history the illumination of life or can one die of history, as I said in a distant article on Bakunin? Is what makes sense the only thing without sense, that is, what has happened? Why must man necessarily find a place in history? Or has this so far only been the remembered, attested and guaranteed history, not the remembered one that speaks quality and thus fades into being, transforming its chaotic existence that reverberates in man without being codified in a precise memory or document? But what does it matter? Making produces objects and the history of making is an object, exhausted like all objects. It can go on step by step in human affairs and say nothing, as happens to making, describing only ghosts. The reasons why time escapes anti-historicism and historicism are also valid for Abbagnano. It is not enough to say: "Therefore, historical research must be based on the intelligence of time. In fact, there is only history of the past. Historical research aims at liberating and reconstructing a permanent order, but this permanent order can be liberated and reconstructed only in reference to the past. The so-called contemporary history concerns a past that is more or less close, but still past. The past seems to contain in an eminent, indeed exclusive way, the character of historicity. In a certain sense, therefore, historicity is necessarily reconnected to a single determination of time, that is, only to the past". (Ib., pp. 137-138). Here Croce returns again (perhaps). Any history is contemporary history. But the history of making is also making, an object produced in a forced way, which goes up to a certain point - the boundary wall to be precise - and does not go beyond. It is not that the present can make sense of the history of making that is meaningless, because the present is a direct child of the future. This is no less meaningless. Of what could be history - in the qualitative sense - words are lacking, remembrance tries to remedy it but it is not history, it is experience that is different in the quality spoken to the appearance, an attempt to put being and appearing in contact, nothing. When Abbagnano writes: "The unity of the past and the future, realized by historical research by virtue of the demanding decision, is a principle of choice and judgment that proceeds to determine and to found the historical world. The historical present is the very unity of the judging, organizing principle of the historical world." (Ib., p. 140). In essence it says nothing, a principle of choice is a choice and choice is coercive production, nothing has changed. I do not know which road leads to remembrance, I only know that it is a step backwards of experience into quality, a reassertion of the quantitative over the disruptive force of different consciousness. And I also know that qualitative experience does not leave man as he found him. This guarantees a difference between history and remembrance. The latter, in the making, finds all doors closed and a long interpretive road that never ends. It seems that remembrance is like telling the story of the different experience, instead at a certain point it deviates and keeps always at the same distance from the shadows projected in the insurmountable wall of the cave of massacres. These recollecting movements are as random and capricious as those describing an unfamiliar place that is not well lit. The lack of words is a fundamental obstacle, but not entirely. Every reference, every description, even working in the appearance of doing, gives indirect life to the experience of quality, which thus, within certain terms, is caged and encircled in something that, this time truly, could be called history. But the logic of doing - and of

the a poco a poco - understands remembrance as an individual and dispersive outlet, as words that go round and round, thrown in there without importance. Yet they are words that speak, in their own way and improperly, of quality, words that are scary. And history must be scary or it is banal to do, an exercise for philosophy professors. Abbagnano, on the other hand, remains anchored to the ground of doing, inert is his attempt to overcome the two concordant limits of anti-historicism and historicism, he

looks upwards, towards an indefinite place where, as he writes, "the historical present" constitutes "the authentic individuality of man".

And here are his words about the relationship to destiny. "Historical research is the confession that man makes to himself of his original temporality and it is the decision of fidelity to this original temporality. History is nothing other than fidelity to time. In this fidelity the historical personality is constituted and with it the transcendental unity, the condition of the historical order." (Ib., pp. 143-144). The concepts of always return, decision, fidelity, transcendence, with which one wants to speak of destiny. But this one does not listen to the words that are held up by these concepts, it goes elsewhere not toward the melancholy of doing but toward courageous involvement. He doesn't wait for an archaic word to urge him towards doing, in this direction the administered unfolding of the future has only one surprise, death. On the contrary, he wakes up in the crossing, when a sort of dull but living light strikes him, a reflection of a very different sun that shines brightly in the desert sky. Destiny does not ask for the hospitality of the present and does not respond to historical solicitations. In any case, it is not fidelity to time. Abbagnano is wrong when he affirms: "Through destiny, man strives to preserve and consolidate the unity of his personality through the unceasing effort to reconnect the future to the past and to make the future the realization of the true meaning of the past". (Ib., p. 144). There is no direct passage between the future and the past. In the making, the future - not destiny which has word only for quality - is equal to the past, appearance and supply of the cavern of massacres. History, in front of destiny, is enclosed in a fog, where it is guaranteed and mocked at the same time. In destiny there are different laws from those of the rest of the world, it has a different physiology of the future, as appearance is different from being. The future, for destiny, is a sort of chronological or topographical reference, there is nothing in destiny that reminds of time. The future is its opposite, it is calculated by doing in terms of time.

Abbagnano insists on an antinomy between thought and action in history and concludes: "Historical research is not only historical judgment, nor only historical action; it is the totality of man's own way of being: a way of being of which judgment and will, knowledge and action are improper and generic classifications and abstractions. Historical research is an act of realization of one's own historical personality with respect to a world that emerges from the dispersion of time and becomes order and universality precisely by virtue of the existential commitment of the self." (Ib., pp. 145-146). But what action is he talking about? Such a contrast, between thought and action, does not exist; on the contrary, there is a subordination between thinking and doing. Historical research is nothing but doing and thinking is also doing; they can meet on the plane where the compulsory administration of the latter guarantees the compulsion of the former, an encounter between prisoners through bars. The making of history is no more important than making any object, in the same way reflecting on historical facts is still a making of objects, setting them aside and then doing them again. Action is something else. There is nothing within them that can be considered as "totality of a way of being of man," assuming that this phrase makes sense. In doing, this affirmation, albeit abstract, of totality turns out to be incongruous, everything here is absorbed by the apparent mechanism in its absurd repetitiveness, addressed to the cave of massacres. There is something incomprehensible in this mechanism so studied and deepened, and it sinks into its absolute closure as soon as radical questions are asked, because the high lectern of the professor does not allow to look at what happens in the underground. Knowledge flows but has nothing to do with history, when they meet they remain separate and this happens to all the objects of production, which have only a co-interest in the overall production not in the overcoming of it. In the reality of appearance, nothing is truly accomplished until it is protocolled, that is, recognized as fact and subjected to appropriate quantitative marking.

There is no historical order, and this can be deduced from the fact that there is no order in doing other than the forced one, but this order does not organize the productive result, only the production that is the cause of that result. Abbagnano, on the other hand, writes: "Historical research is a movement of transcendence that goes from temporal dispersion to historical order. Insofar as it is revealed and constituted by the movement of transcendence, the historical order is transcendent. It stands at the limit of the search as the term towards which it moves, as the being to which it aspires to be reunited. This same transcendence is linked to the temporal structure of historicity". (Ib., p. 148). How does historical research, which is doing, draw upon this order that should overpower it, that should impose the conditions of the research itself? If research is the object of production, it cannot have an order that organizes it that is not itself another object of production. No "fidelity to time" can overcome the indefectible heterogeneity of the objects produced. Any other attempt, any immanence, is to be excluded - Abbagnano agrees on this - so the heterogeneity of history remains unless it is remembrance, that is, a story of involvement, but in this case it is a story that is individual history that we can talk about and its consequences on the shadows cast in the wall of the cave of massacres. On the other hand, Abbagnano does not admit any other possibility of history than a connection between "the transcendence of the historical order and the finitude of man". He seems to look for an individualization, that is, a foundation, in the continuous production of doing, and he assigns this task to history. But making produces objects not foundations, it produces documents that can be consulted and bottles of wine that can be drunk. What is the difference? It is difficult to imagine something that goes beyond the productive mechanism to become foundation or transcendence. The dirty laundry of missed opportunities to go beyond, the anxieties not transformed into a different consciousness, the renunciations and betrayals, all accumulate in the basement of the cavern of the lake of blood. On the contrary, and going further, Abbagnano insists: "Historicity is the fundamental normativity of existence. It is the intrinsic need of existence to emerge from the dispersion of time in order to actualize itself as the unity that is the principle and foundation of an eternal order. It is the duty to be of the human personality in time." (Ib., p. 149). Tuning is elsewhere, in the sign of duty, elsewhere from where I would admit possible historical research, but it is an elsewhere exactly located in the sphere of productive doing. Here, without meaning to, Abbagnano places the person as appearance and connects him to time. It is not by chance that he speaks here of "human personality". After all, the psychology of philosophers is bare, it does not present many complications, they are people who operate in doing with an absolute lack of any other intention. Their ideas and theories have an air of family with life but remain behind the scenes. In reality they play a powerful role as appearances that add up to other appearances, providing a kind of interpretive mediation always in the sphere of doing. They are juxtaposed to the unmanifest that acts in quality, but they don't even touch it, they remain on the other side of the opening. Every philosophy - and Abbagnano's, in spite of my youthful, limited glares, makes no difference - produces an exalting and satisfying atmosphere, but as a surface effect, as soon as one scratches the outer veneer one immediately feels the suffocating and oppressive air of the underground, the air of a continuous restlessness for the lack of real questions and for the abnormal spreading of surreptitious answers. Philosophers give the impression of always being subjected to a pressure from above, as of something superior to their forces. To a tension not easily bearable, and it is the belief in a higher order and a higher completeness possible. They manifest in this psychologically naive way the abysmal fear they have for chaos that as such, by these professional orderers, is despised but also adulated, more or less openly. Think of the problematic nature of Abbagnano and the nothingness of Sartre, the latter even more extremist. As far as murder is concerned, of which the history of man is but the affair, philosophers remain in their blissful unconsciousness.

The purpose where history finds its completion, according to Abbagnano, is coexistence. He writes: "Historical research in its concrete modalities reveals the fundamental condition of insufficiency in which existence is in the individual. In order to affirm itself as an individual and freedom and to realize

itself in its own unity, existence must transcend towards existence and connect man to the other man. Man is not the totality of existence: he does not identify with the fullness and stability of existence. Existence arises in him as relationship with existence and transcendence towards existence: relationship and transcendence that make, of existence, a coexistence. Coexistence is the ultimate foundation of the existential structure." (Ib., pp. 150-151). Which shows a worldview we know, the respectable and elusive one that unleashes an uncontrolled democratic euphoria. It does not hint at extreme forces, unknown gods or demigods, it does not interfere in the life of a philosopher, but commonplaces of the most trite metaphysics do, these are real stumbling blocks. To say that "existential solidarity" is the "very structure of man" means to bring into the field two semi-divine appearances, solidarity and structure, which are either objects produced by doing, therefore appearances, or they are objects without production, that is impossible, ghosts that still enjoy a vicarious production, that of being semi-gods brought to life by the philosophical mind. The myth was much simpler and even religion, in some respects, they referred - excluding poets and theologians - to the imagination and the heart. The philosopher wants something more intricate, produces objects so refined that they are directly functional to the cave of the lake of blood. To confront, thanks to consciousness, these objects, that is, to develop a textual critique, is a way to add consistency to their force that is sometimes little more than a whisper - this is the case of Abbagnano's chirping.

Is truth the goal of historical research? Can it be the truth? Abbagnano thinks so: "Historical research preserves and liberates the truth of the past. Such truth is undoubtedly order and rationality. But order and rationality in history are the transcendent term towards which the personalities of history move and in relation to which they are constituted. In history, historicity itself is historicized. The historical order is not a fact, but a duty to be. It is the movement of transcendence, it is the search for historical being. Historical research can only reveal the truth of the search. It does not lead to a total and complete order, to an order in which everything that should have been is or has been. It does not lead to an infallible necessity that has cunningly operated in the bosom of the most insignificant and dispersed events in order to enact its own immutable plan. Historical transcendence cannot find in history anything but itself, in its genuine nature, in its insufficiency, in its striving for completion and realization. History is the act of historicity that is realized as such. And since historicity is transcendence toward an eternal order, the historical quest is the recognition of this transcendence, a recognition by which transcendence itself is realized in its original nature and led back to its principle." (Ib., p. 153). But what truth can there be in the making of the past? Only its own forced reconfirmation, that is, its own appearance reflected in another appearance. And certainly if we call this deformed captive reality truth, then it is necessarily "order" and "rationality." But virtue, as a quality, belongs to freedom, so it is neither capturable nor identifiable. If we consider it as mirroring, history can photograph a document and hermeneutics can make it speak, but the truth lies elsewhere. I am not talking about an ordinal claim that implies the ability of history - in Abbagnano - to identify absolute truth, but relative truth, historical truth. This is the illusion I am discussing. Historical research does not achieve the "resolution of time in the eternal", but only an accomplished order without loss. Here, this thesis of Abbagnano is not acceptable. The world, historical or not, past or future, is not completed in doing, in doing it either drowns or survives, it remains incomplete anyway. There is this impatience in doing that takes on the aspect of restlessness. This suggests a manifest but apparent part, the doing, and an unmanifest part, which is simply being, acting. The unmanifest part, even in ancient theoretical experiences, is always larger and more unbridgeable compared to the manifest part that remains smaller because it can be measured quantitatively. Since quality requires courage, risk and involvement, it is generally set aside, and so we live in the doing. If everything is thought to be enclosed in doing, we are faced with a kind of secular blasphemy without even a theological alibi. Reducing everything to doing means reducing time to a procedure and destiny to a future, that is, a procedure to be carried out in the future. With some problematic variation, not concrete but drowned in the metaphysical marasmus, Abbagnano is

this thesis he espouses regarding historicity. He says: "In history there is not infallibility and necessity, but problematicity and freedom. For it, man does not deny his temporality and his limits, but recognizes and reaffirms them, he does not close himself up in the illusory pride of an infallible vision, but works with vigilant humility. Therefore, history is the most solemn and fullest reaffirmation of man's humanity." (Ib., p. 155). But these are gratuitous variations, essentially adding nothing to what has been said. The very concept of "vigilant humility" is highly suspect. What can be vigilantly humble? Perhaps human pride that seeks absolute dominance? Perhaps infallibility and necessity? Doing, in its very winding up, guarantees the appearance of all this, cumbersome machines seem made specifically to reassure us of its real capabilities. The world produces a well-behaved doing that would never claim to want, simply, domination of the world itself. He no longer needs God to aspire to completeness, his own process to infinity is enough. His manifestity is self-defined as free and this is what Abbagnano means when he speaks of coexistence. Thus he writes: "Here is the root of the universality of history. This universality is not the impersonality of a judgment in which the very unity of the eternal order is expressed, but it is the coexistential solidarity of men in their common transcendence towards the eternal". (Ibid.). This is the democratic way of understanding the relationship between men under the oppressive light of coercive doing. But there is a tiny lighthouse in the impenetrable wall of the cave of massacres, and from this lighthouse disquiet looks fearfully.

Does man belong to the world? A misplaced and inappropriate question. Abbagnano takes it for granted, as does everyone else. But what kind of world are we talking about? If it is the world as a whole, as Abbagnano does, it should contain man, doing and acting. However, this is not so obvious. He writes: "Existence, which is man's own way of being, is not being but a relation with being; however, precisely as a relation with being, it falls within being and is rooted in it. Being includes it as its part and conditions it; and in this way it poses itself as a totality. This totality is the world." (Ib., p. 156). That it is man who makes the world total because he includes himself in it with his own decision by setting the terms of his relationship with being, seems to me an enormity. Only by accessing quality does man achieve true inclusion in the world as totality and, in this way, he makes the world total or complete. It is not the presence of man and his forced doing that makes the difference, but the experience of quality. In short, totality is placed on the borderline between the manifest and the unmanifest, a borderline that is more properly an opening that can be, whenever it is sought, systematically missed because there is not enough courage. Everyone revolves around the totality of the world but exercises only an infinite commentary on its limits, now seen as larger, now as smaller. They all start from the summation of facts, which sometimes, due to carelessness or ignorance, we call acts, but they never produce - nor can they because this product is not in the production line of doing - an all-enveloping interpretation, that is, one capable of suspecting quality as lack. Here is Abbagnano: "The world is thus configured as the absolute totality of which man, as existence, is part. That man is part of the world is a fundamental determination of the nature of man as existence; but it is also a fundamental determination of the world as totality. Only with the recognition of man's belonging to the world can the world be recognized and placed as a totality. The affirmation of this totality is the act of inclusion, the recognition of a necessary belonging and of an absolute comprehensiveness. To recognize or consider the world is to recognize and consider oneself in the world. To propose the problem of the constitution of the world means to propose the problem of oneself as an entity in the world. Therefore, the first clarification that the problem of the world must undergo for the purpose of its authentic consideration can be obtained only by making explicit and evident the act of self-inclusion that is at the basis of the problem and in general of the consideration of the world as a totality." (Ib., p. 157). Here we find, once again, the conduction between fact and act. Self-inclusion is considered an act of existential transcendence, but it is always the making of the decision that appears under another formulation. It is a tolerant view, uncertain but capable of a certain magnanimity. I transcend myself by including myself, but I don't really know what I include myself in, because I am a product of doing and

not its demiurge. Perhaps I could act, but I don't know how, I only have, in self-inclusion, a kind of restlessness incompatible with the supposition of doing, nothing more. Perhaps I'm just being talkative and lingering more than I should. This is certainly good critical reasoning, but it is not Abbagnano's. He points out: "But the movement towards being is never identification with being. Man can and must consolidate his relationship with being, but this consolidation does not annul the relationship in a total coincidence. Therefore, the movement of existence, insofar as it arrives at the consolidation of the relationship with being, also arrives at the constitution of the world as a totality. Now the movement towards being is the very constitution of being in its finitude. That movement is therefore the simultaneous and correlative constitution of being and of the world: of being as finitude and of the world as totality; of being as part and of the world as whole; of being as conditioned and of the world as condition". (Ib., p. 158). The part is included in the whole and the being - here the professorial metaphysics returns - is included in being. But this equation can only be resolved if being is constituted as totality. This operation requires the intervention of quality, that is, of real being, not of quantity, which is appearance. Thus it turns out that the part may not be part of the part. All this either ends in quality or is a constant regression into the incongruous. Life needs the world to live, but the formulation could be reversed as it happens to almost all sentences like this one. This does not mean that the world of doing, as an appearance, is nothing, on the contrary it is the source of need in that it provides the means to survive and also to go beyond, to go into the experience of quality. This passage is not a transcendence but a permanence in being and appearance, insofar as in quality there is a different experience that can be remembered, therefore an experience that remains in a certain way connected to the quantity of doing. If this were not so, there would be no remembrance. And remembrance is, in a certain way, a passage from quality to quantity. Not directly, of course, but through a vast network of peregrinations, where words that had remained inactive in doing return in a different way, thickening unexpected meanings. The context of doing does not wait for a savior; on the contrary, it rejects remembrance, even if it is forced to humble itself in the shoes of the object manufactured according to rules that, if not logical, are at least grammatical.

Abbagnano perceives a necessary dependence of man on the world, but he does not like to specify the partiality of the second element. A relationship between the part and the whole seems to develop. He writes: "If by the situation of the entity in the world we mean the necessity of the relationship that the existence of the entity establishes between the world as a totality and its own finitude, we can say that the situation of the entity in the world is defined by need. Need expresses man's necessary dependence on the world insofar as the world is necessarily qualified by man's belonging to it. The necessity of this qualification is the same necessity as that dependence. Precisely because the world is not such, that is, it is not the totality, if man is not part of it, taking root in it through existence, man is conditioned by the world and needs it. Man's dependence on the world revealed by need expresses in rebound the necessity of the relationship between the world and man for the constitution of the world as a totality". (Ib., p. 159). There seems to be a reference here to a need for completeness, which is evidently misplaced. In doing, which should be discussed, man's need is normalized in quantity. There can be lack and misery not lack of apparent co-interest. This participation is assured and, for other reasons, grounds precisely that division between included and excluded, of which I have spoken elsewhere, that generates scarcity and misery and drowns the existential need in the need for survival. What is expected? This is the question. Not the satisfaction of the need to be, that this must always be renewed, but the overcoming. Only, there is no means to go beyond if one does not put oneself on the line to the fullest. On this road there is no traffic, only radiant travelers.

Is man in the world a part among other parts? Is the totality only a summation? Or does each part, in order to maintain its own autonomy, have to take safety distances, to guarantee itself with its own normativity? The world of doing leaves this problem dormant beside its own mechanism, a mechanism

that is therefore incomprehensible to it. It feels, in the screeching of the working pulleys, that here there is a hidden restlessness, but it cannot explain why. Abbagnano does the same: "The constitution of the world as a totality and of man as part of this totality means the breaking up of being into a quantitative multiplicity. As a totality, the world is a connected set of parts defined by their mutual exteriority. The parts as such are mutually exclusive and their mode of being is a simultaneous co-presence that demands their impenetrability. The whole would not be such if its parts were not co-present; and the parts would not be co-present if they could penetrate each other by annulling their exteriority. The impenetrability of the parts thus conditions the constitution of the whole. But impenetrability is nothing but corporeality. The constitution of the world as a totality means therefore the corporeity of the parts that compose it. Only corporeal elements can be simultaneously present to constitute a world. The entity in the world can therefore only be a body among bodies. And if to the existence of the entity is necessarily connected its constitution in the world, this means that to its existence is necessarily connected its corporeal life. The entity in the world is always necessarily a living body. And its life is defined by need: for corporeality, signifying its belonging to the world and its dependence on the world, expresses and concretizes the conditionality that the world exerts on it." (Ib., 159-160). Satisfactorily sketched here is the productive normativity of making, separations of objects, corporeality of the same, space and time conflicts together. The perverse continuity of making, its undertold immutability, is also emphasized. Even the inadvertence of the disappearing mechanism, this in the multiformity of appearance. The eulogy of quantitative making could not be better, seen, of course, passively, something that is there and against which one cannot fight. The bodily simultaneity of objects is not totality but summation. This escapes Abbagnano, totality is something that includes the unexpected guest, the quality, and here the philosopher fumbles.

But can the world be rejected? Abbagnano answers yes. With escape from the world and with abandonment to the world. Let's look at the first case: "The flight from the world is the renunciation of the possibilities that the world offers for the realization of man. It is moved by a radical distrust of these possibilities: for it is a total renunciation, which is an end in itself." (Ib., p. 161). Not the partial renunciation of those who concentrate in isolation, but total renunciation, the negation of existence. Now, according to what we have repeatedly said, is this escape the overcoming? Certainly not. The world of doing, only that, is left behind with the duration of the different experience, qualitatively different, but then it is almost always found again, indeed it is with this mechanism with rigid walls, producer also of cognitive tools, that the memorial relationship is established. Quality is not comprehensible to doing, which considers it a remote, unmanifest residue, sometimes present in everyday things, but degraded to a value and not entirely its own. However, the same doing protects itself and raises its cognitive barriers to maintain its productive relationship in an exclusive way, separated from unmanifest and distant disturbances. The second case is abandonment to the world: "In this form [of non-acceptance of the world] man does not really realize the nature of his being, the instability and precariousness of his existence. He is then easily inclined to believe that everything in the world is accommodated to his needs, that the very constitution of the world is ordered in order to make life and happiness possible for him, and that therefore there is nothing in the world that cannot be measured by the yardstick of its usefulness and criterion." (Ib., p. 162). As we can see, as far as the relationship with the world is concerned, at least in Abbagnano's sense, there are not many differences. On the contrary, in the second case there is the vital acceptance of a relationship that seems to be missing in the fugue. But these are matters of detail. The substance of the argument is that, in any case, it is the world of doing that we are talking about. Only in the struggle for quality can we understand the human dimension of the forced life that, for better or worse, we all experience but not all manage to overcome. Breaking into the benevolence of the chain is a form of abandonment to the world, but not the one above. It is not enough to move around like a headless chicken, there is in this form of freedom the same tragedy of the prisoner's walk, it is important to survive to breathe a little in the open, but it is

also a weakening of one's own resistance forces. I write this knowing full well what I am saying. In the doing, in its forced mechanism, there is this form of subtle malice that nips in the bud any aspiration to a life that is totally untamable, different, strange and unacceptable to order and security. Quality is the experience of free, raw, violent, perhaps unbreathable, shapeless, chaotic life, which cannot be elected to a normal condition except by going beyond the point of no return, by going towards the absolute loss of self. There is no remembrance of this and one is swept away by doing as a waste. Adequate productions provide for separation first and elimination later.

Therefore, acceptance of the world. As usual, Abbagnano does not indicate which factual world it is about. He writes: "The acceptance of the world implies, therefore, that man feels solidly planted in the world as part of it. Man's feeling in the world implies not only that he is in the world in conformity with the mode of being that is proper to the world, that is, as a body, but also that he is grounded in and recognizes himself in this mode of being, taking it as the foundation and revelation of the reality of the world. As an entity in the world, man is a body capable of recognizing and guaranteeing the reality of other bodies. As such, he is a sensibility. Sensibility, on the one hand, roots man in the world, making him a body, and, on the other, reveals to man the world in his corporeality. To be rooted in the world means for man, at the same time and by virtue of a unique and simple act, to be a body and to feel as bodies the other co-present elements". (Ib., pp. 166-167). To live is to have a sensible body, to be produced as an object and to have available to one another other objects, similarly produced, called in their interaction, sensibility. This process of entrenchment encompasses both the subtlety of philosophy, which seems but is unable to keep its hands clean, and police brutality. The two aspects interact together and coexist in the same mechanism, indeed they are often the prerequisite, one of the other, for the rush to the cave of massacres. A glance at the quality, with the indispensable overcoming, uproots that rooting and provokes the irruption of another disturbing fragment, unwisely introduced for sabotage purposes in the mechanism of production, that is, in the well guaranteed life Abbagnano is anxious to talk about. This is enough to spread the terror of an inadequate acceptance of the world. In other words, it suggests the path of openness towards quality, it makes it possible. He reveals the intertwining of being and appearing, of quality and quantity, which could nullify the positive consideration of any philosophy that aims at supporting and justifying the world.

Abbagnano's insistence on corporeality is interesting. He specifies: "The body of man is indeed defined as a body by its impenetrability and by the simultaneous co-presence that impenetrability makes possible, but its being transcends corporeality because it is rather the condition of it. As a condition of corporeality, it is sensibility; not in the sense of being a simple apprehension of corporeality, but in the sense of constituting itself as a totality of functions conditioning the constitution of corporeality itself, that is, as a complex of capacities capable of guaranteeing, controlling, and determining the corporeality of the elements co-present in the world." (Ib., p. 167). Not totality, imprecisely fixed, but the sum of capacities capable of producing. Here Abbagnano is one step away from clarifying the partiality of doing and its distance from quality, but he misses the opportunity. Life and doing are never so intertwined as in the sensitivity with which the defects of the protection achieved by the great machine come to light. Factual individuals in all respects, acute and constant purveyors of the chasm of massacres, can be so sensitive that they live in a kind of vertigo in constant fear of remote, unmanifest failings and voids. There is never an interweaving of two extremes as distant as doing and acting, but neither is there an absence of one in the other, and vice versa. These portances, values and remembrances, cognitive means in the opposite case, that of quality, end up contrasting the very distinct traits of being and appearing. Neither of these two extremes threatens the other with annihilation, only their absolute interpenetration would realize nothingness, but this is not possible as long as there is the world as we think we know it. Looking at the remembrance, which carries with it the indelible signs of the desert wind, one feels a certain admiration for the cognitive power of doing,

and all the remembrance effort, with which the other and unknown signs are outlined in the cave of massacres, is nothing but doing. Vice versa, the doing feels its own partiality and if necessary, sometimes only in a hovering way, sometimes openly, denouncing the circular course of every cognitive effort and the very inconsistency of every attempt of completeness realized in the forced environment.

The conclusion, after so much hope, is really modest on this point. Abbagnano says: "Now, if by sensibility we do not mean simple learning, but all those complex functions of observation and control that work and technique put into operation, we can indicate with the term soul the whole of human sensibility and we can say that the soul is the fundamental mode of being of the body. The body, as the body of man, is soul. It is co-present with the totality of the other elements only in order to condition them in their co-presence, and yet it can condition them only on condition that it is included by them and conforms to their fundamental mode of being. Man is soul only if he is body: he can condition, understand and dominate the totality of bodies only if he is included in this totality as a body among bodies". (Ib., p. 168). I am familiar with this final choice of Abbagnano's regarding sensibility as the sum of knowledge. It was the opposite of my youthful way of understanding the problem when I was a war machine. I talked about it at length in the introductory note to this work. What kind of ideas I was coming up with at the time, that's pretty much how one might close the controversy. Only those ideas, minus the cognitive guerrilla machine, are pretty much what I have now, at the end of my life as I write these lines in a foul hole. I had to accept the world as it is, here is the suggestion of the time and the one that many other impressive philosophers continue to impart from the top of their chairs. And precisely, Abbagnano continues: "The acceptance of the world means, therefore, the acceptance of sensible experience as an act of self-insertion in the world. But the acceptance of sensory experience as such is not the undergoing of it, nor is it the recognition of a given: it is a search. Acceptance of the world transforms sensory experience from a pure and simple collection of data that one undergoes without ordering them or giving them only a provisional and accidental order, into a slow, progressive and methodical search that tends to discover the objective order." (Ib., pp. 168-169). Here is the transformation - still an off-beat term - of the chaotic confusion of knowledge, continually acting as a force field under the influence of cognitive arrivals, into a slow and orderly search for, and primarily, objective order. In particular, the following words weighed on me with an unbearable weight: "In fact, the non-acceptance of the world, whether as an escape from the world or as an abandonment to the world, does not eliminate or destroy sensitive experience as such, but rather eliminates and destroys the search for order. Sensible experience remains in those cases as something provisional and accidental that does not reveal or guarantee an authentic object. Only the recognition of the essential character that his belonging to the world has for man, leads man to consolidate himself in it by taking upon himself sensibility in the form of a search whose purpose is to guarantee and control the objectivity of the world itself. In the search, the sensitive experience consolidates and gathers itself by ordering itself on the one hand as a system of controls, measures and technical operations, on the other hand as a system of objective determinations. Research constitutes man as a true and proper subject of the world and as such capable of understanding and dominating it; and it constitutes the world as a true and proper object of man, as a totality of instruments that help and limit him at the same time. But since the quest, being nothing more than the recognition and acceptance of the world, can only lead man to realize the nature of the world, and this nature is defined by corporeality, so it consists essentially in an inquiry into the nature of corporeality as such." (Ib., p. 169). I, on the contrary, think - the present tense is a must - that if order does not kill knowledge, facilitating it at first, then it conditions and recompacts it, making it usable, that is, ready to produce objects thanks to the monstrous machine of making. Calling this call to guarantee with the term "sensitivity" is another of the many philosophical tricks. It is not a coincidence that Abbagnano uses this term to indicate an ordered storage and production according to repetitive rules and monotonies. Doing is a sordid and suffocating motion of living, but it is still

sensibility, that is, the ability to understand the cognitive process. In this way, abstraction and concreteness, appearance and being are mixed in a precise and calibrated way, obtaining an amalgam that makes it more difficult to go beyond. After all, for Abbagnano, knowing is directed only to the "domination of the world", therefore to the conquest of the coexisting corporeal space. The conclusion of this thesis is, once again, modest: "The measure of the relationship of exteriority between bodies is space. Research is essentially the spatial consideration of corporeality because, aiming to control it in its true nature, it subjects it to rigorous methods of quantitative measurement. The spatial consideration therefore leads to the recognition in bodies of discrete quantities separated by measurable intervals and leads to the recognition as variations of these intervals all the changes that bodies undergo. The interval between these variations, also measured spatially, is time as the determination of the co-present elements. Space and time are but the measure of corporeality, and express the entire essence of that corporeality. The quest that moves to discover the authentic nature of the world as a corporeal totality can be nothing other than a spatio-temporal consideration of it." (Ib., p. 170). Here we enter into problems that cannot be treated metaphysically. Science, of which a new chapter is opened here and, for the moment, only hinted at, needs other critical considerations. Elsewhere Abbagnano will try to do this with poor results.

If science objectifies the world, it subtracts man from the totality of the world itself and this causes the loss of homogenization. In other words, man loses dominion over the world. Strangely enough - but not so much because we are in front of a dialectical process that is not uncommon in Abbagnano - this objectification allows a stronger conquest. He affirms: "In front of such a world, man cannot arrogate to himself any supremacy and any claim of anticipated dominion. Dominion must be conquered. But he can conquer it precisely because the world is such as to appear alien to him; precisely because in it there are only measurable things and therefore ascertainable in their instrumentality; precisely because in the world there is no longer the image of man. This is how science is born; science, born from the controversy against animism, finalism, metaphysics and in general every form of non-acceptance of the world, is the explicit recognition of the world as objectivity and the search for such objectivity as a space-time order. Science is not sensible experience because it is research; and research is the consolidation of sensible experience into the authentic form of the spatio-temporal consideration of the world." (Ib., p. 171). It is still a matter of conquest, and Abbagnano considers technology as the true realization of man. We are at the bottom of the problem. The professor has deployed all his instruments of war; a wide-ranging discourse is no longer possible. Obedience to rules - but which rules? - is an absolute principle, i.e. absolved of all demonstrative necessity. All of us are thus imprisoned in a definition and here we struggle unaware of our forced future and unable to interrogate a destiny that is unwilling to concede. The more guarantees bloom like cobwebs around us, the more we want to increase caution. We can go beyond doing, we bitterly regret it if we stay put and, at the same time, we want to stay away from risk. We lack the courage but we don't know where to look for it, we are basically unaware of everything and the knowledge we acquire alone is not enough to make us get up from our chairs.

Abbagnano's words on scientific research are irreplaceable: "Scientific research appears and is above any human will, above any particular interest; it appears and is all aimed at discovering nature in its objective truth. But precisely because it is above any particular arbitrariness or interest, it connects and identifies with the most essentially human interest, which is to find in the world the possibility and conditions of existence. And it is precisely because it tends towards nothing other than the objective truth of nature, determining itself in this endeavor as a system of procedures from which every preconception or anticipation is excluded, that it is able to serve man and to provide him with the necessary means for his affirmation in the world." (Ib., p. 173). We now know perfectly well what a philistine is. A philistine is one who always knows how to behave in the average of choices, which are

never true choices, but only equivalent decisions. He knows that science is the measure of the productive force and technique is its armed arm that directs it towards the lake of blood. He knows all this but does not get his hands dirty. He also knows that philosophy maintains a higher level of analysis, a certain fluency of vision, but also a great caution, so as not to smell the blood. The philistine is a shrewd philosopher, he knows how to limit his words to an indifferent and insignificant level because he is always under surveillance and could betray himself without wanting to. He calculates and measures, he looks around and, especially in matters of science, knowing almost always little about it - different the case of logic and methodology - he always feels in a state of siege. I still think today, after so many years, that in front of knowledge the only immediate solution, that is to say a practical one, is acquisition without any pretence of control or domination. Afterwards, continuing in the usual and ankylosed movement of doing, in the long run knowledge becomes an untransportable baggage, it must be emptied without fear of making mistakes or committing prejudicial wastes, because the same weight of knowledge becomes a brake to overcoming while it should be an instrument and a point of strength added to courage. Abandonment is the condition of involvement and wisdom. We are now very far from Abbagnano and his idea - only apparently corrective - that technique is used by man but the nature of man is not a problem of scientific technique, nor can it be its object.

Regarding the relationship between existence and art, Abbagnano's thought can be summarized in these words: "Art can approach nature or move away from it; it can pretend to reproduce it or to ignore it; it can claim to be inferior to it or it can affirm its own superiority of reality and value. But in any case it will be constituted in its secret relationship with nature and will necessarily include within itself a movement back towards it." (Ib., p. 177). This is not clear, it is not enough to speak of a metaphorical "genuine concreteness" of art, nor to affirm the indissoluble union of art and nature. But of what nature does the philosopher speak? Perhaps that which is continually modified by doing? Is there in doing, crammed into its infernal machine, in its tireless pulleys, the necessary kernel of nature? Or, better, is there in the doing the whole existence, therefore devoid of failures, therefore including nature? Abbagnano is not clear because he does not distinguish between doing and acting and produces the world as a summation by assuming it as a totality. In fact, he writes about this fantastic "return" as follows: "One cannot return to nature if one has not already been in it, if one has not always remained in it. The return supposes that the connection between the subject and nature has never ceased. It presupposes a necessary continuity by virtue of which one can find again what one is looking for. It also presupposes a kinship, a real affinity, which has never failed, but which in the act of return is restored and brought back to its true meaning. Therefore, by placing itself as the pure subject of the return to nature, the subject recognizes and reconfirms itself in its naturalness. It moves towards it not because the bond that bound it to it has been broken or can be broken, but precisely because this bond has never failed and is such that it must be recognized and re-established in its genuine essence. Through the subject, through the initiative that constitutes it, nature itself returns to itself. The initiative of the subject does not sever the relationship between nature and itself except to restore it immediately in the form of a more intrinsic and essential connection. If a return is necessary, it means that the naturalness proper to the subject must, through the return, be reconfirmed and strengthened by the recognition of the originality of the link. The subject returns to nature because it is originally nature". (Ib., p. 179). Here seems to close a reasoning without opening. There is a suspicion that the promiscuity between the concepts of nature and life cannot be resolved into some sort of distinction. Life would seem to be a concretion of nature, and with that we do not understand what becomes of the factual appearance and its compulsion. Yet in making there is a matter in elaboration, corrosive of nature and radiating order and control, something that does not exist in nature except as an image of necessity on which philosophy has long exercised itself. There is in the depths of coercive reality, with its rules and the monotony of its superintendencies, a laughable marasmus that is badly hidden, but hidden, by

repetitiveness. It is here that the precise belonging to a necessary and cautious division is decided, and this decision is passed off as an authentic choice.

Abbagnano continues: "The return to nature supposes, therefore, as a first condition, belonging to the nature of the returning subject, being nature itself. This primitive naturalness, which exists only to become original in the return and through the return, is sensitivity. Sensibility is the primitive naturalness of the returning subject, that naturalness which, by virtue of the very return, becomes original because it is recognized beyond possible dispersion." (Ib., p. 181). Again the circular movement seen before, with the added sensitivity we have already discussed. That this is a kind of "primitive naturalness" is only understandable in the sense of doing as a capacity that man rediscovers in his continual reinvention of what he does. This suggestion is not viable, however, because it would seal even more of the making into itself, implacably. No possible opening is derived from this consideration. Quality is and remains remote, surrounded by a light of incomprehensible strangeness. Here, indirectly, the possibility of a distance between nature and life is suggested, but who can say it clearly. Certainly not Abbagnano, entangled in his dialectical overcoming. Here is how he continues: "But sensibility as primitive naturalness is already transcended in the act in which it is constituted. The movement of the return constitutes it only in order to overcome it. The returning subject poses itself as a sensitive entity only in view of its return. Through the return, primitive naturalness is recognized and actualized as original. What was the beginning becomes the end, what appeared to be the condition becomes the conditioned. As the term of the movement of return, naturalness becomes original naturalness and sensibility becomes pure sensibility. Original naturalness is the condition and possibility of primitive naturalness. Pure sensibility is sensibility that has become the condition and end of itself." (Ib., pp. 182-183). Here the guiding word is "overcoming" and needs no further explanation. Man is not at all reflected in this analysis of Abbagnano, less so perhaps than in other analyses.

However tenacious his dialectics may be - here we have to call things by their name - it goes deeper and deeper into the unresolved contradiction between sum of objects and totality. Who could ever claim that they are synonymous. In essence, the world of forced services that administers the productive process is only a part of reality, the one where appearances are rampant; it is not a self-sufficient world, but it is as if it were, since what counts for this world is precisely what it says about itself, and this saying is part of its own production. Quality lies elsewhere and there is no artistic sensibility that can grasp it if not in an involvement of which it is not capable due to lack of courage. Exchanging a refined and even senseless way of doing things for art is just another way to feed the cave of massacres. Abbagnano does not deal in this way with the remoteness of being, he thinks that it can be overcome by decision, but even this thought is often affirmed in a wave-like and enveloping way, resorting to dialectical mechanisms whose origin and functioning are not well defined. Here the knowledge of the philosophical matter makes a veil over speculative thought, in short, this is the risk to which professors expose themselves. There is something in this superficiality that does not notice the evil in the world, that is how these respectable and progressive statements are functional to the massacre, there is something that causes dismay. When and where will it be possible to attack such an all-encompassing and well-oiled mechanism? The doing rises to the terrible concreteness of mechanical perfection and shows, just in Abbagnano's apparent innocuousness, something feral with which to defend the inevitable flaws of the production process, he perfects it with energy, attention, theoretical means of importance.

Here is the essence of the entity. Abbagnano always has a formulation for his statements that rarely avoids being essential. Here is how he expresses himself: "Art begins only when man, instead of abandoning himself to primitive sensibility, dispersing it in the multiple interests that individual things arouse in him, turns the things themselves and their characters, as well as their production and

manipulation, to the sole end of sensibility itself. And man does this only in the act in which he recognizes in sensibility its original principle, assumes it as the unique and total essence of his constitution, and subordinates to it the things or elements of the world to which his primitive sensibility put its head, as to definitive terms. The return to nature is the recognition that man makes of sensibility as his nature and is therefore the assumption of sensibility as a final form to which the elements to which it seemed primitively directed are subordinated and directed". (Ib., pp. 184-185). Still an original principle, sensibility is on duty. But purified, rendered "pure sensibility", obtained by the "returning subject" to nature. Nothing that concerns the productive overload, the mechanism that directs to the cave of massacres. The world seems to be the best of all possible worlds. Yet, these pages were written during Fascism and during the war. Abbagnano does not understand this, as if he had lived in a soap bubble.

But his intention was more modest, as he has time to notice between the lines, when he writes: "Pure sensibility is the determination of a vital interest of man in nature and at the same time the approach of nature to man, the effective participation of nature in human existence" (ib., p. 185). In short, no more than doing. Here it is: "Primitive sensibility is the simple recognition of the real presence of an object that is there, and insofar as it is there, it can be observed and used." (Ibid). A sentence that needs no further reference. The reflection on art, immediately afterwards, is disarming: "To see means that an object is there and that it can be recognized in its reality and in its characters. But painting means making seeing one's own purpose, realizing an object that makes it integrally possible. Pure or artistic sensibility thus implies the determination of an object. But it is an object that no longer counts as a thing or instrument, but only as the realization in final form of sensibility as such. The object of art is not a thing: it becomes a thing again only in the event that in it pure sensibility does not recognize and actualize itself as such." (Ib., pp. 185-186). The example of painting alone is worth an explanation. Abbagnano speaks of something he does not know and of something that at his time no longer existed, or almost no longer existed. Unfortunately, what happens to him here - as we will see better later - will also happen to him in other specific fields of knowledge. Big blunders accumulate, illuminated only by the poor philosophical light, too little to show the limits and the deformities sometimes really disconcerting. It is easy to read his best pages, which are those of the Introduction to Existentialism, but it is difficult to digest the worst ones. One hears more, in the latter, a dull noise of pulleys at work, a production of appearances that collapse one on top of the other with a dull noise. The psychology of philosophers is still an unknown chapter. There is a certain stubborn resistance in Abbagnano in not wanting to abandon the ground in which he deludes himself to remain safe. At a certain point, even the most benevolent criticism - and mine is certainly not particularly bad - has to fall back and stretch out its claws. From this point of view, that is, from the psychology of philosophers, there are no small or great thinkers, but all small men, immersed in their idiosyncrasies. Full of zeal they shuffle their cards and have no respect other than for their supposed correspondences, games of appearances not movements of being.

The dialectical game again: "Human existence is not nature except because it is a return to nature. Existence for man means not just abandoning himself to naturalness, but recognizing it and putting it into action as an original and final form. The authentic realization of naturalness in man is art as pure sensibility.

"But if this is so, the naturalness of the aesthetic object consists solely in its effective participation in human existence as such. The aesthetic object is the actual possibility of pure sensibility. It is nature itself that humanizes itself by becoming an intrinsic possibility of properly human existence. By returning to nature and recognizing it as his own origin, man becomes authentically nature. This means that nature authentically becomes part of his own existence". (Ib., pp. 186-187). The argument revolves

around the term "participation" of an object produced by making - that it is called "aesthetic" is a graceful attempt at misrepresentation - in human existence. Nature becomes man. A concept that we can see in what way it has come to correspond to reality. Art cannot fail to grasp the smell of death that now permeates the forced world that surrounds us. There is nothing to suggest that Abbagnano is aware of this. The frenzy of his dialectical technique is accentuated at this point, it becomes a continuous shuttle between opposites and distinctions, an unconscious homage, perhaps, to his ancient enemy? I don't know. I don't want to be mean. In any case, it is clear that he remains attached to reality and to "utility," which inevitably recalls productive doing even when he speaks of a "return" to nature, not an abandonment but a return. Here is what he writes: "But man can also, instead of abandoning himself to nature, return to nature. In such a case, his vital interest is directed not only to the reality and usefulness of things, but also and above all to his own sensibility as the condition and foundation of that reality and usefulness: which is therefore not denied or destroyed, but preserved and justified". (Ib., p. 188). Sensibility is thus encapsulated and guaranteed, that is, produced and stored. The philosopher remains attached by his teeth to the mechanism of preservation and justification; after all, this is his real decision, the only one that is possible for him. This affair of sensitivity is a small dialectical movement, one of the smallest of the small, emblematic of how appearance works to make what is only fantasy appear correct. And it is only in this dimension that man conquers a particular kind of shadow that he calls "freedom." In these false movements there is a kind of implicit lowering, one glimpses the renunciation of any attempt to go further, towards quality, and one even sees the willful and obtuse forgetfulness of this opening. Moreover, we must not forget that everything that sounds different is dangerous; being itself, with its chaotic presence that can never be codified, is misleading precisely because it is basically considered unattainable and even a little oppressive. In fact, oppression and control consider freedom oppressive, and this is a consequence of the terror that inspires the unknown. Quality has its own trace in doing and from this the mechanism has the suspicion that something superior - not really something else, but something superior - could crush it. No mechanism can conceive of going beyond.

All the reasoning on art conducted by Abbagnano remains a prisoner of quantity. Here is how he expresses himself: "And since the existential commitment in the sense of pure sensibility determines not only the constitution of the returning subject, but also that of the aesthetic object, so there is no art without an object being determined, that is, without the effective production of the work of art. Art is always production, work, technique. Technique is the moment of the realization of the work of art: that is, it is the moment in which, realizing himself in the form of pure sensibility, man realizes in one and the same act the object that is the condition of this form". (Ib., pp. 190-191). Man is not sensibility and that alone - that too would be production of an object - but he is producer as artist, that is, as technician who makes the "artistic" object, whatever that means. The artist is perhaps the least suited to grasp quality, he has a particularly acute strength - sometimes, not always - to make it take shape as a residue in the sphere of making. This makes one feel a brief thrill that can strictly be characterized as "aesthetic", that's all. Quality is something else, very distant and inaccessible if one does not put one's courage at stake, a lunar territory full of strange holes and diaphanous mountains.

Abbagnano feels the need to explain how art as an object - therefore as doing - is explicable. He writes: "If art, as an existential commitment, is always necessarily the production of the object, i.e. technique, it is evident that art taste and art criticism are completely different from art. We can designate by the expression intelligence of art the aesthetic taste and in general every capacity for evaluation and criticism as well as all the feelings, emotions and passions that can be aroused by an object of art." (Ib., p. 192). Here, too, we remain prisoners of the conditions that govern making, even as we attempt to transcend these conditions in the bond of commonality and solidarity. Even the desire for "glory," rather than being compared, as we see more and more clearly today, to a market motive, is embedded in

this coexisting dialectical process. Hence artistic intelligence, i.e., the understanding of the art object, he writes: "...always and only turns to the aesthetic object; but in the aesthetic object it does not and cannot consider anything but the individuality of the artist." (Ib., p. 193). The stereotype of the artist as someone who does not know what life is like, a being shrouded in a mysterious aura that he or she shares with others up to a point, is maintained here. There is an air of family that goes back to the original existential problem, then things change as the artistic product is stamped with a particular sign, which the market takes care of commercializing. In itself, the artist is a producer of appearances that feed the infernal machine that governs him and makes it enjoyable. Misery remains and its shards - once expelled from the artistic object - are now reintegrated into it, only it is made more tolerable, embellished. In the artist is visible, through his work, the potentiality of production, the extreme limits and boundaries of its extension, where quality could begin, could but is not, because in those borderlands, cultivated by the force of expression and sign that the artist places in the product, there is only some residue, a fictitious value. An impossible dream, through art, insinuates itself into the coercive production, into its low and despicable productive coordination and takes the appearance inconceivably far, without for this reason moving the breathless gravity that hovers over the world of administered making. Abbagnano concludes in an almost modest way, inadequate in every way: "For the artistic intelligence, the work of art is both the revelation of nature and the autobiography of the artist: it is an appeal to that return to nature which is the way to the authentic realization of man as nature and at the same time an appeal to a non-fallen form of human solidarity." (Ibid.). This back-and-forth does not give art its factual autonomy, it does not recognize the highly perceptive aspect that is its due, albeit within the limits we know. It pulls it by the hair in a dialectical movement that ends up giving it an inadequate task. There is always in art an aspiration that is broader than the simple factual content; crushed by the objective mechanism and by the laws of the market, this aspiration does not always blossom. Abbagnano, on the other hand, wants to imprison it in historicity in order to guarantee it a life, a meager life, but still a life.

He insists: "In historicity the past is constituted and preserved in its fundamental and eternal meaning. History is the recognition of the past in what is worthy of surviving; it is the construction of the past as the future. Art, as a return to nature, is not in history: it is history itself. It is history because of the intrinsic movement that constitutes it. The return to nature is a return to the origin: it is a recognition, it is to bring it into being and to make it valid as such; it is to make it the future. And insofar as it is history, art never repeats the past. Repetition would assume that the past was such outside the act of recognition; and that this recognition would demand faithful reproduction. But in reality, recognition of the past is the constitution of the past, it is the revelation of its true meaning; and only in its true meaning does the past become the master of the future. Tradition in art is often more revolutionary than any innovative will; and truly an innovative will has no effect if it does not lead art back to its true essence, that is, to its origin, and if it does not make it recognize itself in its own past. The historicity of art leads it back once again to the solidarity of existence among men; recognition of the past is the constitution of a tradition in which a community of men in solidarity with each other is formed and lives. Art and the intelligence of art determine, because of their historicity, a coexisting community in which only men find themselves because it realizes the individuality of each one, its original nature". (Ib., pp. 194-195). The circle closes and integrates with other circles. The historicity of the past and the original return to the future - mind you, not to destiny -, the return to nature and the historicity of art, the authenticity of the existential choice and "novelty". All of this is a well constant, but weak appearance. He denies the obvious repetitiveness of making and hides it behind the vitality of artistic tradition. He attacks the "innovative speed" and does not realize that the critical point is in the blind will and not in innovation, which if it is productive is and remains forced. Art is tradition and innovation at the same time, because it is production and as such follows the rules of productive administration, it could not be otherwise. For this reason, except in rare cases of overcoming, which the

artist realizes by paying personally - and then it is remembrance -, it is born old and known. In Abbagnano's dialectical procedures there is undoubtedly a lot of philosophical craftsmanship, and this explains my partial obligations of a remote time, but there is little, concrete, philosophical intelligence. Often these supposed demonstrations take us to a remote place that has nothing to do with the starting point, and there we are left, more perplexed than ever. These movements are appearances that are covered with veils and dressed up to show off, without being able to hide the ancient idealist matrix that is often only badly hidden.

Abbagnano's conclusion is in harmony with what we have said so far: "The return to nature includes and implements the entire metaphysics of art, tying it closely to the authentic realization of human existence as such. The metaphysics of art, of which I have summarily set out some cornerstones, firmly connects art to the constitutive normativity of human existence." (Ib., pp. 195-196). The word "metaphysics" now breaks through like a glimmer of light. It is not that terminology should prevail over conceptual reality, in fact the opposite is true, but sometimes it is important to underline verbal cues because they indicate something that persists, crouching inside like an old cat, ready to pounce. It is not a coincidence that here, at the end of this Introduction to Existentialism, the word "normativity" returns as a constant motif and funeral chime of the whole work. The reconstruction of existence and its problems, which was supposed to be grandiose, has turned out to be a pantomime where technique has substituted the problem, leading it towards apparent solutions, in perfect harmony with the ghosts we are talking about. At the center of the scene there is the "problematicity" that is made to appear like a demiurge to then withdraw it in the narrowness of an "authentic choice", "original", with the mute assistance of mere dialectical expedients. The whole context keeps prudently far away from the concrete world of doing and does not even suspect a different world, where quality is the living. The most penetrating impression that I get today, fifty years and more after my first reading, is that there is a wasted force, an advancing and a restarting, a terrified falling asleep with a thoughtless clash of centrifugal and centripetal processes. Too punctilious, too detailed and demanding, his saying would have deserved greater courage and, from this evidently unavailable availability, different conclusions. His own logical inflexibility, abstractly condensed into dialectical movements, is often wasted, that is, not applied in all its consequences. Thus, contradiction erupts sovereignly and there is no way to curb it; on the contrary, the more he advances, the more it envelops him in an invincible way.

The prudent Abbagnano, while advancing, looks around him from all sides, he watches himself, he looks for foundations to support his thesis in a definitive way. The emanation of a continuous danger of loss seems to hover around his saying, but it is only an impression, it is not real anxiety. Abbagnano is placid and sure in his proceeding, he knows that in appearance everything and the opposite of everything can be made to appear and disappear from time to time. Where should the danger come from? Perhaps from some improvised critical consideration of doing? There is nothing specular between the world reconstructed in appearance by Abbagnano and the quality that overwhelms every obstacle. Nothing here is more remote than this qualitatively different world. Of course, even if it is remote, the world of overcoming, even as a nightmare to be chased away, is always around the corner and it is enough to move in an inopportune way to find it in front of us. This is why Abbagnano is so cautious and tries to put obstacles in the way of this dangerous encounter that he assumes is possible, even if he does not really know what it is. For reasons of administered assurance, nothing must move from the coercive world of doing, except shadow games, appearances.

Positive Existentialism

Man "seeks being." This fact is considered by Abbagnano "search for stability". His whole thought revolves around this presupposition. Whoever seeks something means that he does not have it, therefore the search proves that man is not being. He writes: "Man seeks in any case a satisfaction, a

completion, a stability that he lacks. He seeks being. This condition is characteristic of his finitude. If he seeks being, he does not possess it; he is not being. The fundamental task of existentialism is to become aware of this finitude and to examine its nature in depth. But becoming aware of it or scrutinizing it does not only mean making it the object of speculation, but also taking note of it and deciding accordingly. Here the new perspective of existentialism appears clearly. It demands of man a commitment to his own finitude. It demands that in the search for the being that constitutes the substance of his every daily or exceptional attitude, he does not forget or disregard this substance: that he does not forget or disregard that this search has a meaning or a foundation only in virtue of its constitutive limitation, only in virtue of its insufficiency and instability and that, therefore, every step in that search only consolidates him in the finitude of his nature". (Positive Existentialism, 1st edition, Taylor Turin publisher, 1948, pp. 5-6). This is somewhat different from what we saw in Introduction to Existentialism, but only apparently. There is a kind of halt, a form of blockage on the problem of completion, then the intervention of metaphysics - now declared - saves everything. He states, "This commitment is at the same time the recognition of the ultimate nature of man and the metaphysical self-definition of man as finitude: man is the original, transcendent possibility of the search for being." (Ib., p. 6). Research in finitude, therefore in the reduced and impoverished condition in which doing moves. No one can do it on his own, everyone must follow the rules. One must not even suppose another eventuality and the traces of this extraordinary path must be erased as soon as possible. Working within the limitation, one feels only a faint uneasiness, a dissonant background that is immediately erased. According to Abbagnano, the commitment to do is an "authentic" choice, but this other position does not even touch the hypothesis of going beyond, any real risk must be excluded. Thus Abbagnano: "[Commitment to finitude] already gives a sure directive to existence, it already gives it the norm of its authentic constitution. It excludes distraction, dispersion, it excludes everything that breaks the existential bond of man with himself and with others; since it demands the gathering of one's own strength and effective solidarity with others. Finitude, as the substance of existence, becomes the norm of existence. And this norm, by leading man to realize himself as finite, leads him at the same time continually beyond himself, since it consolidates him in his capacity for research, in the possibility of his relationship with being". (Ib., p. 7). Here is the rule re-emerging from the apparent risk, doubt becoming certainty, impotence becoming "strength" and "power". The basis here is "choice", but more than a choice, this existential decisionism seems to be an emanation that permeates the air that spreads everywhere, a residue that has the scent of theology. There is never a true epiphany of this authenticity, it always remains in the vague. The "I" is "transcendent", its choice that is original to it is also such. Abbagnano writes: "The "I" is not a psychological or anthropological datum, it is not an objectively observable fact; it is the fundamental need towards which man moves in his search for being, the term he tends to constitute and ground in his relationship with being". (Ib., p. 8). Metaphysics has much fantasized about transcendence. This is the tabernacle of power, the magical instrument with which philosophy deludes itself into thinking it can solve its problems. Like any boldness of words, transcendence attracts the philosopher irresistibly and so it ends up that his theories frequently meddle with it. There is in transcendence a comforting color that the banal logical demonstrations do not have and this color persists, it does not hint at diminishing with the rooting in doing, inevitable for all philosophies. Metaphysical groundedness gives power to the anxieties derived from the lack of a foundation; this is an enveloping element that transmits, or rather radiates, the strength of the pulleys at work.

Abbagnano writes: "The elimination of every datum, the resolution of all being in its problematic essence, makes the movement of transcendence appear in all its enormous importance. Because, just as the "I" is continuously transcendent for man insofar as he must constantly relate to it in order to realize it, so is the being of the world transcendent. To realize oneself as I means to be passionate about one's task, and to be passionate about one's task means to bring the world out of the dispersion of

insignificant events and to recognize it in the seriousness and consistency of its order, in which everything is a means or an obstacle for the realization of the I". (Ib., pp. 8-9). Everything revolves around the word "order." Faced with this concept, which is the basis of administered doing, Abbagnano always has a sort of fog. There is a shadow around order that has no equal, it warms the lukewarm heart of philosophers and allows them to collect their salary at the end of the month. Any doubt as to the legitimacy of the use of this concept is not so evident, it is reduced to a slight disturbance taken as an excess of softness. From transcendence comes coexistence. The metaphysical dream continues, "All forms of coexistence are based on the finite nature of man as the possibility of the relationship with being. Man cannot seek being or relate to being, except by coexisting. Man cannot find himself and constitute himself as I, nor recognize the reality and order of the world, except in the act of relating to others, of recognizing the originality and essentiality of his bond with others and of deciding, consequently, to be faithful to the community to which he belongs, to love and to friendship". (Ib., p. 11). Birth and death, relationship with other men. Everything is connected, and the philosopher points this out, but he does not indicate the possible tragedy of doing, encapsulated in his eye-witness consideration of the world. In this cozy order - apparently - man leads his existence from one extreme to another, he is born and dies. But life is something else, not the gentle, caressing murmur of repetitiveness disturbed only by the sound diffractions that the pulleys cause in the basement of the lake of blood. The more the fear mounts, the more one needs comfort, praise or good words, even though deep down one knows that it's all a game of parts where appearance is dominant and being as remote as ever. The scent of transcendence smells of incense and not of God, as it would be logical to suppose, it is a matter for the priests of the virgin and fruitless goddess, who makes the bird of the night take flight.

Dialogue with destiny, in these conditions, is impossible. Abbagnano does not realize this and assumes that the necessary key is fidelity. He writes: "If the future were already included and preconstituted in the past, if history were a continuous progress, a necessary order from which every conquest would be made definitive and every value guaranteed in eternity, no dispersion, no straggling of individuals could prevent or disturb it. But in reality, man must rise to history, that is, to the order in which the meaning of his being is found, as well as that of the world and the community, moving laboriously from the insignificant and dispersive events of time. Man is not history: he must make himself history by finding himself in the world and in the community. He must escape from the threat of time, which is always ready to submerge him in the insignificance of his trivial events, and face the risk of his success in history. Now this risk can be faced only by disposing oneself to fidelity: moving towards the future with the decision to reinforce it in the past and to find in the past its true self and the true form of its coexistence with others. This fidelity is destiny." (Ib., p. 12). Rejection of the myth of Er and what it means in Plato, openness to destiny on the basis of the authentic choice that each person must make in his own life. But there is no possibility of genuine choice, this would be possible only in the freedom of involvement, that is, in quality, but Abbagnano is far from this hypothesis which frightens him. His is therefore a subordinate position that usurps the profound sense of the word destiny. His real interlocutor is time - space, as we have seen, is for him a corollary of time - and the future; he lacks the word capable of speaking to destiny. Destiny dwells in me, in an intimate niche of my life, and it dialogues, and proposes real choices, only if I go beyond my forced conditions of doing, otherwise I receive no message. Everything is silent in the future, only the unexpected guest will show up one day without warning beforehand.

It is true, Abbagnano is right in saying that "the free man is the man who has a destiny", but his philosophy does not know this free man because it speaks only in the context of forced doing, therefore it does not know destiny. All the positive discourse of existentialism lives in a state of subjection to the "norm", that is, to every kind of guarantee; it is subjugated by the conditions that doing imposes, it never accesses the doubt, more than evident, given the partiality of the object produced, of a quality

that is elsewhere, not remote, but unmanifest. This rebirth crouched in the warmth is the most unpleasant sense one gets from reading Abbagnano. It is no coincidence that this philosophy openly declares itself to be far from both dogmatism and skepticism, but what does this equidistant distance, without measuring exactly, mean? Only commitment, work, fidelity and tenacity. In short, everything in positive existentialism converges towards a point, the certain placement in the productive sphere. The various elements of this philosophical position all conclude in the rejection - to the limit of silence - of chaos and imprecision, elements that are much closer to the idea of being that comes from quality. To consider outrageous the limitedness of doing does not mean to render it a good service, it is precisely this limitedness that produces the tools that allow, thanks to the courage of involvement, access to quality.

Problematic nature of man and problematic nature of philosophy. Right. No certainty, therefore, no positivity. Instead, Abbagnano assigns to existentialism the task of a definitive break with philosophical naivety. He continues: "In front of every philosophy, it is necessary to ask if the concept of reality, to which it belongs, makes possible the problem from which it arises. If it does not make it possible, the implicit result is always the total and irremediable emptiness of philosophy. Existentialism intends to escape from this vacuity. It demands that philosophy must ultimately come to justify its problem, to demonstrate its intrinsic possibility. This is, one could say, the fundamental characteristic of existentialism. (Ib., p. 19). But what is the problem of philosophy, if not that of saying what cannot be said? So it is a problem of how and why what needs to be said cannot be said. Can these obstacles be removed? Or is there an evil plot that innervates philosophy and condemns it to a helpless life? A prisoner of doing, itself doing, philosophy cannot answer these questions. The philosopher should be the one to twist it into remembrance, but of what? Of its going beyond, the philosopher's, of course. But philosophers are seated in their armchairs, and when they don't get any they yearn for it all their lives. There is therefore in their saying an exacerbated tension that would like to say but cannot because it is too risky, so that in the end the tension is dampened and the philosopher only knows how to defend his paltry cognitive possession, that which makes him static and watchful. There is no lingua franca of philosophy with which to say quality. If even a major change - a war, for example - cannot disturb the supreme contemplation, think of a personal involvement, an opening in the defenses. Of course, a bomb can also kill a philosopher, but this belongs to chance, it is not his reckless exposure to the danger of overreaching. That is why war for the philosopher is only a small disturbance to his philosophical doing. This is the problem of philosophy that Abbagnano speaks about, but he cannot hide it enough.

He continues: "In its apparent simplicity and abstractness, this question is full of consequences and resonances, not all of which are easy to perceive at first glance. It is on the very posing of the question, on its inner meaning, that our consideration must stop. We see immediately then that it is as much a question as an answer, and that it can be assumed, without any change, as the very definition of philosophy. "Why is philosophy always to itself a problem?" may mean that philosophy is essentially its own problem. In that case, its problematic form is not appearance and tentativeness, but substance." (Ibid.). Indeterminacy that by resolving itself founds the problem itself. This is the central idea of philosophy, according to Abbagnano. But in doing there is no real problem, there are only difficulties that are broken down into minor difficulties and thus overcome, but it never happens that a problem is posed that is not a tautology. What is done is fulfilled in the objectuality that encloses it and here it finds its peace. If it does not find it, it is because a different tension has intervened, a residue appears on the horizon, even a small deformation in the mechanism, a banal change in the rhythm of the pulleys. A small dysfunction can compromise the entire functioning of the process. Quantity needs a method, a project, a future. It does not want to deal with mood swings or restlessness. The philosopher does not

feed dysfunctions; he is the diplomat who knows how to choose the words that lead to the cave of massacres.

Although he has long flaunted the possession of existence, to be safeguarded and guaranteed, Abbagnano does not seem to draw on the possession of philosophical knowledge. He explains: "It is immediately evident that, because of its problematic nature, philosophy is not and cannot be a divine knowledge of the world. That is to say, it is not the firm, definitive, total possession of all possible knowledge; nor is it the possession of any kind of knowledge; rather, it is the problem of knowledge, a problem that is continually reborn from its own solutions." (Ib., p. 21). This is merely a play on words here. Philosophy is possible knowledge, but once this knowledge is achieved with authentic reality, here it becomes a possession. Of course, always problematic, but a possession to be defended. Here the essential logic I discuss is confirmed. Any knowledge - ultimately all knowledge is philosophical - can vanish into thin air or plunge into a force field where it is no longer findable in its primitive state of influx, it must be subjected to control in order for it to be stored and become an object of possession. It can be lost or found again but, in the end, it must lock itself up somewhere. The task of philosophy seems to be that of the jailer who solves the social problem by using the key.

Abbagnano continues: "Man is the only finite thinking being; problematic knowledge is therefore the condition and the mode of being of man. If we call man's mode of being existence, problematic knowledge defines and expresses existence. At this point, the feature from which existentialism takes its name is revealed: the identity between existence and philosophy". (Ib., p. 22). Which reiterates what we have been saying. A forced condition produces a forced, diminished existence. Philosophy mirrors and justifies it; in a sense, it seals it. Many dialectical turns are basically pretexts for founding a prudent and guaranteed behavior. Indications of behavior, available to put everything in its place, in the order of all things. Bringing chaos back to order would be the extreme philosophical ideal, unattainable because philosophy only goes from one order to another.

Even philosophy as a word is considered by Abbagnano in the same way. This is what he says: "On the other hand, the technical elaboration of philosophy, which is basically the construction of a language that expresses in the most rigorous and precise form possible the authentic philosophizing that is existence, acquires a new meaning. The intolerance and dissatisfaction generated at times by the so-called 'abstruseness' of philosophical technique are made impossible by the explicit recognition that in that technique the fundamental experiences and attitudes of man seek their expression and their logical-linguistic arrangement". (Ib., p. 23). Do you banish abstruseness? Not really. It is not a question of saying things simply - nothing is simpler than appearance - the difficulty lies in saying them. Specialization impresses no one, only when it is aimed at covering up the contribution to murder is it then to be pointed out carefully, but who can cry out for the unctor? Certainly not the anointers themselves. Can one be safe? But safe from what? From the all-encompassing mechanism of doing? Not really. Philosophy tries to make itself safe from the risk of going beyond. Going into the unknown, this is what philosophy - or rather, philosophers - do not like. It always lives under the threat that its secret contribution will be revealed. That's why it cries out in scandal against those who don't follow the rules. Whoever faces the adventure of quality is considered as a foreigner, immediately put under suspicion. In fact, they speak another language that cannot be codified in actual production. We can only examine recollections, dubious texts, which however belong to the factual quantity but are heterogeneous, which speak of extraordinarily different experiences, in many ways, frightening. Philosophy does not like the desert wind.

If Abbagnano affirms that "philosophy is not contemplation", we have to ask ourselves what is it? Perhaps a dialectical game of forced correspondences? No. It is a duty. He writes: "Philosophy cannot

be founded on the illusion of making man a disinterested spectator of himself. Every clarification that man succeeds in achieving about himself, and even that which he only deludes himself into achieving, immediately becomes part of his existence, which is modified by it. This means that philosophy does not have an object, in the proper meaning of the term, but only a task, and that this task consists in committing man to that form or that mode of being which he comes to consider his own. This does not imply, moreover, that philosophy is more practical than theoretical and that it concerns action rather than speculation. Theory and practice, action and speculation, are conventional modes of classification which are useless for philosophy. Philosophy is always concerned with man in his totality, in the problematic being that is proper to him and which entirely engages him in the form or attitude that allows him to choose. (Ib., p. 25). Here a critique of phenomenology understood in the exclusive and reductive sense of a suspension of judgment or, if you prefer, of decision is alive. Paci has shown this superficial critique to be unfounded. But Abbagnano is too tied to the concepts of "authenticity" and "fidelity" to realize the limits of his position. It is clear that there are aspects of philosophy that cannot all be amalgamated into Abbagnano's claim, many try to understand, if only by asking the question, what happened to completeness? And, among philosophers close to Abbagnano himself, there were many who asked themselves this question.

For Abbagnano, as opposed to science, philosophy is without interested knowledge. He writes: "To deny that philosophy is disinterested knowledge does not mean that disinterested knowledge is not possible for man. It only means that, if it is possible, it is not philosophy. It is there, indeed, so it is possible; but it is natural science.

"The attitude which underlies science is that man is only one of the possible objects of scientific consideration, without any title or right of privilege over others. Man is subjected in science to the same procedures of observation and measurement to which other objects are subjected whatever they may be, and cannot claim in it any preferential treatment." (Ib., p. 26). Which is a questionable concept much used by philosophers. The "value" of science here is split between its claimed objectivity and its approximate incompleteness. As a basis for doing, science follows the laws of partiality and here, like the whole coercive world, it is mere appearance. Even monstrous mechanisms such as atomic ones, capable of incinerating the planet, are only appearance, they are not being. But these problems, miserably drowned by Abbagnano, will be discussed elsewhere in this book. Here I would like to note that science is not at all a "disinterested knowledge". However, the interest is not in being but in appearing, it is the doing that takes the lead. Knowledge can help to get away from the doing - scientific or philosophical, it does not matter - but it must be taken in charge differently, as a consciousness capable of going beyond the rules that coartrate it. It does not matter how long this experience will be possible - time is not a unit of measurement that trains quality to quantify itself - what matters is the consequence and the transformation that the different experience can determine.

Abbagnano points out: "These clarifications show that man is not problematic except in the very act in which the problems, which are rooted in this problematicity, include him as one of their possible terms. This implies that scientific knowledge, like the common knowledge that prepares and stimulates scientific research, is essentially connected to existence and constitutes a fundamental aspect of it. The claim that man can do without science is chimerical, expressing only an attachment to a more rudimentary and less effective form of scientific knowledge. This also implies that man cannot recognize himself in his original nature before all the other beings or things of the world, unless he recognizes himself by the same act as a being or thing of the world. The relation to the world is just as essential to man as his relation to himself; the exteriority in which he lives constitutes him no less than his interiority or consciousness." (Ib., pp. 27-28). The guiding term here is "problematicity", a magic word that encompasses all of Abbagnano's philosophy, yet in itself this term does not explain but, on

the contrary, needs an explanation. Certainly, there is a difference between problematicity and dialectical demonstration, yet the two philosophical concepts, the two metaphysical techniques, are both used thanks to the intermediary function of "transcendence". The fact is that if the problematicity incites reverence in the forced doing, opening fictitious possibilities to the appearing, the dialectic promises to put things back in place without the need to resort to linear demonstrations - cause and effect - longer and less convincing. We are in front of logical monstrosities - and I have to remember my ambitions of method when I faced them for the first time - that do not want to wait to be codified and press at the door all at once. So he can say with impunity: "These determinations and exclusions constitute a first start to a positive direction of existential philosophy. A further start can be had by considering that the philosophy of existence decisively breaks the framework of necessity within which every dogmatic philosophy moves. The horizon that it recognizes and within which it moves is that of possibility. The acknowledged problematic nature of philosophy, and of man which is its only theme, has brought about this change. From the point of view of a problematic reason, it is not possible to discern in man, and in any other reality that in any case enters into relation with man, any necessitating nature, any immutable datum, any determining law". (Ib., pp. 29-30). Only possibilities, but which possibilities? Those that require a decision, but what decision? Everything is fictitious. Possibility first of all. Everything wraps itself in the sheet of the ghost. These possibilities can also be defined as "authentic", but they are not real choices because they do not involve the existence of those who choose. They only make one finger move, right or left. What matters is their equidistance from the existence that chooses. The result does not change except in the external form, appearance, not in the quality, the being is not called into question, it remains other, distant, located beyond the opening that in any case the philosopher keeps barred. There is no future as destiny for this decision, there is only a consequent future, perfectly adequate to time, impending like death. Abbagnano specifies: "Neither inside nor outside himself, man can ever come across something more stable, more resistant, more firm, than possibility. A possibility is, for him, himself, that is, his own self, which is the possible unity of his inner attitudes. For him, other people are possibilities: possibilities of concrete relationships of work, solidarity, friendship and love. Possibilities, and precisely the possibility of use, are for him the things of the world. Possibilities are the works of art, which become pieces of cloth or stone, that is, brute matter, if man does not have the taste to feel and appreciate them. Possibilities are the documents on which history is based, and which say nothing if man does not know how to understand them in their value as testimonies". (Ib., p. 30). Excellent provisions that pile on top of each other but do not shift the problem. A choice must be heedless of consequences, not blind or shrewd, if it involves too much or too little it is not a choice, and in any case it must carry with it those it chooses, it must set aside the world, not leave it in its ceremonial dress as at a funeral. What makes the choice compromising in quality is the overstepping, the abandonment of rules, the shocking occurrence of chaos, the strident doing that does not accept the clash and tries to resist, the sharp consequences of remembrance. He talks about possibilities and, in a certain sense, he considers his philosophy as an open proposal, but it is not enough, the mechanisms on which it is based are always the same and repeat themselves punctually. The guarantee is his main concern. This indicates a sense of guilt, as if the philosopher felt the responsibility of the cave of massacres. Hence the flight from Kierkegaard, theorist of negative possibility, and from Kant, theorist of positive but one-way possibility. But these distances do not do justice to the two philosophers. It is a misplaced hoopla. After all, Abbagnano remains in the middle of the ford. He cannot be Kant - for various reasons - and he does not grasp transcendence as a total possibility; he cannot be Kierkegaard - for even more serious reasons - and he does not grasp the qualitative tragedy, the fear and the individual desperation in front of the overcoming. More fuss to keep a distance from Sartre, equivalence of all possibilities - but where has authenticity gone? -from Heidegger, equivalence of all possibilities minus one, death, from Jaspers, impossibility of all possibilities, so there is no way to emerge from nothing to be something.

Against these positions Abbagnano proposes his own: "Against this existentialism, which can be called negative, not because it denies beliefs, values or realities that are outside its range, but because it denies the very principle from which it moves, existence, - I propose a positive approach that justifies the recognition and the maintenance of existence in its fundamental problematic nature, and leaves open the possibilities in which it is constituted. To an existentialism that lives under the exclusive sign of Kierkegaard, the philosopher of impossible possibility, we must oppose an existentialism that brings Kierkegaard back to Kant and to all the other philosophers who have worked to guarantee to man the legitimate possession of his own limits". (Ib., pp. 35-36). From the negative to the positive. But it is but an apparent juxtaposition, forcibly clamped to the wall but not convincing. Once again a missed opportunity. All these philosophers had posed the problem of the incompleteness of the world; Abbagnano resets it to zero and moves on. He considers it a disturbance, a flexion in the rigid safeguarding of positivity. He wants all obstacles to the guarantee to be cleared away from their first appearance, he wants to avoid disturbances and perturbations to the doing, this is basically the task of the philosopher, to put peace in the hearts of men and to take over the ancient task of the magician and the priest, so that the massacre continues undisturbed.

Still on the "transcendental possibility". Where to find a particularity in what circulates in the objective market of making? It is difficult to think of this possibility excluding the transcendental. The existence of the forced world is an unconfessable plot that repeats itself without interruption or novelty. Appearance is the shamelessness of the reflection that mimics the chaos of being, which is absolutely inimitable. In the unbreathable air of the prison that we all administer overheating only the fantasy of escape - exacerbated form of the same production of appearance - what can be done outside of the overpopulated accumulation of objects produced? Instead, Abbagnano reiterates: "An existential possibility can have the most diverse characteristics, but its proper and fundamental character is undoubtedly that which makes it an authentic possibility. A possibility that presents itself with the brightest colors, but that, once decided and made its own by a man, dissolves or overturns in his hands, taking away or denying him what it promised him, is not an authentic possibility, because it is an impossibility. On the other hand, a possibility which, once chosen and decided upon, consolidates itself in its being of possibility, so that it makes its own choice and decision possible again and again, is an authentic possibility, a true and proper possibility. Such a possibility is immediately re-presented in front of those who have chosen it with a character of normativity that makes the choice obligatory. The possibility of possibility is the criterion and the norm of every possibility. One can indicate the possibility of possibility by the name of transcendental possibility; transcendental possibility is then what justifies and grounds every concrete human attitude, every choice and decision." (Ib., p. 37). Still the fundamental words of metaphysics give here the illusion of holding everything up, "authentic," first of all, indicates a characteristic presence of possibility. This is followed by the word "normativity" which transforms the possible choice into an obligatory choice. The usual dialectical game is repeated. The problem of the annihilation of choice is here apparently solved by resorting to coexistence. A background of ghosts, in fact, can well testify to appearance. These movements are constantly reversed. Choice is never possible, as we have seen, except by committing oneself to life and death. The philosopher avoids this clarification, for him it is enough to move away from home to go to university, and this is the greatest risk he can imagine. Being does not concern him, he hides behind the screen of appearance and that is enough for him. The vain fury of the world passes under his window and he does not understand the reason behind it. For him, everything is for the best, even if the murdered continue to crush on the ground of the cave of massacres. His crooked legs always bring him into the proximity of defensive bastions that he calls "duty" or sometimes even "freedom". After all, the function of the philosopher is precisely this. A subordinate among subordinates, he says, deluding himself into thinking he is saying what others cannot say - the ancient chatter of philosophy - and in the end here he is, a spokesman for everyone, for the codified banalities that everyone loves to hear repeated. Everyone has

their own compressed life and keeps silent, the philosopher has his own compressed life like everyone else, and he speaks. His voice comes out almost choked by the fatigue of stopping on the threshold of the cave where a continuous flow of theories feeds the lake of blood, but it comes out and fulfills its duty to the end. His faith is, once again, dignity and respectability. He has only a vague inkling of the possible qualitative upheaval and the profound awareness of not being able to control it, so he keeps his distance.

Freedom, according to Abbagnano, emerges from possibility. He writes: "Existential possibilities are never offered to man in their indifference. Among those that, in fact, he can choose, there is only one authentic possibility, that is, the one that is not an impossibility. This he must choose, because this alone guarantees him the possibility of choice. And this alone is freedom. Freedom is therefore connected to the value of possibility of the chosen possibility, that is, to transcendental possibility. And it is evident that not every choice is free, but only the one that includes the guarantee of its own possibility. If I have decided freely, what I have decided I can unceasingly continue to decide, because my decision guarantees itself." (Ib., p. 40). But how can I decide freely in a world immersed in the dust of objects that make everything uniform and indistinct? They are objects without a destiny, their future marked by time, death awaits them, and when we peel away the mold that covers them we find more mold. How can one speak of freedom, the most rarefied and extreme of qualities, far more complex and difficult than beauty or truth, in an etheric world, submerged, frowning in its inability to look at the sky? Is there not in this world a kind of inadequacy that makes freedom impossible, while in its place other and multiple freedoms are traded that have nothing to do with it? The shamelessness of philosophers is the child of fear and the mother of massacres. There is no way to regain possession of a theoretical foundation if not by subjecting it to the fire of overcoming.

The problematic nature of existence means "temporality". Abbagnano writes: "The philosophy of existence starts from the explicit recognition of the reality of time. And with it it recognizes that of all its characteristics and aspects: birth and death, preservation and destruction, immobility and change, development and decay. These antagonistic aspects of time can hardly be understood and interpreted on the basis of any concept of time. For if time is order, continuity and permanence, according to the concept that is at the basis of almost all philosophical interpretations of time, its destructive and nullifying power cannot be explained. And if, on the other hand, time is disorder, impermanence and destruction, according to religious interpretations of it, or tendentially religious interpretations of it, there is no explanation for man's possibility of subtracting from it, albeit in pieces and shreds, what is dear to him and making it the heritage of his past, his tradition or his history. In reality, only the existential category of possibility allows us to understand time in all the aspects of its temporality, because it allows us to recognize this temporality in the possibility that is always both positive and negative, and always implies the alternative of order and disorder, preservation and destruction, etc. The temporality of time is nothing more than the possibility of a change in the world. The temporality of time is but the fundamental instability of existential possibility." (Ib., pp. 42-43). No suspicion about the difference that exists by interrogating time on the basis of doing, i.e., as occurring, or on the basis of qualitative remembrance, i.e., as destiny. These concepts are replaced by an apparent difference between philosophical and religious interpretation of time. This substitution is functional to maintain the demand in the sphere of forced doing. The rigid quantitative scanning of time is not taken seriously, its cruel succession of instants is considered only a bridge between the past and the future. The impossibility of questioning time as future, of talking to it, is not even imagined, as if the bark of the objective product mocked this possible opening, visible instead, but not for Abbagnano, in the future considered as destiny. The context is poor and cautious, and it is a testing ground for any philosophy here. Only by acting can we turn to destiny and ask it for the impossible answer. Whether this comes in a form that is not immediately comprehensible depends on the degree of depth of remembrance. If we

think of the time of doing as full and flourishing with finished products, ready to enter the market, we cannot understand the word that is addressed to destiny and we close our eyes to every remembered image. If one places oneself in expectation, everything changes. Fate responds and accomplishes the unimaginable. What I am describing is the condition of Abbagnano's sunset, confined among his cautions, unable to question destiny, time has surprised him by throwing an unexpected guest at him. His conception of history seals this sunset. "In this alternative of existential temporality, history is rooted. Which is a quest that engages the future to discover the truth of the past, and is thus a struggle to wrest from the destructive and nullifying power of time what is valid and worthy of preservation or remembrance." (Ib., p. 45). One more where for man. From the charred rubble of a factually concrete life, here emerges a memory - not a remembrance - that is, once again an object that will become charred rubble. No one was able to divert him from his path, nor was I able to drag him into some dubious qualitative adventure. His itinerary was always the same. I am talking about Abbagnano. Then, suddenly, a pile of ruins before his tired eyes. Among these ruins, as I am doing now, while I find myself locked up at seventy-three in a Greek prison, I discover some object submerged in dust. I take it in my hand, I clean it, I observe it and this ruin brings me back to the years of my youth, of my labors, of my fallacious impressions. Then I lay it down, once again, in the dust, without the object having sent out a sign, even a tiny sign of life and quality. I realize that the object was already dead before it fell into ruin and was covered by the dust of time.

Existence and problematic reason

If the secret "spring" of philosophy is the fact that everything it is interested in becomes infinite, the search for the finite is impossible. Abbagnano writes: "Philosophical consideration is always rational or thinking consideration: it can only result in the discovery or recognition of the universal and permanent substance of its objects, that is, of the infinite principle that makes them be or appear". (Philosophy, Religion, Science, I edition, Taylor Turin publisher, 1947, p. 11). In fact, this spring belongs to metaphysics, but this is not the point. Abbagnano wants to move forward and not stop at what could be considered as a kind of condemnation. This fading leads far away, and instead it is good to stay close, that is, to avoid giving too much space to a hypothesis that in the world of doing, of which philosophy is a part, is by now currency out.

In fact, if philosophy is realized above human doing, it closes its eyes to the appearance that constitutes it but does not necessarily open them to being. It becomes a judge of ghosts, puppets and fantasies wandering around inside it and spreading a slight tremor among the rubble. That is all. Abbagnano is rightly not on the side of this philosophy without problems. In fact, he writes, referring to such a philosophical approach: "Yet this philosophy, which rejects the very problems it encounters and refuses to consider the problematic as such, is constantly presented with a fundamental problem: that of itself". (Ib., p. 14). And a little further on: "The finite constitutes the content from which it draws its concrete problems; but the presence of this content introduces into it an irreparable split and an unsolved contrast. The need to resolve the finite in the infinite constitutes a problem whose possibility is not justified by this very need." (Ibid.). Here is a critique of Hegel that is developed, Minerva's bird included, using the same dialectical method. The problem of the resolution of the finite into the infinite becomes a problem solved but not eliminated, thus making philosophy problematic. In the end, "... when philosophy comes to become aware of its own problem, it immediately poses itself as a possibility of the problem itself, that is, as a problematic consideration of the world. The category of necessity in which it rested as long as it deluded itself into believing that it could immediately emerge from the problematic condition considered apparent and provisional, is then shattered and falls as a fictitious envelope that prevents it from reaching the full self-consciousness of its task." (Ib., pp. 15-16). Here we wander into a false problem, specular but not exactly antithetical to Hegel's, a problem that portends future complications concerning the foundation of the finite, which must have as its basis

a necessary coercive doing. In this way the finite is not founded, it sinks into a soft fog, into an equivocal slime that heralds the outlet into the cave of massacres. Everything is hastily summarized, and this, in front of Hegel's sumptuousness, sounds false in its very attempt to settle things once and for all.

Abbagnano writes: "The passage from the thinking consideration founded on the category of necessity to the thinking consideration founded on the category of problematicity implies this radical change: reality is problematic, indeed problematicity itself is real. With this, infinity ceases to be the necessary term or result of philosophy. The object (whatever it may be), remaining essentially characterized by the problem concerning it, refuses any necessitating determination because it reveals itself as the simple possibility of every possible determination." (Ib., p. 16). And, a little further on: "Possibility is not an abstract potentiality waiting to become real in the act, but precisely the act of a concrete problematic that is resolved and freely chosen. In the act of this concrete problematicity, object and subject of philosophy become one". (Ibid.). But this is not enough. The problematic is an uncertain look at the future, uncertain and silent. The door to the future does not open with this key. The reduction of the finite might even seem at this point almost a methodological fallback, not a disposition of reality. The light that Abbagnano lights is that of a small candle, it illuminates little in the face of the dazzling Hegel. It may, for bad readers, be considered a losing attempt at the start. Instead, the damage is not here. But what is to be understood by the finite that does not want to resolve itself into the infinite? Any object? The being of Parmenides? The universe of Aristotle? Kantian categories? No. Abbagnano considers finite in the sense of finitude. It is the world in which we live that has finitude as its characteristic. In fact, the problematic nature would rather suggest the incompleteness of the world and therefore raise the problem of quality. But on this point Abbagnano is categorical. "A problematic consideration is finite in the sense of finitude, insofar as its limitation is intrinsically inherent in its problematicity. In fact, problematicity is such only by virtue of the negative possibility that is inherent in it, that is, the non-being possible of that of which it is problematic. A problematic situation is the constitutive instability and possible nullity of the mode of being that is proper to it. This possible nullity, this negative possibility, is the intrinsic limit of problematicity as such." (Ib., p. 17). Here we start from existence that is problematic and unstable, a fairly faithful mirror of forced making, but still in the sense of a working hypothesis left open. Now, this instability is constitutive in the sense of a working hypothesis left open. Now, this instability is constitutive of doing, so the other solution, the Hegelian one, speaks of another kind of appearance. Or is it about the same appearance seen from two different points? It seems that the latter hypothesis is the most reliable. Everything revolves around the distance between being and appearing, but being cannot be grasped by philosophical knowledge. As much as the doing is sober and precise, it has a mysterious undertone due to its incompleteness, to the orientation suffered because of the separation from the quality. This lack, which suggests an opening somewhere, is buffered by Abbagnano with the concept of problematicity.

He specifies: "A problematic thinking consideration, insofar as it is finite, is an existential consideration; and the condition or mode of being that it defines and expresses is existence. For existence must be understood as the condition or mode of being of man; and man is the only finite thinking being. Existence, essentially characterized by problematic knowledge, is itself a condition or a problematic mode of being. Man has no determinate and determining nature: he is the very problem of his nature." (Ib., p. 18). It is in the doing that these ambivalences are located. But in doing there is more order than is necessary, reducing everything to appearance. Here, on the other hand, we are looking for a foundation for existence that, even though it is a problem to itself, should draw on being, or at least try to, and not always remain an appearance. Instead, Abbagnano does not decide on this point. Existence is not a "necessary possession". Right. Therefore, it must be defended. Wrong. The intensity of imagination always magnifies the defensive strongholds. This sets in motion a machine that firms up

the productive machine, all a matter of pulleys. Everything is recorded because it could become a problem if it gets lost in the overcoming, of which we have symptoms, nothing precise. That's why the marker cards exist and were invented thanks to the philosophical concept of "marking". Here is Abbagnano: "It is because of its constitutive problematicity that existence is always the existence of a single self that lives in time and in the relationship with other selves. Time, in fact, is the very dimension of problematicity, which is rooted in the past in order to lean towards the future from which the consolidation or loss of its possibilities can occur. The others are there for the ego only insofar as it recognizes itself as finite, and therefore linked to them by birth and death and by all the possibilities that are its own. The inner life of the ego as consciousness and its associated life as an individual, are closely linked to the problematic relationship of existence with itself. And the same relationship is inextricably linked to the other fundamental aspect of existence, its connection with the world. Insofar as it is not self-sufficient enjoyment and possession, existence knows that it is not everything but that it is somehow connected to everything and depends on it. The relation to the world is essential to the individual self, just as the relation to itself and to others is essential to it." (Ib., p. 20). Here the essential term is "leaning out," not speaking. And then, rightly, the future does not accept speech. It is encapsulated as a consequence of the factual present and is coercive in the same way. Life teaches the strangeness of the future because it derives this certainty from the teaching of the past. There is no intimacy with the future because the machine of doing produces appearances and the future it produces is an appearance. You can't have a real conversation with an appearance, the quality is missing. There is something incongruous in this desire to enclose the problematic nature of existence in the asphyxiated dimension of doing. It is not by chance that Abbagnano states: "The entire domain of science, understood as research through which man is rooted in the world in order to know the order of its things, that is, the possible project of their use, finds its foundation in the problematic constitution of existence. A problematic consideration must therefore assume an attitude of positive evaluation towards science and recognize without doubt that validity to which it intrinsically aspires". (Ib., p. 21). It is the order of things that man wants to observe in his own existence, and it is this that he perceives as compulsory, an incoming possession, to be held back at any cost. There is not even the hypothesis of a possible different completeness. The iron wire that wraps around the machinery of making is kept intact, there are no smears. In this way, we only obtain the result of exalting existence as incompleteness and not seeing it is covering our eyes, as philosophers usually do.

Abbagnano writes: "The whole domain of science, understood as research with which man takes root in the world in order to know the order of its things, that is, the possible project of their use, finds its foundation in the problematic constitution of existence. A problematic consideration must therefore assume an attitude of positive evaluation towards science and recognize without doubt that validity to which it intrinsically aspires". (Ibid). If this possibility were really such - as Abbagnano states - we could easily put aside doing and the forced world it produces. But this is not the case. Overcoming - which Abbagnano does not even discuss - is not a simple setting aside but is an involvement of oneself in extreme danger, life or death. No, possibility does not open the door of doing, on the contrary, it seals it more. No one is inside the secrets of the compulsion to repeat if he is not willing to reject it. To probe and expose them, one must be willing to take the risk of involvement. The cycle of production and the cycle of control reproduce each other, the priesthood of doing prepares the new recruits of working prostitution, everyone maintains his own role and, in this way, dreams of possessing himself. Everyone hates the mechanism, even its most careful creators, no one or few really question it, they postpone their own completeness to a greater clogging of accumulation, then they panic when they realize they are in sight of the unexpected guest, who has always arrived for them before his due time. Everyone, or almost everyone, dreams of escape, just as prisoners dream of having wings to fly beyond the prison walls, where it seems they can breathe a less suffocating and dense air.

Abbagnano continues: "But the single self is not for itself a thought or a subject in general, nor a generic unity; it is a concrete unity that expresses itself in a thought, in a will, or, in a word, in a determined life. And this life is for the "I" itself a complex of possibilities which are rooted in the past and reach towards the future, possibilities which the "I" tries to collect in the unity of a dominant task or thought, and here is precisely the fundamental possibility offered to the "I": that of being truly an "I", that is, a unity which does not disperse into insignificant manifestations, or of losing itself and getting lost in such manifestations which tend to diminish or disintegrate its unity. This negative possibility is always present even to the "I" which has been more firmly recognized and affirmed and which therefore remains a possibility; but at its extreme limit it can lead to madness, the human illness par excellence, which strikes at what man has most in himself, the concrete unity of his "I" (Ib., pp. 23-24). The central theme here is "the unity of the self", which is presented as a possibility that can be lost, lost in madness or authenticated in preservation. Indeed, what is madness if not the loss of self-control? And why is this control realized only in forced action, while free action is considered madness. Even imagining an escape from the productive mechanism is regular behavior, it is not madness at all, it is part of the production itself, the appearance is self-deception to better appear and to reintegrate the force of control. Every slave dreams of freedom but is then careful to maintain the chain. The dream is part of the appearance while the road to being is a project and a courageous determination, not a simple decision between alternatives that are essentially equivalent. Once experienced, quality may not allow a return to doing. But, apart from this overcoming of the point of no return, doing is always the ultimate goal of the same different experience, and this is seen in remembrance. A mixed and indecipherable feeling is what animates remembrance in its claims to clarify their meaning to the shadows that stir in the impassable wall of the cave of massacres. Certainly this is a different experience, therefore unacceptable to the appearances that dance in the dim light that illuminates the cave, who is the bearer of this experience is an outcast and should remain silent, but his word has great weight and shatters existences. Never again will this outcast resume exactly his place as he had left it to set out for the other side.

But the problematic also needs an order. This is where Abbagnano attacks the donkey. The walk outside of possibility was exactly like the prisoners' hour of air, ending at the sound of the jailer's bell. He writes: "It has been seen how problematic consideration resolves into possibility every reality. Now it is evident that the domain of possibility itself must contain a criterion of distinction and choice; for there are undoubtedly true and authentic possibilities, and inauthentic, deceptive and illusory possibilities. An authentic possibility is one which is to itself its own guarantee. The possibility of possibility (or, as it can also be called, transcendental possibility) is the criterion of all possibility. Among the possible relations that the self can have with others, he must choose those that guarantee the possibility of such relations, excluding those that deny it or reduce it to nothing. Such in fact is the simple foundation of every moral attitude. The same Kantian categorical imperative is expressed, as everyone knows, in terms of possibility and prescribes the choice of a maxim (of a possible attitude) that can apply to everyone, that is, as the very possibility of human relationships. This possibility is therefore the only criterion for evaluating and choosing human relations, the determined possibilities offered to the self in relation to others." (Ib., pp. 24-25). The secret would consist, among the many possibilities, in choosing the one that makes these possibilities possible. This alone is the "authentic possibility". Now there is no doubt that identifying this particular possibility is a choice, and the choice is not possible unless the results are basically equivalent, in qualitative terms, because one remains, whatever the choice, always in the sphere of quantity. This is why choosing is empty production, a torment in itself devoid of meaning, which makes one feel even more deeply the bitterness of the forced condition. But it is true that one chooses, that is, one continues to produce without rebelling, with a simple shrug of the shoulders one subscribes to the massacre, as if to say, what can I do about it? Everything is as if the appearance that is produced is not an overpowering but a ritual guaranteed and protected by the

monotonous hum of the fatal pulleys. Do the murderers regret their murders? Maybe. And with that? Does it change anything? There is something metaphorically cumbersome and inescapable about the authenticity we speak of, reflecting well the process of making and the possession that comes with it. There are no authentic choices.

But Abbagnano insists: "... for problematic reason what is, is in any case a concrete possibility: and a possibility, when it is authentic, is the having to be of itself. In this case, the strength and power of having to be is all the greater the richer and more concrete the possibility in which being is resolved. A fictitious possibility is devoid of normativity: it dissolves at the first test due to the inability to maintain and guarantee itself in what it is, in its being possibility. But an authentic possibility is such because it recognizes its own possibility as its own duty to be; and the more it recognizes and realizes its authenticity, the more it recognizes the power of its own duty to be. An "I" that has chosen its authentic possibility and has recognized its task, recognizes for that very reason this task as having the greatest normative value". (Ib., p. 27). The guiding word here is "normativity." The "I" withdraws into the "must be" of authentic choice; this is its norm and its prison. It does not want to free itself under these conditions; it revolves around itself, visits the prison cells, and, if it can, chooses one that suits its tastes. This is administered freedom. It is necessary to realize how compulsion works, how it reaches far inside us, how it digs deeply into our immediate consciousness creating referrals and justifications. This continuous delving produces habituation, and the production of this habituation is mostly appearance produced by philosophy. What then becomes of the excruciating thought of the beyond, it falls asleep, cradled by the wise hands of the philosopher.

What is a problematic reality? Abbagnano answers: "The problematic real is a structure that unceasingly brings back every concrete possibility to its problematic foundation and makes of this foundation the norm and the duty to be of possibility itself. It can be said then that ought-to-be is the substance of being. Substance, in fact, is the intrinsic principle that makes being such; and normativity is substance in the sense of being the problematic foundation to which every authentic possibility must incessantly refer and on which it must build itself. The foundation of any problematic reality (and every reality is problematic) consists in justifying and guaranteeing its problematic nature; which appears in this act as the substance that constitutes it, the norm that brings it into being". (Ib., p. 28). This is yet another dialectical exchange that turns in on itself, making the problematic become the norm, therefore the duty, therefore the substance. Many people, not exactly in regard to Abbagnano, have responded with contemptuous sarcasm to similar turns. Reluctance in front of these statements of appearance is a must for any reasonable person, certainly not for a firebrand. The same maker of rules has difficulty accepting these paralogical processes that precisely because they are untouchable. To suggest a "substance" is an ontological expedient that, in order to subsist, must be passed off as existence itself beyond any limitation. Doing, for example, being incomplete by definition, cannot be considered such a substance. It follows that appearance is not a substance because it is not problematic, but neither is being. Entrusting the problematic hypothesis to metaphysics is a bad business, not doing it makes the justification mechanism impossible. The counter-evidence of this can be found in history.

Here is Abbagnano: "... for the problematic reason, the construction of a historical world is a problem that arises in the dimension of historicity. A historical problem undoubtedly concerns the past as such, but at the same time it is the beginning of a research that leans towards the future. The very formulation of any historical problem commits the future to the past; and it addresses the future with the confidence and the claim that it can and must reveal the truth of the past. The material of history (traditions, documents, monuments) has no other reality than that of a possibility of evocation or reconstruction; and every possibility is an opening towards the future. From this point of view, history is essentially problematic. It is resolved in its problems, which are repropounded by their very solution: since the

solution of a historical problem immediately opens up the problem of its confirmation or refutation, on the basis of new sources or through a re-evaluation of material already known. A historical problem is thus always the connection between the past and the future, and is indeed the very problematic nature of this connection. In this problematic nature consists the critical consciousness of historicity, a consciousness that must accompany the entire course of historical research, just as doubt must accompany the entire course of philosophical research". (Ib., p. 30). Production that revolves around the relationship between the past and the future. The use of this last term is indicative. The past is documented in order to feed the productive machine itself, a circle that closes in the evil circularity that makes the immediate consciousness evil. Nothing can be objected to the assertion of such a circularity. A connection between past and future is problematic and, precisely for this reason, it becomes necessary, that is, it is overturned in the critical consciousness of historicity. To refute in this way is to overturn the problem because there is no mention of quality, which is not only a different face of doing but also a different consciousness of those who abandon doing for acting. Necessary and objective, thanks to the problematic nature elevated to the norm of itself, history is now a finished product and can enter the mechanism of doing without residue or interference. Abbagnano fervently devoted himself to this objective foundation. Here is a considerable example of the recovery of any contradiction. "Against the objectivity of history there has often been turned the derision of an investigation that claimed to be based on necessary reason. But the objectivity of history is the same problematicity raised to the norm of historical research. There is no doubt that the historian cannot move to understand and interpret a historical fact except on the basis of the convictions, principles and doctrines that are his own; but it is also evident that the critical character of a historical investigation derives solely from testing the same convictions, principles and doctrines that constitute the directive of the investigation. When convictions, principles, etc. are simply presupposed and put out of discussion, so that historical evaluations are subordinated to them without involving them, there is no proper historical investigation and one remains on the plane of tradition. A historical problem is always essentially the problem of the research that proposes it: it brings into play and makes problematic the principles that this research accepts and intends to found for the future. Therefore, historiographic objectivity implies, not the absence of guiding principles, but the problematization of such principles in the setting of the historical problem". (Ib., pp. 31-32). The opposite is used here to ground the initial hypothesis. Resulting from the abandonment of linear logic, it drives an immediate repulsion that is reflected in the apparent rejection of necessity, found under the normative aspect. There is no way to open the secret casket of doing that mockingly continues to produce. It is not the metaphysical squiggles that can disturb him. Philosophy - not only the necessitating one but also the problematic one - takes care of it, takes care of its mechanisms, does not allow attacks on its incompleteness. These, if they take place, appear under a different horizon.

What is the task of history? Abbagnano specifies: "Historical research that accepts and recognizes the problematic nature as its norm is rooted in temporality and moves from time. Temporality is the possibility of dispersion, annulment and death, connected to every possibility as such. Historical research is the effort to rescue the truth of the past from the annihilating work of time, and to preserve and guarantee it for the future. It is thus both conditioned and stimulated by time. Time circumscribes its limits on every side, but it also offers the incentive and the motive. Without time there would be no historical research; and there would be no historical research if time were reduced to the absolute contemporaneity of a single and total vision". (Ib., p. 32). The past cannot and should not be lost. History preserves it ready for the future. The circle closes in the factual process. The fact that problematic history recognizes the possible loss of the past only reinforces the need to save it. Only in this necessity there is the renunciation of the remission of the past, whereby the past is produced as an object and subjected to the rules of objectual production, that is, it loses its reality and is ready to appear. The all-encompassing nature of making is reflected in the ordered multiplicity of the world

without reducing it to unity - which would be a completing force -, it descends on individual objects and impresses on them the sign of the irreducible smallness of quantity.

Abbagnano reiterates: "Problematic reason is not subject to the demand of necessary reason for an illusory suppression of time by reducing it to contemporaneity. Instead, it recognizes the essential temporality of reality insofar as it sees in it a problematic structure that connects the future to the past. This connection is precisely historicity; but insofar as it is problematic, it does not annul the threat of time, which can weaken or nullify it. Problematic reason therefore recognizes the reality (the possibility) of the accidental, the contingent, the insignificant; since this possibility is always connected to the possibility of what is valid and significant and therefore properly historical. This is not equivalent to the negation of the historical order, but only to that of its necessity; so that it implies that every order is problematic and, because of this problematic nature, normative, and therefore such that its recognition is equivalent to a commitment to an active realization". (Ib., p. 33). Far from openness or denial of order. The pace of the theorist is that of the productive process itself; it has no electrifying jolts, such as those that cause restlessness in the consciousness that recognizes itself as incomplete. The historical order, which before is differentiated from historical necessity, becomes old and wrinkled, it discovers in itself the woodworm of a blind future and of a senseless death. It begins to limp, the theorist must refine his tools if he wants to continue in his profession. As soon as productive necessity returns to flank him, the historical order resumes its unstoppable march. New projects, similar to the old and different from the old. Isn't this the productive secret?

According to Abbagnano, existential philosophy must be able to differentiate itself from necessitating philosophy, that is, it must be problematic. Here is what he says: "Existential consideration is proper to reason insofar as it does not postulate its identity with reality, but places itself in a problematic relationship with reality itself and with itself; and explicitly makes a problem of this relationship. A problematic reason understood in this way does not eliminate the finite but establishes it; since it reconnects it to the substance that governs it, that is, to its normative structure. It therefore refuses to resolve what ought to be in being (i.e. in presentiality and recognizes the greater the authenticity and solidity of the manifestations that constitute it), the more forceful and effective the ought to be of the substance". (Ib., p. 35). Illuminating condensation. Key words here are "foundations," "substance," "normative structure," and "strength and efficacy." These philosophical, or rather metaphysical, virgules are the basis of any foundational recovery, a tangle of snakes that gets more and more twisted, a primordially arthritic method, incapable of unraveling doing, indeed directed specifically to congealing it more, in other words, a civilized method that reaffirms the methodological closure of doing. This false problematicity is floppy meat, aged before living. On which one should swear with one's eyes closed with the guarantee of one's word alone, something I have never accepted. In another respect, this continuous dribbling, apparently good-natured, is the privileged supplier of the cave of massacres. It is enough to read these few lines: "Problematic reason thus moves from time to history seeking to consolidate and ground the possibility of the order in which history consists." (Ib., p. 36). Order is history, and vice versa. I am stifled by such a project, I find it irresponsible and limited, just as I found it more than fifty years ago. A project that is at bottom childish from a theoretical point of view, but no less troublesome for that, and which gives a glimpse of the greatest suspicion, the providence of the lake of blood.

Value as a problem

The problematic of value is asserted as dependent on doing itself. The choices of existence have a value, every attitude does. Abbagnano points out: "The search for value is closely connected to every human attitude or behavior. But the search for value is the very problem of value: because it is the search for what, in a multiplicity of possible acts or objects, is worth or worth more. Uncertainty about

what is valuable or what value must be chosen or preferred is thus rooted in all attitudes, both in those that qualify as thought and in those that qualify as action. Neither thought nor action nor any other mode or aspect of existence can delineate or affirm itself except in view of a value explicitly recognized and made to emerge by an act of choice from a complex of insignificant or less significant possibilities." (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., pp. 38-39). But value in appearance is but a reflection of oriented quality, that is, of that which has been separated and reduced to the incomplete state of coercive doing. This reflection, in the immediate world, is a residue, it does not have at all the horizon that Abbagnano supposes, it remains imprisoned in consciousness and is never transformed into true quality except in the overcoming. In doing, the horizon is not occupied by the qualitative value seen by the object, never was the antithesis more radical until the residue, of which remembrance can speak, fades away and becomes an object itself. There is here an irremediable estrangement between value and residue. The latter remembers the quality and loses this memory when the remembrance fails its task and then becomes object-value, produced according to the rules. The residue disturbs the making, the value provides it with an additional quantitative charge. There is nothing problematic about this, just as there is nothing thoughtless about the production mechanism. To consider a value "authentic" is a tautology, like defining an object as objective. It follows that a value as an object is never objective. Making knows the annoyance and even the eventual torment of the residue, it knows how to respond, but for this it needs philosophy to help it, to prevent the residue from wandering freely in the productive structures.

Even the residue, though qualitative in nature, cannot be perceived except as a remembrance in the world of making, therefore tolerated and sometimes mocked, while intrigues and traps are hatched around it to force it into harmlessness. It is therefore not a matter of words. Value is a residue reproduced as an object. Abbagnano continues: "...from the threat of this irreparable fall into the dispersion of time, from the danger of a definitive loss of the unity of the self and of the order of the world, man is saved by the problem of value. This problem urges him towards the search for what is substantial and eternal in time and in the events of the world, towards the unity of the ego which makes him capable of evaluating circumstances and dominating them. Only therefore through the explicit and clear position of the problem of value does the initial certainty of the reality in itself of value, of its transcendent substantiality, acquire efficacy for man and become operative." (Ib., p. 41). In the face of value, therefore, there can be no problematic "recognition," because there is no recognition in the face of any other object. In the face of the residue this recognition is not necessary because recovery occurs through a filter constituted by remembrance, a filter which by its particular predisposition is subject to uncertainties and setbacks, but which sooner or later allows the production of the object. The productive mechanism is always stronger. There is a basic misunderstanding here, and it is always that of considering accessible a different way to the process of forced making. Once again, Abbagnano brings the possibility of value back from its initial problematic instance to "having to be". In fact, he writes: "The problem of value concerns more than thought, action, feeling or any other scheme or group of attitudes, the totality of these attitudes is, therefore, the very being of man. The problem of value is the problem of what man is to be. This problem, can take on different forms or aspects, forms or aspects that can be distinguished and classified, so that we speak with sufficient legitimacy of different values that appear to be the ends of different behaviors: cognitive values, moral values, economic values, etc.. But in reality the philosophical elaboration of the problem of value must lead this problem back to its original simplicity and consider it connected with the being of man. The value that man seeks in his concrete attitude is a condition, a state or a mode of being to which he is directed by a preferential choice. The movement directed to the search for and determination of value is actually the movement directed to the search for and determination of what man is to be." (Ib., pp. 42-43). To simplify the problem of value is to lead it back to its "originality" which connects it to being. What does this statement mean? That value is part of being and not of appearance? Abbagnano is consequent,

he is only interested in doing and when he speaks of "acting" it is a terminological confusion. In his way of reasoning, there is nothing in the problem of value that presents itself as a particularity, as a history marked in itself in a different way, with an imperceptible difference in level. Value is an object. The problem of the residue is my problem, not Abbagnano's, a problem about which he never knew anything. A problem that at the time, in notes that have been lost, I defined as "being-life", and that aroused, I won't say, his hilarity, but certainly his indifference.

Abbagnano points out: "The transcendence of man's being with respect to man is the first and fundamental condition of the problem of value. To annul or deny this transcendence means to annul or deny the problem and with it the very possibility of value. If being were all immanent in man (or in man's thought or action) the search for value would be useless and the relative problem would fade into nothingness. Man would entirely possess his being, his being would be entirely and stably given to him; the uncertainty of value and the possibility of fall and error would be eliminated. But the very fact that a problem of value exists and is ineradicable shows that man does not entirely possess the being that is truly valuable, that this being is not given to him and that therefore being as value transcends man. Value as ought-to-be is being in its transcendence." (Ib., p. 44). Metaphysics and its usual tools. Be careful not to confuse "transcendence" with transcendence. The lack is in man enclosed in his fictitious possession of doing, not elsewhere. The different consciousness can fill this lack by going in search of quality and this process can be understood in many ways, physically experienced, for example by feeling the desert wind on one's face, but not in the metaphysical empyrean. To join this philosophical reversal - perfectly known in all respects - is to turn the appearance on the other side, to find oneself once again in the ecstatic dream that does not see the lake of blood but only free and clean horizons. On this line we do not understand each other on many things. Note the above technique in this sentence: "The value in its transcendence thus appears as a having to be that is essential to the being of man. This essentiality is constitutive of value: which would not be sought by man and would not be the final end of his every struggle, aspiration or conquest if it were not and did not necessarily appear connected with man." (Ib., p. 45). This is an excellent example. Value is a having to be essential to man, and this essentiality of his (of having to be) is constituted by value. The snake eats its own tail. Here there is the usual air of family, the usual fears that lead to the usual metaphysical justifications, the usual search for a secure base on which to base one's permanence.

But value, for Abbagnano, is something more, something metaphysically more grounded and foundational, it is "substance". "If we mean by substance the being in itself, the being that is beyond what man immediately controls or possesses, value is substance. The transcendent substance is man's ought-to-be, the norm of his constitution. The substantiality of value, its being-in-itself, its unconditional and absolute validity, necessarily imply its relation to man." (Ib., p. 46). To reduce being to substance in itself is to go back thousands of years. I understand that philosophy treats theories as a kind of Venetian rondo, but everything has its limit if only of decency. This way of talking about substance is not only a metaphysical leap in the dark, it is recklessness. Here there seems to me to be a veiled confusion between being and human existence. The two philosophical concepts are not synonymous. The turn of phrase is always the same, "norm", "should be", "value". But by now we know it well. Is it useful to torment the process in this way? Not really, the mechanism does not need it, but the philosopher does not know this, and acts as a fly on the wall. Consciously or unconsciously here substance is presupposed as the "normativity" of being. That then being is the absolutely other, remote to all metaphysical determinations, this is another matter. Reduced to captivity, being is pathetic and helpless; it becomes the norm for something, man for example. But the imperiousness of doing, which invests man with the apparent slaughtering power, is anything but something similar to being, it is as remote as it gets. Man is authentically appearance, only when he abandons this forced condition he draws the qualitative completeness, that is he lives a different experience, in other words he lives his

life in a complete way, of course not forever, because beyond the point of no return there is only madness, then the absolute disintegration very similar to death, but in remembrance. Abbagnano, on the other hand, affirms: "... value, precisely in its transcendent substance, is like a duty to be, closely linked to the being of man. If it is what man must be, it is also what he really and authentically is". (Ib., p. 48). Exactly the opposite. He reiterates his metaphysical slumber, only "ought to be" "is" and is "authentically." One cannot affirm this and then retreat, that all this deployment of productive forces is only a possibility and not a fact. Abbagnano has a certain repugnance to go to the bottom of his theory, justifying and not resetting its dialectical premises. This presumably stems from his disagreement with Hegelian dogmas, but this was always one of his most serious problems, and we see it still unresolved today. These theses, presented as "problematic", are instead a tangible sign of the resigned acquiescence of the philosopher who complains about the evils of the world but is incapable of moving, indeed he does everything he can to keep on complaining about the possibility that it might not come true or that everything might not come true.

Abbagnano insists again: "If this being as value and normativity is the final term of the relation whose possibility constitutes existence, its definition leads once again to this possibility and to the existence that is constituted by it. The characters of transcendent being must all be traced back to the possibility, constitutive of existence, of being in relation to it. They can and must be enucleated, not from the relation, but from the possibility of the relation. If we define this possibility as transcendental, we will be able to express the nature of our research by saying that we must trace the characters of the transcendental in the transcendental." (Ib., p. 50). Once again metaphysics shows its limits, building aerial superfetations that accumulate without any support. Doing takes over the finished product and modifies it into an object, nothing more. The mechanism can do this and much more, it does not enter into the dialectical process - as Hegel claimed - it merely packages it quantitatively. This invincible inclination is the one that guarantees the solidity of coercive making and the correspondences of the world that work even in their proclaimed incompleteness. But Abbagnano is not satisfied, he wants to flush out the ontological determination of value and bring it back to its existential nature. He writes: "But ontological consideration, even though it is based on existential possibility, which is the condition of the relationship, does not explicitly assume this possibility as its foundation and therefore does not move from its preliminary recognition. Two paths are open to it. On the one hand, it can characterize value by referring it to elements or conditions that are proper to man and making man the measure of value. On the other hand, it can tend to purify value from any immediate or indirect reference to man, making value the measure of man. The first way arrives at an anthropomorphic determination of value and, by leading it back to the being that is proper to man's finitude, denies it in its validity of having to be and of norm. The second way recognizes value as absolute duty to be and normativity and yet as transcendence; but it does not come to understand and justify its original connection with man; a connection without which, as we have seen, it could not be valid for man as duty to be or norm". (Ib., pp. 51-52). Unsuitable ways, he affirms, because they disavow the "ought to be" and the "transcendence" of value. In short, here the correct dialectical positions are criticized, the ones that any metaphysician could set up and maintain for a long time without the ambasms and embarrassments that can be seen in Abbagnano. If nothing else, these rejected positions, even if not acceptable, have the pride of their own status, something that is lacking in Abbagnano because of ambiguity. Hence the bad impression as of adjustment that one gets when reading the latter's reflections. After all, it is always the air of the family that one breathes here, the air of the productive mechanism at work. These dialectical circles - the realm of appearance - tighten in the void and mark the drama of incompleteness that grips doing. But the philosopher cannot speak without qualms; his purpose is subterranean and he himself knows it only up to a point. In fact, the introductory part on value concludes as follows: "The authentic determinations of value can also be achieved by bringing the ontological determinations back to transcendental possibility and recognizing them in their existential root. I propose here to follow

precisely this path." (Ib., p. 53). That here, in this condensed program, there are logical leaps, does not interest him at all.

But how can the universality of value be founded? Abbagnano writes: "Now this ontological character of universality is, as such, negative and generic. Negative, insofar as it is reduced to the negation of the particularity of meaning, (that is, of the insignificance) of individual human attitudes. Generic, in that it includes the requirement that such individual attitudes be identified with a common recognition or identity of judgment. The negativity and generality of that character can be removed only by bringing them back to the transcendental possibility, which is its foundation." (Ib., p. 54). Once again, the tail justifies the head and vice versa. The problem is, at the same time, assimilated and expelled, circumscribed and condemned to the compulsion to repeat. The impression one gets here is that of immediately understanding, but then realizing that one is obliged to start all over again. It's as if one were caught up in an all too familiar mechanism - the dialectical one and, conversely, the one of doing - that holds one back and urges, at the same time, to go on, but does not provide concrete help. Here then is the forced conclusion, predictable to those who have followed us so far. "The universality of value, traced back to its transcendental possibility, therefore expresses the aspect by which the existential structure carries individual existence beyond itself to other existence. The transcendental foundation of the universality of value is the coexistential nature of the existential structure." (Ib., p. 55). Coexistence and universality. Existence and transcendence. The mechanism does not sharpen, it simply repeats, even if at times the philosopher is capable of exaggerated subtlety, however easily unraveled. But one immediately notices that this ability is only craft, there is no painful compromise, no concrete adventure in perspective, no involvement. The extreme quantity, indispensable to grasp the restlessness that compels, almost obliges, to go beyond, the recklessness and the courage, are not the stuff of philosophers. And Abbagnano produces here a nice piece of democratic philosophy writing: "The universality of value expresses in the negative and generic form of ontological consideration the normativity of coexistence. From its very intrinsic nature, from its constitutive structure, existence is called upon to recognize and realize itself in the form of coexistence. This form is that of solidarity and inter-human understanding: solidarity and understanding for which man is no longer a thing, an object or an instrument for the other man, but a person in the proper meaning of the word, a person endowed with the same constitution and validity that everyone recognizes in himself. Value, insofar as it is rooted in the coexistential structure of man, is the foundation of the absolute dignity that the individual can and must recognize for himself and for others. All that is valuable consolidates the coexistential bond between men, strengthening their original possibility of connection. All that is valuable has its root in this original possibility that is the very foundation of the existential structure. All that is valuable leads the individual man to relate to the community and to live, even in his singularity, in it and for it. If universality understood ontologically seems to deny the concreteness of the individual, taken back to its transcendental foundation and recognized as a possibility of coexistence, it strengthens the individual by multiplying and guaranteeing his relationships with others". (Ib., pp. 55-56). At the time of my first reading, these affirmations caused me, and continue to cause me, an impatience that I have never concealed, even if perhaps in the very beginning I kept it to myself, in the end I felt almost a sense of repugnance, everything seemed too honeyed and cloying to me in the face of the evils of the world that others stripped before my thirsty attention.

These positions must be crossed all the way through, and then get rid of them. Coming to terms with Abbagnano is not an easy thing for me, in a certain sense it is like coming to terms with myself, with a more aggressive and more warlike self. No more metaphysics. That is. Crossing over has taught me to move in the desolate and, at times, swampy territory of quality, I have acquired an animal-like agility in grasping when it is time to turn back, when the big work on the word begins.

The relationship between the unity of the self and the unity of value is astounding. Abbagnano writes, "To the individual brings us back the second ontological character of value, unity. Everything that is valuable has the form and nature of unity. Among the many things that arise in a given circumstance, only one is the one that is valuable and must be chosen. Among the many attitudes possible in a given situation, only one is the one that is valuable and must be assumed. The search for value is therefore fundamentally the search for unity. And unity as an ontological character must be rooted in some fundamental aspect of transcendental possibility." (Ib., pp. 56-57). Behind these statements is the metaphysical hypothesis of "authenticity" and the negative consideration of "dispersion." This bold certainty is based neither on quantity nor its opposite. Doing is not unitary but codified in a multiple way, even if it can be traced back to multiple, ordered and corresponding processes. Even the self is not unitary. If it were, it would be complete. Instead it is divided between appearing and being, between quantity that conditions it and quality that disorients it. This boldness about the "I" is softened by the usual dialectical mechanism. The "possibility of unity" is the unity of which the "I" fabulates, and here again the razor of appearance cuts radically. What could be more mellifluous than those who speak of unity within a codified multiple? It would be like denying the rising of the sun or the setting of the night. Here are the non-precision clarifications: "The value as unity brings us back to the original possibility of man to realize himself as unity. The transcendental foundation of the unity of value is the unity of the self. But the unity of the structure is always the possibility of unity, not a unity already given. It is a unity that must be realized and possessed, not a reality and possession. Consequently, the unity of value is not a factual unity: it is a unity that must be recognized and grasped among a multiplicity of disparate determinations." (Ib., p. 57). Impermissible wandering. One cannot admit two conflicting conditions that justify each other; it would be an attempt to pass off doing for what it is not, acting. Once again a specious confusion between acting and transcending. Choosing value is a unitary way of living. There is nothing to support this unsupportable affirmation if not for the cathetical needs of a philosophy professor. The ontology of value would then be based on the existentiality of the ego. This perspective is seductive but absurd if one does not forget the profound sense of the problematic and does not want to neutralize it.

Finally, the objectivity of value. Abbagnano says: "Value is such that man, only if he recognizes it as an objective reality, can work for its realization and preservation. The recognition of its objective reality and the commitment to realize it objectively constitute one and the same act". (Ib., p. 60). The whole concept of objectivity is not acceptable in a world of objects produced by coercive doing. The incompleteness of these objects is obvious and is attributable to the lack of quality. This makes them objectified not objective. There can be no metaphysical effort capable of changing this reality. Man cannot recognize in doing an objective and emphasized reality in order to obtain a stable foundation. Doing does not let us see anything of the kind, if ever the opposite is true, it distances from itself any possible completion with justifications that often may appear naive but that are actually the cover of the influx to the cave of massacres. The obsequious acquiescence towards the non-existent objectivity is one of the many metaphysical expedients, a play on words. In fact, Abbagnano specifies: "Because of its objective reality, value presents itself to man as the true reality of the world. It presents itself to him as a totality, an order or a system that conditions and includes him, continually urging him to go out of himself and to search outside of himself for ways and means to rejoin his rightful being. If value is transcendent objectivity, it is for man the reality that includes and conditions him. As transcendent objectivity, value is the duty to be of a totality of which man is part and towards which he must move in order to realize himself. If value is objectivity, man must move in search of objectivity in order to realize himself in objectivity. Objectivity therefore refers back to that character of value for which it is the term of human activity in the world, that is, of work. And since the world as a totality of which man is a part is an order of co-present parts defined by the impossibility of mutual penetration (i.e., corporeality), the search for the objectivity of value is the search for the total order that guarantees to

the individual parts their reality." (Ib., pp. 60-61). All the parts of Abbagnano's positive philosophy, which are usually presented separately, are summed up here. Value is totality, order, system, conditioning, transcendence, reality, self-realization in work, set of co-presenting parts, and finally corporeality. Objectivity is all of these things together. Metaphysics takes little time to become all-encompassing and this fictitious capacity sniffs out and pursues appearance, courts it and perfects it in its fantastic statute. It is always this method that composes the most irreducible opposites, that puts together laceration and recomposition, the absurd and illogical celebration and the ordering rationality, so that in the end sacrifice prevails.

Abbagnano's ideal is bourgeois and conservative, the fact of adorning his philosophy with problematic trinkets is a concession to the fashion of the time and a way of presenting recovery in an attractive way. But a necklace of garnets does not a queen make. Abbagnano writes: "Man has no way of reconnecting with value, of recognizing it in its essential characteristics and of working for it, unless he commits himself to being himself in a community of solidarity and to realizing in the world, recognized as a systematic totality, the indispensable conditions of his authentic being. Value as having to be transcendence is the coexistence in solidarity of men, proper to the individual, the systematic order of the world". (Ib., pp. 62-63). This is system and order, it is the sign of a progress that does not admit alternatives, authoritarian under the clothes of the party, gloomy and closed under the open aspect of choice. The philosopher almost expects the applause of the reader, he does not even think about a possible objection. Yet the doing does not admit alternatives except radical and extreme, alternatives of involvement. The mechanism, with all the philosophical flourishes, is always cold, clear, firm in its objective productions, it is useless to dress it up in a more alluring way, it is not impressed by dialectics that pass by it, touching it only without disturbing it. The perturbations of doing, due to philosophical theories, are barely noticeable at the same modifying level, while they are more relevant at the level of feeding the lake of blood. Abbagnano continues: "Freedom and value are identified in the existential foundation. The possibility of commitment is the original freedom that only effective commitment can preserve and consolidate. Because of this possibility, man can truly be an I operating in the world in a community of solidarity with others: he can because he must. The very structure of existence impels him to effective commitment and continually calls him beyond his limits towards that transcendent duty which is his authentic being. Commitment, as the choice of value, is the effective return of man, of the whole man, to that original possibility. By opting for value, man anchors the totality of his being to it and constitutes his being as freedom. By disavowing value, man loses or weakens that possibility and lapses from his existential freedom." (Ib., p. 63). Here the leading word is "anchor." It is here, in this safe harbor, that the philosopher wanted to arrive. His stormy sailing turned out to be crossing a puddle. Not out of embarrassment or shyness, the problematic hypothesis was wasted out of simple fear, out of a vocation for security, out of a desire to remain on the side of confirmation and prudence, as if he wanted to eliminate any possibility of friction with the world. Abbagnano does not accept the rules of conservation, he is himself a founder of conservative rules, a master of protection and caution. After all, he does not know how to open a path towards quality, and so he continually remixes the same metaphysical concepts, giving the impression of a compactness that is only an appearance. But this is precisely where his philosophical genius lies, in being trivially capable of adhering to the productive project of doing, giving the impression of wanting to, I won't say upset it, but only criticize it. Impression, nothing more. Appearances are content with little.

Certainly, even working on conservation, Abbagnano himself realizes the limits of his metaphysical mechanisms, even if he does not want to change course at all, but only to fill in some gaps. Thus he writes: "By transcending towards value, by working for it, man tends to come out of the lability of his temporal life and to reconnect with something permanent and eternal. Value appears to him as supratemporal and intemporal. And such it is ontologically, as duty to be, substance and objective

reality in the face of the insufficient and changing being of man. But the act with which man escapes the dispersion and insignificance of the events of time does not bring man into the eternal and does not identify him with the eternal. By recognizing the threat that time represents for his authentic being and by transcending beyond time towards the permanence of value, man overcomes the threat of time, but he does not conquer the definitive security of the eternal. By this commitment he enters history and realizes himself as historicity. He chooses to be what he must be: an I in a community of solidarity and in an ordered world, and thereby recognizes and makes his original possibility his own." (Ib., p. 65). Mind you, this is not a step backward but forward. He does not want to accept the evidence, that is, the endemic incompleteness of doing, and closes his eyes to quality. There is something minute and puny about this construction that in many ways struck me at the time, something stale that could not escape my keen youthful eye, and perhaps did not escape it. Who can say, given how much time has passed? I can still see myself pondering these old Abbagnano quotes and feeling a sense of tenderness about them, but being here to close the accounts I cannot let go of the motions of the soul. In short, once again Abbagnano throws the concept of "choice" at the reader's feet, which should call into question "security". But it is a matter of appearance superimposed on appearance, philosophical games, simple wrinkling of the forehead, not real anger. There is nothing sensational about his double dance step, everything soon falls into place, the doing never gets old because it was never really young. The order of the world first, even if paid for by the suffering of the cave of massacres. And this order can and must be eternal. Here is how Abbagnano reasons: "Freedom, as a commitment to value, is therefore the fundamental historicity of the existential structure. Historicity is the transcendental foundation of value. Ontologically, eternity is the pure and simple negation of time, of the insignificance and lability of temporal life. But it could not be, as it is, the correction, the completion and, in a word, the duty to be of such life, if it were not rooted in it and was not its constitutive possibility. Just as insignificance and lability, the life of man is an aspiration to emerge from time and to reconnect with something permanent and eternal. But the permanent and the eternal must then be rooted in temporality itself and be the foundation of it. The foundation of temporality, by virtue of which temporality aspires to reconnect with the eternal, is historicity. Historicity is therefore the mode of being proper to the transcendental possibility constitutive of existence and is embodied in the existential commitment, through which man transcends towards value, that is, towards the authentic meaning of coexistence, of himself and of the world. Living for value is therefore necessarily historicity, precisely because it is an aspiration to the eternal. Moving from time towards eternity, man realizes himself in his history. In history the meaning of value is expressed and realized as a duty to be". (Ib., 66). By deciding for history, man confirms himself in his problematic nature and "truly relates himself to the eternal". The circular conclusion takes up the initial point, problematicity. There is no way to get to the bottom of such a movement that produces at the same time a danger signal and a comfort for the dying. Criticism, correctly on the other hand, must start from what there is to go towards what there is not, from the manifest to the unmanifest, it cannot continue to circulate with impunity around the manifest, and Abbagnano never had a critical conception of philosophy. The unconfessed point, always implied, is how to escape from danger, from what can suddenly become completely out of control, extraneous. The philosopher who senses this signal is about to realize the proximity of the lake of blood and then runs for cover to protect, and reaffirm, the rules of safety.

Faith, philosophy, religion

Putting aside faith as a necessary moment of the universal Spirit, Abbagnano looks not only for the possibility of faith but also for its relative obligation. Once again the foundation and the guarantee. Here a strong problematic reduction is needed and Abbagnano is ready to carry it out. Faith is "something essentially human," he says, which could be a decisive starting point. Let's see. He writes: "The essential humanity of faith implies first of all this: that it is an attitude of the total man and that therefore it cannot be reduced to some partial aspect, however classified and distinct, of man. Faith

cannot be defined as an intellectual act or as a sentiment or as a practical activity; not because it is not each and every one of these things, but precisely because, being each and every one of these things, none of them really comes to characterize it in its total nature". (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., p. 71). As an intellectual act faith is belief, as a feeling it is dependence, as a practical activity it is work. These school distinctions leave one indifferent. In fact, the conclusion is different: "The fundamental lesson to be drawn from these alternatives is that faith is not a particular manifestation of man, traceable to a particular form of his activity; but it is a fundamental mode of being in which all manifestations of man can take root and from which all can deduce their own specific meaning." (Ib., pp. 72-73). We are back to square one. The initial drastic approach seems to have been abandoned, and the usual Abbagnano enters the field with his stale philosophical paraphernalia. Here we would need some qualitative boldness and courage, for example, to affirm the absolute extraneousness between faith and doing, between faith and quantity. Instead, he begins a backward, cautious and delicate process. Abbagnano is an experienced philosopher and knows when the ground becomes slippery and threatens to expose the mechanisms of coverage. And faith is too difficult a concept and could hide a dangerous hidden path directed towards the rejection of the impositive rules of doing. In any case, it is not a simple and crude concept and denounces a high problematic receptivity.

The first delicate point to be addressed is the relationship with doubt. He writes: "If faith were an infallible determination, if once acquired it could not be lost, if it definitively eliminated from existence every uncertainty and every struggle, it would not be faith: it would be an instinct, a necessary impulse, an impending fatality, it would be the negation of freedom and responsibility in the face of existence. And in that case the peace and security that are connected with it would be paid for too dearly: they would imply the loss by man of his genuine prerogatives and would even take away the merit and responsibility of faith itself. But such a faith would not be faith; for a safe harbor is such for those who sail, not for those who have renounced navigation.

"Faith and doubt are thus connected to such an extent that faith, although it is victory over doubt, and indeed precisely because of this, necessarily includes the possibility of doubt. And by doubt is meant not only intellectual doubt. Doubt is any uncertainty, any indecision, any alternative, any possibility of confusion; in the same way that by faith is meant not only belief, but also feeling and acting, and, in a word, a way of being of the total man". (Ib., pp. 73-74). But doubt is here a possibility of choice and, as such, is reduced to mere equivalence, as if doubting or not doubting were merely points of view. We are not yet at the unmasking of intentions, but almost. And doubt is not a possibility as a choice but is the most appropriate way to feed within oneself the restlessness about the world of doing that all captures us in its administered rules. If I consider this a choice, I have not understood the difference between quality and quantity. And Abbagnano never hinted at such an understanding. Doubt then does not accompany faith but life. Except that life and faith, here, for a philosophical gamble, are considered the same thing. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Abbagnano does not address the problem of the desperation of a life imprisoned in the certainty of doing, therefore he does not grasp all the implications of doubt, which is not an outrage against faith, quite the contrary.

Where Abbagnano reveals his cards and silences my illusions is in the equivalence between doubt and sin. But it is an ambiguous equivalence, which wants to recover doubt to the status of problematicity. He writes: "Uncertainty, bewilderment, dispersion among different and equivalent alternatives, making it impossible for man to find his inner unity and any true relationship with other men and with the world, constitute man's fall into sin. But in doubt sin is already recognized as such. As long as he remains immersed in dispersion and abandoned to bewilderment, man does not doubt. Through doubt, he is already beyond dispersion and bewilderment and already tends to reconnect with something that has unity and being. Doubt is a tension between sinful abandonment and faith, a tension by which one

is already out of abandonment, but not yet in faith. What constitutes the very nagging of doubt is the knowledge that sin is there threatening and that it can cause the irreparable loss of our being. If this threat is not clearly recognized, if it is not accepted and its meaning is not realized, doubt is impossible and with it the first condition of faith is lacking. Through doubt, man throws the first probe into the foundation of his nature: he recognizes as his own the possibility of sin. Doubt is precisely this recognition that makes the aspiration to faith possible. Now sin as the loss of unity and being is due to the fact that man is a finite entity. Man could not lose being and unity, if being and unity constituted his nature, if he was by his nature being and unity. Doubting, recognizing oneself as subject to the threat of sin, means recognizing oneself as finite and accepting one's finitude. This acceptance is decisive for doubt to be truly such and to be able to truly open up to the possibility of faith". (Ib., pp. 75-76). Once again the metaphysical circle, doubt grounds faith and faith grounds doubt. We are trapped. Yet the preparatory move was interesting and hinted at more than just an exchange of services and omerta. If I exercise doubt regarding the presumed and apparent completeness of the making, I give space to disquiet and this counteracts the faith in the productive mechanism by directing me towards a different consciousness, not on the contrary towards a confirmation of the making as absolute completeness. It's all about understanding the words. If introjected doing is despair, then going beyond is the doubt that opens me to quality. But Abbagnano does not say this, he seems to suggest it but does not say it. This is proven by the equivalence of doubt and sin, an equivalence that is underlined but no less pregnant. And sin is equivalent to an expulsion from society, from coexistence, and to an introduction into the process that is directed towards quality. Then, coming out of equivalence, Abbagnano resumes doubt as a means to reconfirm doing and its apparent completeness. These two dialectical movements intertwine together and complement each other metaphysically. It seems to me that we can say, clearing the field of misunderstandings, that faith is directed to appearance not to being. Sin is a failure of faith and a turning of the eyes elsewhere, towards quality. Abbagnano himself writes: "And the meaning of finitude is this, that man is not being, although he is or can be relation to being. If man were being and if he possessed by his nature the unity and stability that are proper to being, faith in being would be useless and impossible for him". (Ib., p. 77). A faith in being is certainly misplaced. Quality does not need it; it seeks only courage and involvement. Apostasy reversed, that's what a faith in quality would be. It does not require some sort of initiation to break out of the evil circle of doing but simply a refusal to cooperate. The "having to be" of which Abbagnano speaks, is essentially a having to do or, better, a having to appear, that is, it covers and tries to hide - more or less consciously, but who will investigate the shallows of immediacy? - the unmentionable amalgam of the cave of massacres.

Yet Abbagnano wants to differentiate himself from "necessity". He affirms: "The possibility of man to come out of doubt and to reach faith is clarified in this way as the recognition of transcendence. And thus the first positive determination of faith is reached: it is transcendence towards transcendence. This determination includes both the recognition of man's finitude as the possibility of sin (doubt) and the recognition of the possibility of leading finitude back to the being that is truly such and thus achieving a genuine relationship with being. And this double recognition is a single and simple movement; the movement by which man moves beyond his finite form accepted as such and leads it back to a being that is beyond it and that is defined precisely by this being beyond it". (Ib., pp. 78-79). Is necessity in transcendence? No, Abbagnano denies it, and it is of little importance to us to demonstrate here a possible contradiction, but even if not necessary in the classical metaphysical sense, transcendence guarantees the genuineness of the relationship with being. In other words, for similar things, it guarantees its authenticity. But of what? How can there be authenticity of doing if the transcendence of the object is another object equally produced and administered according to the rules? It would also be a serious confusion to think that Abbagnano wanted to refer to the radical abandonment of doing, as if this could be entrusted to the crudely metaphysical concept of "transcendence". There is no such abrupt

passage in the dialectic of his philosophizing. Using the contrast comes forward threateningly, the contrary hypothesis intervenes to heal it and everything returns as before.

Abbagnano has the intention that man lacks something, precisely being, and that therefore all his philosophy - and that of others, and more - is only appearance, in fact he writes: "Now, that man moves by faith towards being and tries to bind himself to being, implies that being is what man himself must be. If man can find in the consolidation of his relationship with being the victory over sin and if he can aspire to that consolidation with the well-founded hope of finding in it faith, it is evident that being as transcendence must contain what man lacks and lacks and must constitute the completion or correction of his finitude. Precisely because man cannot move towards transcendent being except by virtue of the recognition of his finitude, the transcendence of being is in some way connected with that finitude. Moving from finitude to transcendence, man seeks in transcendence the meaning, the being, the value of his own finitude. For if transcendence meant total extraneousness of being to man, if the distance of being from man implied a total break between being and man and the absence of any relationship of being with man, man's aspiration to being, the movement of transcendence constitutive of faith, would lack any foundation. In what way could man seek in being or beside being faith and peace, if being were foreign to him and if because of that foreignness he had no connection with what man is in his finite nature?" (Ib., pp. 80-81). Here we almost seem to see the intuition of the remote missing quality. But courage, if one does not have it, no one can give it to him, lamented Don Abbondio. And this is Abbagnano's sad conclusion. It is not a question of "extraneousness", not of "rupture", but being is in man, otherwise how could he look for it? Strategic retreat, the usual dialectical leap backwards. No unprecedented behavior, what would be the courageous leap in quality, no scandal. Everything proceeds regularly, one cannot do without the rules and, in the end, one even ends up loving them. Here is the conclusion: "Faith is the recognition of transcendence as the true being of man. By virtue of this recognition, the very being of man reveals itself to be transcendent, insofar as transcendence is his duty to be; and faith is linked to the value which is precisely the transcendent duty to be, recognized as the original being of man". (Ib., p. 82). One always ends up in the cave of massacres, where the logic of "having to be" reigns. This logic requires full trust in the "original" being. Once again the circle is closed. Yet I should have noticed even in times long past the sloppy way in which the dialectical technique of reversal is employed. I didn't. How could I not see the interest behind the metaphysical concept of faith as transcendence? Yet my methodological weapons of so many years ago were no less sharp than those of today. On the contrary, the search for quality, the real and concrete doubt about the completeness of making, the resulting restlessness and transcendence are movements that unhinge the order in the depths, question the world of making as a whole, the same irresistible attraction towards order and guarantee. Abbagnano does not want this to happen but he is with his feet planted all the way down in the philosophy of being, that is, the exact opposite of the philosophy of appearing. He does not want to admit this uncomfortable position of his as a philosopher with false papers. He is a prominent professor - I won't say famous, but well-known -, full of students and editorial relations, working on a monumental History of Philosophy, he doesn't want to put all this into play. He hangs out with distinguished people and plans with foresight the professorial future of his students - not mine. His has been a safe, secure and comfortable social rise. What would be the point of putting this contradiction in the middle? This is why he says: "By transcending by faith the possibilities proper to his finitude and moving toward the transcendent being which is the ought-to-be and the value of his own finitude, man actually moves toward the transcendental possibility which constitutes him in his own right and brings back to that unique possibility the multiplicity of possibilities in his possession. The movement toward transcendence brings man back to the transcendental of existence. We can express this third determination of faith by saying that it is the movement through which transcendence reveals itself as the transcendental of man." (Ib., p. 84). Here the key words are still "ought to be" and "possession." The rest is a dialectical somersault. One only needs to keep away from one's ears the wild sound of

being and the noise of chaos that stirs all experience in quality. He doesn't want to hear the trumpets that bring down the defensive walls, he wants the party to continue, with its masks and its concordances, he doesn't want a simple false step to declare that the king is naked. Everything must remain as it is, or rather strengthen itself in doing because it is in doing that appearance makes its ghosts move. This is why in Abbagnano's philosophy nothing happens, only dialectical movements, eminently apparent. Even a remote presence of residue is withdrawn so that nothing happens, no novelty, no loss of grip, no variation of lift. Nothing.

But is faith fidelity? Abbagnano responds by taking things in a broad way. He writes: "Faith does not subtract man from his existence and his finitude: it subtracts him from his improper existence, from the dispersion of his finitude, and recalls him to that foundation in which resides his possibility of truly relating to being and of consolidating himself in this relationship. Therefore, faith does not remove man from his human tasks. On the contrary, it engages him substantially in his task, making him recognize it as his own, and as the only way to achieve sincerity and peace with himself". (Ib., pp. 84-85). Peace with himself, a laudable goal, no doubt. Resetting restlessness. There is no more humiliating image for a man than that of seeking peace before quality, that is, of being content with pretense, with appearance when he could go further. It is the laceration of being that is here consummated and the realization of an existence perfectly adequate to doing. There is no fault in this, I know, only lack of courage, and perhaps the blindness was mine going to knock on the wrong door. Closely squeezing the doing is fruitless, it cannot produce quality because no quantitative administration would allow it. So I wandered around asking - or rather comparing - something that invariably remained mute. The clashes of method - or which seemed to me to be such - of which I spoke in the Introduction, were part of this attempt to break down a non-existent door. I was systematically breaking my head against the wall. I couldn't achieve anything but constant, chaotic, annoying brooding. I didn't want to be a believer and I didn't want to be gifted faith. On the contrary, I wanted to disperse myself in my own possibilities, not properly authenticated by knowledge, and do it my way. For Abbagnano, to have faith is to be faithful. He writes: "Fidelity is the same existential concreteness of faith, since faith can never be indefinite and generic, but it is always individuated and individual, and it requires individuation and singularity as its own condition. To the determination of faith as fidelity is thus connected the recognition of the value of the individual, which is proper to faith. For faith, the individual (myself, the other) is irreplaceable and has absolute value. Faith, in fact, is the very movement that calls the individual to this value, demanding that he relate to his transcendental possibility and recognize himself in this relationship. Only faith, by rescuing the individual from dispersion, committing him to a task which is his own and in which he is irreplaceable, realizes its unique meaning and guarantees its absolute value. Faith as fidelity is always fidelity to the singularity of the person". (Ib., p. 86). Interest shifts from faith to fidelity, from the dream, albeit misplaced because it is contained in doing, to adherence to an administered program. I am thus enclosed in fidelity as in a shell that contains a numbered repertoire of situations to which my appropriate behavior must correspond. It is myself as an individual who is enclosed in fidelity, not an accidental part, a single contribution that is required is always total in the partial logic of doing. If I am faithful, I am a marked man, a recognizable object that cannot escape the game of correspondences of use in the productive mechanism, even to the most instinctive precepts, those that do not emerge even at the object level. If I sculpt this rule by seeking quality, I am pursued by every means, fiercely and without possible second thoughts. Remembrance itself either follows certain rules, where the desert wind is reduced to a light breeze, or it is rambling.

Here the concept of fidelity widens to coexistence. Abbagnano writes: "The realization of oneself as a person and the recognition of the other person are therefore based on the one and indivisible act of existential transcendence. The faith that leads man to realize himself as an existential singularity, leads him at the same time to respect in the other man a different, but equally absolute, singularity. And this

respect cannot be negative and generic, but must be positive and operative. It must be expressed in concrete ways of solidarity, sympathy, friendship, and love and constitute the possibility of bonds in which fidelity to the person is determined in the very form of the person's singularity. A generic and inoperative recognition has nothing to do with this fidelity, precisely because it disregards the singularity on which it is based. Actual fidelity is single, of the person's very singularity, and it determines a living community constituted by the interweaving in solidarity of individual relationships". (Ib., pp. 87-88). Indiscriminate devotion, without distinctions of affinity. Society (Abbagnano insists, for his own reasons, on speaking of "community") is this intersection of solidarity. What an angelic vision I had at the time. Next to me, who got up at five in the morning to start work at six, there were young people from middle-class Turin who got up at ten and didn't work, they just studied under the hen's wings. I could not sympathize with them. That's why, even now, after more than half a century, I don't know what "community" Abbagnano was referring to. In any case, whatever it was, I was not part of it. The maximum of absurdity is reached in the statement that "the unity of this community is destiny". This is not a sort of almost filial devotion, but simply a misunderstanding. Often Abbagnano's casual use of philosophical concepts causes confusion. It would have been more appropriate to talk about the future. Instead he writes: "Destiny is the existential connection of the community, since it is based on fidelity to the person. Faith, as fidelity, is the recognition of a common destiny to which the community in solidarity is called. Living for a common destiny is the ultimate determination of faith. It implies a solidarity that recognizes itself as such and a fidelity that safeguards at all costs the singularity of the person. Faith is essentially a relationship and connection between individuals, a relationship and connection in virtue of which only individuals are worthwhile as such. In the unity of destiny, the individual finds himself insofar as he finds the other". (Ib., p. 88). As the reader well realizes, there was no need to bother with the concept of "destiny". A philosophy that pivots on the positive evaluation of doing as transcendence has no words that destiny is capable of understanding. Destiny has an impact on life only on the condition that it is really lived, even qualitatively, within the limits in which this different experience is possible. Remembrance speaks to destiny and destiny responds. Otherwise it is a contradiction of misunderstandings that follow one another. Fate is mute before the unassailable wall of the cave of massacres. The future in it always moves the same spectacle of shadows. But, as I said, for Abbagnano, destiny is simply a future told with another word.

Now the central problem is faith and the relationship with transcendence. Finally, this last concept takes its definitive form. He says: "... faith is essentially a relationship with transcendence which is susceptible to a twofold consideration. First, it can be described as a transcending of man towards transcendence; second, as the revealing of transcendence to man. For the first interpretation, it is a movement from man to transcendent being; for the second interpretation, it is a movement from transcendent being to man. The first is the existential interpretation; the second is the ontological interpretation." (Ib., p. 91). The first interpretation is the philosophy of existence that elaborates it, the second is religion. Here is marked the limit and the inglorious end - if you want the spiritualist and ontological subjection - of Abbagnano's philosophy. Let's see why. "Transcendence" has the sovereign metaphysical peculiarity of appropriating everything that comes into contact with it, or that is spontaneously submitted to it for the sake of order or assurance, in other words to escape the terrible and humiliating contingency of doing. Thus transcendence takes away the content of the positivity of existence, in the same terms hypothesized by Abbagnano, and reverses its meaning in the most absolute deresponsibility. As a good metaphysician, he did not realize this, others did, but they did not say it with due force. Paci, for example. Tending towards transcendence means giving it its own positive consistency, if we want to give this term a proper and coherent sense. It is out of place to justify this metaphysical step as Abbagnano does: "For the existential interpretation, man does not move towards transcendence if not to recognize it as his own transcendental possibility, so that this interpretation

avoids the hardening of the transcendent being in its extraneousness to man and recognizes this being in the unity that must be proper to man, to coexistence and to the world, so that they may be guaranteed in their value". (Ibid.). This is a one-way trip. There are no captious or insinuating interpretations. There are no initiations that would really be a sign of the finished product, hence of doing, perhaps the only well-founded interpretation, but one that Abbagnano keeps away from. The religious interpretation should be rejected insofar as man - again according to Abbagnano - is only a receptive element in it, but once again, with an unjustified logical leap, he recovers by writing: "These determinations, however, are immediately asserted by religion beyond their strictly ontological meaning and regain their existential meaning". (Ib., p. 92). No comment. Religion, after all, is an instrument of order of the first magnitude and could not be set aside for a trivial ontological quarrel. The separation and conjunction within the concept of "transcendence" is one of the weakest points of all positive existentialism. In fact, for me, at one time, it was the culmination of my push for rejection. Nothing could and would convince me less than Abbagnano's reasoning on the trinity. However much regard and interest I might have had for existentialism in general, this point managed to block me beyond measure. I did not want to be faithful at any cost, even jeopardizing what I thought might be my future. I wanted to remain integral in my model of approaching knowledge and I refused to accept what I saw accepted - in a more or less critical way - by those around me. There was a rocky resolution in me that brought me here, to this Greek prison, at the end of my life, a refractoriness of which I am proud, that never wanted to get caught up in the political slime, even disguised as culture. It is my way - often unconscious - of staying in front of quality. I have found myself many times reflecting on those old choices of mine while contemplating devastation. I'm okay with that.

If philosophy is based on man's "decision" about his life, religion follows the opposite path, emphasizing the action of grace on man, who thus manages not to sin. Abbagnano makes a curious mixture and writes: "However, the religious character of grace lies in the fact that it is not an extrinsic gift, but operates in the human will itself, calling it back and raising it to freedom. It constitutes the initial possibility which man recognizes and makes his own through a binding decision. Once again the divergence of the two paths, accentuated and carried through to the end, determines the return to the unity of their origin". (Ib., pp. 93-94). This is truly unacceptable. A "common origin" is a wrong concept for the destination Abbagnano wanted to express it, but, as it often happens, the blind hen manages to catch the grain of wheat before the others. Philosophy and religion, which I considered at the time - and in some ways even now - antithetical expressions of knowledge, are both indefatigable providers of the cave of massacres, and so, strangely and unwillingly, Abbagnano ends up being right. But it is a reason that he would never have shared and that would have embarrassed him if he had ever known it. In his clumsy attempt to recover the Trinitarian religion, which is more dialectically appealing to him, he does nothing but distance his positive existentialism from some semblance of comprehensibility.

If philosophy appeals to historicity, religion appeals to tradition. Society receives the elements of the former and the latter in a different way. Abbagnano does not think about this, he tries in every way to summarize these distant conditions so that they can work together for the stability of the human future. Referring to religion, he writes: "Obviously this problem does not arise in religion as long as it is based on tradition. Tradition lives by the prior acceptance that the individual has made of the community, an acceptance to which the community itself has committed itself on his behalf. This acceptance, however, is generic. It has been made once and for all, without the possibility of considering what the individual is and will be and what are or will be the concrete conditions, obstacles and struggles he will have to face. But when man, in order to keep faith with this acceptance, must face the uncertainty of the struggle and the danger of dispersion, doubt will present itself to him in all its force and he will have to propose anew the specific problem of his commitment and of his own singularity. Tradition will still

represent for him a solicitation and a call, but since he will no longer be fused with it, he will distinguish what belongs to tradition and what belongs to himself; what it demands of him and what he can correspond to it; what it commits him to and the commitment he can and must make to it. By virtue of its unfolding and deepening, the religious attitude thus passes from tradition to historicity." (Ib., pp. 96-97). In the end, historicity prevails over tradition, religion, having fulfilled its generic and delimiting task, gives way to philosophy, heir and sister more suitable to manage the world of forced doing. It is not a yielding, but a division of roles. It should not be forgotten that historicity is based on fidelity. What is important to Abbagnano is that religion fulfill its specific task of positive singularization of existence. It should not be a question of a dubious and dangerous exaltation, but of a concrete regulating force, capable of bringing to fruition any treatment of appropriation. In the attempt to justify first and then use religion, Abbagnano is uncomfortable, he touches the bottom of his inability to build a real positive philosophy of existence, even if it is linked to doing and to its productive rules. He accepts, in other words, to eat in two cowsheds.

The long critical tirade with which religion is accused of "generic objectivity or objective generality" is also a justifiable and prudent tirade, like all Abbagnano's distances. He writes: "Religion speaks and acts in the name of a universal community in which all men participate both in fact and in law; and for it what makes the value of the individual is precisely this participation to which, therefore, it continually calls him and commits him. Certainly its call is all the more passionate and intense the more the individual moves away or tends to move away from the community in whose name it speaks. But in the individual it never sees anything other than precisely the member of this community; what is and can be unique and exceptional in the individual falls outside its consideration or is explicitly denied. Religion affirms a rule, which refuses to the exception. The objective character of the ontological interpretation on which it is based excludes consideration of the exception. A single path is offered to all and all must equally follow it. Everyone is given the possibility of following it; and because of this possibility every man as such possesses the dignity and worth of a person." (Ib., pp. 98-99). Society - community was only good for religion, as we have seen - proceeds in the opposite way, starting with the individual. This problem poses a real but wasted distinction. Abbagnano does not wait long to throw out of the window what he had managed to say was good. In the end, even religion is brought back under the philosophical hat of singularity, speaking specifically about the sense of "election" to which the religious man feels called. Once again, the dialectical circle is closed, but it gives the impression that this game of the parts could continue indefinitely. These are the usual techniques of philosophy with which man continues to torment himself without being able to break the bad game imposed on him by the productive mechanism. His is a declared search for synthesis. This syncretism resets to zero, in my opinion, any interest in positive existentialism. In the past, in my lost notes, I have expressed the doubt of a certain ironic speech, but re-reading the texts I realize that I was wrong. Abbagnano is very serious, as always. There is here, on the contrary, a desperate attempt to enlist religion under the umbrella of existentialism, something that in France had been done more or less by Blondel and Marcel, even if in different perspectives. Here is how he specifies this commitment: "Faith is in fact singularity, transcendence, value, fidelity; and each of these determinations is a bond by which philosophy and religion must seek and find each other. But they cannot seek and find each other except in the context of a concretely lived and realized existence. Their synthesis is neither objective nor rational nor even universally subjective. It cannot be given once and for all in any doctrine; it must be realized by the individual man who finds himself in his faith, whatever the path that led him to faith may be. It is a continuous discovery and a continuous search: the search and discovery that existence makes of itself, reconnecting with the authentic being of its singularity and its true community". (Ib., p. 102). Recovery deludes him into thinking that he will gain more convincing power, but it is an illusion. Philosophy uses religion but is itself used, the history of theology demonstrates this. In reforming the lake of blood one never knows which of the two is the

more effective. On me, as a young man, this observation, albeit nebulously intuited, made a great impression. It is a bad sign that a philosophical theory is too concerned with religion, not so much with the existence of God, but precisely with religion as faith, exactly as Abbagnano does. Faith is linked to fidelity and fidelity to guarantee and security. The circle soon closes. These are not coded signals but clear words.

Time and sin

After an exposition of the theories of time, divided between the concept of becoming and the concept of consciousness, theories that are not referred to here, Abbagnano brings back the interpretation of necessity as "permanence" to possibility as "temporality". He writes: "...if necessity is linked to permanence, that is, to being as such, the possible is linked to instability, that is, only to the relationship with being. The proper domain of time and its interpretation is therefore existence. Temporality expresses the instability of the relationship with being, that is, the possibility of its resolution. The relation to being, as a possibility, is also essentially the possibility of a non-relation: as such, it is temporality." (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., p. 111). Escaping from the present is the purpose of this fallacious problematic to take refuge in the future. But, as we have become accustomed to seeing, this future cannot be different from the present in a world administered by doing. One cannot escape necessity in this way; on the contrary, one seeks it as a safe place to anchor oneself, a word that recurs often in the philosophy of positive existentialism. The negativity of time, harbinger of death, is thus extinguished in the positivity of the present, where death does not exist. What does it matter that the mechanism of doing is a kind of living death, it guarantees, therefore it is necessary, thus keeping us safe from the dangers of qualitative compromise. Here it is the misinterpretation of the future that prevents us from grasping the reality of time. We can see that the philosopher is on the defensive, since time is transformed into an object by doing and if this vicious circle is not broken, it risks going unnoticed. Yet, time is precisely the same problem on which Abbagnano's themes are so insistent.

He writes: "The interpretation of time gives rise to an alternative: either to disown and ignore time and with it the finitude of existence or to recognize and accept time and finitude. The first alternative determines sin. The non-recognition of temporality as a possibility of the non-possible is the assumption of instability as stability, that is, the stabilization in an instability considered definitive. Every element of this instability, every attitude, every act, appears to be firm, definitive and significant; therefore, one renounces to look for and realize its meaning and value beyond it, in the transcendence towards being and in the establishment of an authentic relationship with being. One believes to possess being and to be in a certain way being in the instability and provisionality of an evanescent relationship with being; and by ignoring or disavowing this relationship, one loses the only possibility of consolidating it and making it authentic. The world then appears open to us as a spectacle or theater in which we can intervene at will, but at which we can also watch; and so it loses its consistency and its reality. Other people appear to us as collapsible instruments of our particular needs and purposes because we do not make the effort to trace in them the being that is beyond the casual and provisional relationships that are established between them and us. Our very selves become dispersed in a variety of attitudes each of which is taken as definitive and therefore closed in its insignificance." (Ib., pp. 112-113). These words sound dead for Abbagnano's philosophy if read with the right logical scansion. He welds himself into the necessity of defense, and this is a closure in time, that is, he does exactly the opposite of what he says. The essence of the problem continues to elude him. And the fact of calling this disavowal "sin" is a request for testimony to affirm the contrary, but this testimony is not sufficient. But what is sin? Abbagnano immediately answers: "The fact that facts, persons and attitudes replace each other so well in the succession of time is the evident sign of their insignificance, their inconsistency and their poverty of value. And so to live in time, to see in it a succession and to abandon oneself to the course of the succession, means the same thing: to live in sin, to renounce the being of

one's self, of the world and of others. Sin is the loss or at least the potential rupture of the relationship with being; it is the renunciation of transcendence and the loss of transcendence. Loss of transcendence means: loss of the authentic possibility of a relationship with being in the threefold form that is proper to it: the unity of the self, the reality of the world, and solidarity with others. The weakening or potential rupture of that relationship takes away from being its nature of having to be, that is, its character of value. To live in the succession and in conformity with temporal succession means to attribute to each event that succeeds the other the same value as the other; to each person that succeeds the other the same value as the other; to each attitude that succeeds the other the same value as the other. The consideration of time as succession thus carries within itself the threat of the laceration of the existential structure, of the loss of unity, transcendence, and value." (Ib., pp. 114-115). But this is exactly what was stated earlier, that is, the disavowal of time as the presence of temporality, that is, as a consciousness that does not accept the limitedness of doing and its rules. Time accesses destiny through quality by breaking its own pattern, the latter crumbles as a result of the overcoming. In quality there is no time as a succession, freedom is something else, chaos, not ordered scanning, more or less disguised as problematic. The powerful gust of diversity upsets the necessary order of doing and throws the different consciousness into uncertainty - this time really uncertainty - from where it can then speak to destiny. Abbagnano does not hint at such an alternative, he seriously thinks that the connection with being, its "transcendental relationship", guarantees him an exit from the world of appearance. But it is gratuitous philosopher's thought, seasoned thought that has had its day. From the cavern of massacres one can observe only shadows cast in the impassable wall. Philosophical theories are ingrained in the power of doing, where they penetrate and become deeply impregnated, they cannot access the experience of quality, their author keeps them firmly on a leash. Doing is the very essence of power, its infallible eye evaluates and weighs the theories according to the contribution they can give to the productive mechanism, it often uses some of them - and this is the case of Abbagnano - to reduce the damage of others, perhaps more reluctant to be regimented, although never completely unavailable. This operation of sorting and control is always lurking.

Imagining himself immune from this enlistment, Abbagnano writes: "The other alternative that time presents to man, that is, the recognition and acceptance of the temporality of existence, is as difficult and arduous as the first is easy and obvious. It consists first of all in opening one's eyes to the dispersive and nullifying character of temporality as such. It requires that man courageously realize, by overcoming the allurements of existential illusion, that time contains for him a latent threat that can render null and void his best achievements. That is, it requires an attitude of unceasing vigilance, which excludes abandoning oneself to the succession of events and living at the mercy of that succession. This preliminary recognition, this unceasing vigilance, implies that man commits himself to gather and concentrate in a fundamental unity. Among the attitudes he can assume, only one is authentic for him, the one by virtue of which he can realize himself as unity and self. Among the relationships which it is possible for him to maintain or establish between himself and men, only one is the one which enables him to live in solidarity with them and thus to constitute with them a true community." (Ib., pp. 116-117). The leading word here is "fundamental". There is always, as we can see, the search for a foundation, a good, ancient, costly, distinct foundation of assurance. And it must be suitable to protect what has been achieved by the authentically chosen possibility. But this argument is, again, contradictory. It badly recovers what it begins to assert, and recovers it with the usual dialectical movement. The strangeness of this behavior lies in the fact that Abbagnano is seriously convinced, once the relationship with being is fixed, that he can establish and guarantee it. In the deep closet of logical lacerations there are tools of various kinds, one more obscure than the other; Abbagnano is the satrap of their use. Abbagnano is the satrap of their use. In fact, he affirms: "Among the situations in which he finds himself or can find himself in the world, there is only one that allows him to recognize and evaluate the order and the reality of the world. If he has truly decided to gather himself into the

unity of his own existential structure (that is, he has decided to decide, because his decision can only have this meaning), time no longer appears to him as a succession of replaceable or substituted terms, but as the possibility of transcending the threat implicit in it and of gathering, preserving, and guaranteeing the essential unity that it tends to disperse." (Ib., p. 117). He thus saves the past in history and the future in the task imposed by doing. His bargaining thus aims at a secure foundation. He is not a philosopher of uncertainty, but from uncertainty he is a philosopher moving toward certainty. His purpose is to recover the always possible subversion towards quality, which he considers the realm of nothingness, since he is convinced that being and appearing coincide totally in doing, in the world of doing. His obligatory passages to the problematic denounce a poor and hesitant background, not of the *arcana imperii* as I had once suspected. In the realm of recovery there is always something very malignant, the counterpart denounces all the misery of the agreement.

The denial of temporal succession should have entailed an unresolvable conflict with doing, which is a succession of produced objects. In fact, Abbagnano rightly notes: "Succession does not imply any fundamental continuity, any internal welding in the constitution of man, because it is simply substitution: and substitution requires substitutability, that is, the equivalence of value of the terms that, by succeeding each other, are substituted". (Ib., p. 119). And here the way should have been opened to quality. But the aspiration to a different consciousness has disappeared, the philosopher acts as a maintenance man, working in the back room, he does not even have the courage to collaborate. He throws the stone and withdraws his hand. He is content with a piece of bread thrown to him by the power that feeds itself fully and without pretence to the forced action. Even if he doesn't take out his templar vestments, the philosopher fights his crusade in defense of the right to massacre, not him personally, not this one, but through a third party. Here then is the problematic statement and the correlative wandering, the despair of the loss - only imagined - and the subdued reintegration in the massive administered complex of doing. Here he is precipitating: "Only by transcending succession, that is, by accepting and realizing temporality as the possibility of loss, does man limit and define himself, moving in search of what he has been and committing himself to fidelity to the past. This act of fidelity, constitutive of the authentic present, is the unity of the person and is the act by which the person truly acquires his or her own dignity and irreplaceable value. Personality means irreplaceability, and the realization of personality in a process in which substitutability is the law is not possible". (Ibid.). Tiny heirlooms of consent, carrier word, "irreplaceability." Empty of meaning but rich in dialectical devotion. Now the philosopher is guardian of the orthodoxy of recovery, fidelity and value are the ancient words of assurance. The essence of quality, never so palpable, accentuates the need for security, for an inviolable space in which to move, for recuperative techniques capable of keeping enemies away, the proponents of an existing incompleteness that generates anxiety.

But Abbagnano feels the need to confirm the vague "irreplaceability" with the more concrete "historicity". The denial of temporal succession is therefore elevated to power. Here it is: "In the non-acceptance of temporality, which is implicit in succession, man is a slave to succession itself and to the vicissitudes of substitutions in which it expresses itself. He is not free to preserve himself, to guarantee himself, to consolidate his essential acquisitions, because succession presses upon him and snatches from his hand, without his realizing it, that which he believes he holds firmly. In historicity, on the other hand, the risk of loss is clearly accepted; but decisive fidelity removes from this risk the threat of dispersion and reduces it to a fundamental alternative of success or failure. In this case man is free because he belongs to himself and because he realizes the conditions that make him available for his task.

"The future is configured for him as a coming to being of the unity and of having to be. The unity of his self, of the world and of the community, is revealed to him, in the act of freedom, as the effective term

of his transcendence and constitutes him in a well-founded relationship with himself. His possibilities still remain possibilities, implying the possibility and risk of loss; but, having gathered and founded themselves on transcendental possibility, they have guaranteed themselves against the vicissitudes of succession and have made themselves dependent on the force and decision of existential commitment." (Ib., pp. 120-121). The carrier words are all gathered here. Some of them we are familiar with, others resonate with the old content, e.g., "preserve," "secure," "consolidate." The theme is always the same. Solemn, massive, self-confident affirmation, carrying a gravitas that resets any residual problem. The air that is increasingly being breathed in positive existentialism is dense and repetitive, and it is inherited from the countless generations of philosophers who have endeavored to produce it. There is now something eye-rolling in these dialectical movements of recomposition that gives a sense of panic, one sees the concern to keep separate the eventual critical outlet of the problematic, an outlet that could only lead to a questioning of the accumulative mechanism of making. The sacrosanct productive mechanism must be kept away from chaos, from the formless and dangerous adventure of quality, from any eagerness to complete.

Yet, despite the obvious ontological reference, Abbagnano writes: "If the guarantee, which historicity implies, in favor of being and man is interpreted ontologically and fixed in an objective term extraneous to the existential commitment of man, man finds himself facing eternity. Eternity is the simple generic negation of temporal succession. It is being objectively considered in its permanence and therefore opposed to the instability of existence that takes place according to temporal succession. As such, it remains extraneous to existence and because of this extraneousness can encourage man to abandon himself to temporal succession, distracting him from transcendence." (Ib., p. 121). Suddenly, it comes back. This may seem like a matter of detail, but it is important. Abbagnano wants to double-lock the door, he wants to prevent the smallest grain of sand from damaging the gear. He knows that time is an ugly beast in philosophy, and he also knows that his purported third way does not exist. What he pursues is the defense of his function regarding the interpretation of time, and he does not realize that this defense conflicts with the very essence of doing. Therefore the critical conditions of any consideration are, on the one hand, the denial of parceling, and on the other hand, the acceptance of security in the transcendental foundation. But doing would have liked better the parcelled out solution, more in keeping with its nature. Instead, the philosopher provides the exact opposite, and provides it systematically. But what does it matter? What matters is not what he provides but how he provides it. And because he provides it as an object, everything falls back into place. Function is basically what the philosopher wants to defend; everything converges to this end. That is why he can conclude, "In this sense historicity is the transcendental foundation of time; but it is a foundation which is not but must be, and whose being is identified with that of man's authentic existence." (Ib., p. 123). Everything is in the service of "ought-to-be," that is what must be protected. The various massacrators are those who protect the mechanism of massacre. Like all metaphysicians, Abbagnano thinks that the place of good is in doing. With this, he fails to place the place of evil in action. If he talks about sin, he gets confused and suggests a possible place of quality from which to flee as soon as possible, but this is a false deduction of malicious critics. For him good and evil coexist in doing and here they die together. Quality is not present. It doesn't matter. The philosopher makes his appearance see in motion under quantitative species and his dialectical skill makes it unrecognizable under the brute form of the object.

Man and science

Advocating a collaboration between science and philosophy, Abbagnano asks on which side his result should lean, on the side of science or on the side of philosophy? Gnoseology or epistemology? He writes: "Science presents itself as the eminent and typical degree of knowledge: it can therefore be taken as revealing the foundation of knowledge as such. Embodying the maximum validity that knowledge can achieve, it allows, better than any other manifestation of it, to enucleate and recognize

the intrinsic constitution of knowledge and its existential foundation. Science is true knowledge; the condition of truth can and must be derived precisely from the consideration of science. Such an inquiry may be called gnoseological." (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., p. 129). A scientific statement at least, questionable and dated. Unless Abbagnano wants to reserve a higher knowledge for philosophy. But this knowledge should go towards quality, which is not possible. Let's see. Here it seems more than anything else a sort of sacralization of scientific objectivity, opposed to philosophical problematicity. A sort of place of certainty, above everything as such, without explanation. Is this the neo-enlightenment? What about the benefits and ills we all receive from science? The very concept of collaboration, a child of the 1950s, I cannot share today. Concerning the epistemological aspect, Abbagnano writes: "Obviously, this epistemological research, if it can and must lead to determine the character of science as such and the orientation that is proper and constitutive of it, must stop where the real scientific investigation begins, limiting itself to prospect its general orientation. Epistemological inquiry is not a substitute for scientific inquiry; it is clarity about its nature and its fundamental modes, clarity achieved through consideration of its ultimate possibility and thus its validity." (Ib., p. 130). But in what does this inquiry that philosophy elaborates for science consist? Today the answer is much clearer, but not as one might wish. In what way could science set its own methodological orthodoxy for itself? Many answers are available today. Abbagnano either did not have them at hand or ignored them. In any case, for him, entrusting philosophy with the task of being the guardian of orthodoxy suited him very well. It is not a question of prevailing over the choices of method, but only a question of shopkeeping. Like Hegel in his time, Abbagnano here ends up speaking from hearsay about things he knows second-hand and badly. Here there is a morbid defense of existentialist and positive positions in a field that by its nature is very friable. Science, originally a measure and an order, was now, even at that time, anything but measured and ordered, and it was crowding around new concepts, first of all the theory of indetermination. Abbagnano wanted a return to order for the mother - according to him - of all knowledge, that the disordered be brought into line, that hypotheses be held within decent and acceptable paradigms, so that the many demands of man could be satisfied and guaranteed. Enlightenment was one thing, neo-enlightenment another, quite different.

Abbagnano poses the problem of epistemological investigation in this way: "There is no doubt that science must ensure man's dominion over nature and must provide him with the indispensable tools for his realization in the world. Because of the state of indigence that is proper to the human condition, man's relationship with the world is defined by need. Man is not enough for himself: he needs the things of the world in order to make himself instruments and means, not only for living, but for his own properly human or spiritual realization. And the more his life is enriched and lifted above the purely biological plane, the more his realization becomes purely human or spiritual, the more his bonds of dependence on the world multiply because the greater becomes the contribution of instruments and means which nature must provide him with. Now man has no other way of procuring the means and instruments indispensable to his realization than through science." (Ib., p. 131). Here the leading word is "subjugation." Nature must be subjugated. The last fifty years have shown down to the slime what these words mean. The misery and the extent of exploitation have grown out of all proportion. Man is a malignant creature, incapable of stopping this process. The mechanism of doing has strengthened without ever stopping and science is willing to reform the cave of massacres even when it works - at least on the surface - to improve human life. Abbagnano throws back all objections, even those of free movement in his day, and is not much concerned with the mindless use of resources. What he fears is that science not be besieged by the demand for utilitarian uses and save its theoretical soul. Thus he affirms: "To limit scientific research to those tasks which appear to be of evident or mediated utility would mean to preclude all those ways which, although not leading at first sight to results of evident utility, could turn out to be much more fruitful than such results. Science cannot arrive at practically usable results except through the path of theoretical discovery; and yet it seems that the only way to

achieve those results is to push pure research as far as possible, in all directions". (Ib., p. 132). Which is a philosophical platitude, for theory and technological application are always science in its modification of coercive factual production. There is no way to save science, on the one hand, and making, on the other, they are two sides of the same coin, indeed they are the same thing. Abbagnano does not realize that a scientific - or philosophical - theory is an object that is sold in supermarkets today. Science is based on the object. The rest is traceable to coercive doing without residue. And if the proposal of new problems inaccessible to quantitative analysis could loom on the horizon as a new danger, it must be blocked. Dangerous ideas must be rejected far away, where they cannot damage the orderly mechanisms of scientific research, so essential to production.

The object governs the world and its fundamental law, ordinability. Abbagnano writes: "But the object of science has ordinability as its fundamental and predominant character. The passage from ordinary knowledge, which does not include a sufficient guarantee of its own validity, to scientific knowledge, which does include such a guarantee, is determined by the introduction of rigorous methods of systematic ordering. Order is in science the control of the reality of the object and is therefore the intrinsic guarantee, which it possesses, of its own truth value. Where the use of an exact method of ordering is not possible, science limits itself to describing according to the procedure of common knowledge, but does not achieve systematic constitution and therefore the value of authentic science; and correspondingly its object does not achieve its value of authentic objectivity, that is, of rigorously controllable reality. The possibility that science truly organizes itself as a system of knowledge, verging on an objective reality, is therefore the same as the possibility of the systematic order". (Ib., p. 133). This sentence is an archaeological monument that shows like no other all the signs of time. To list the load-bearing words is impossible. It is the perfect picture of a science of domination that, in order to maintain its power, has had to profoundly modify itself. Many aspects of scientific research today have been refined and escape the simple cataloguing of measurement, even if they remain prisoners of the objective and factual hypothesis. The eccentricity of certain theories does not move from the quantitative, but this Abbagnano would not have noticed even today, his interests were elsewhere.

Here is the dialectical leap, the desperate metaphysical attempt to bring back the problematic in the sign of scientific ordinability. The problem could have been insoluble because that very type of corporeal impenetrability is what is needed for coercive making, so there was no need for much effort. But Abbagnano wants to get there differently. There is something urgent in his metaphysical effort, to save his positive existentialism, and this happens by making order disappear and reappear unchanged but under another appearance. Not even to speak of being different.

Following the dialectical rhythm, the object of science must first become foreign to man and then return under a different appearance, as we have said. He writes: "Now a world reduced to a pure system of space-time determinations appears totally foreign to the needs and requirements of man. It is a world which no longer implies any immediate reference to the constitution of man as such, which has become completely dehumanized and has been reduced to the most rigorous and purest objectivity. And yet it is precisely a world made in this way, precisely a world which has revealed itself in its constitution as totally foreign to man and his needs, that must include within itself the guarantee of meeting these needs and of lending itself to the realization of man as such. Here is the paradoxical aspect of the problem. As long as the world has appeared to man as having a constitution akin to his, as long as it has appeared to him permeated and woven with anthropomorphic elements and entirely subordinated to human ends, as long as science has not taken possession of it to reveal its spatio-temporal objectivity, it has lent itself much less to meeting man's needs and providing the appropriate instruments for his realization. But as soon as science has revealed its space-time objectivity and as it proceeds to reduce it more and more rigorously to this objectivity, removing it from any direct or indirect reference to man,

it begins to lend itself and lends itself more and more to be used. What is the solution of this paradox?" (Ib., pp. 136-137). But where is the paradox? It doesn't exist. We know the answer well by now. The problem is posed in such a way as to be constantly irritated to the utmost in its components and then recovered. No restlessness is tolerated, no criticism of objectuality can be thought of. Everything must correspond perfectly to the premises. Abbagnano's philosophy does not survive his metaphorical method, it is all here, in these spectacular, and at the same time laughable, leaps of the hen. Once started, he must bring his chisel work to completion. So he concludes, "The key to the solution is in man's attitude. To discover the authentic objectivity of the world, man must not think of the world as a part of himself, but must feel himself as part of the world." (Ib., p. 137). Once again it is the choice to root oneself in the world that fictitiously solves the problem. But we know how this choice is more of an exhortation to choose than an actual choice. The call to will is always reminiscent of that terrible web of doing. It is not by chance that the carrier term here is "rooted", which corresponds to the foundation Abbagnano is looking for in his metaphysics. Life is this continuous attempt at stabilization, an attempt persistently frustrated by the incompleteness of the object. One cannot detach oneself from the mechanism. If one does not break this factual chain - which science as a measure cannot do - one lives only in appearance. Here there is such a big obstacle that Abbagnano cannot get around it with his usual dialectical techniques. He must first take note of it. He does not feel like insisting on a utilitarian relationship of cause and effect between science and man. So he takes it in stride. Thus he writes: "Scientific research has its goal or termination in itself. Taking its origin in the recognition and acceptance of the objectivity of the world, it moves toward the orderly determinations of that objectivity. No utilitarian concern can enter into research without limiting its scope or diverting it from its proper procedure. It cannot set itself utilitarian goals; nevertheless, it cannot fail to achieve them. By reducing the world to pure ordinarable objectivity, it reduces it to pure instrumentality. Ordinarable objectivity is nothing other than the plane of the possible utilization of the things of the world." (Ib., p. 140). Something has agglutinated around the ideal concept of purity of research. The 1950s were the post-war years and Abbagnano had seen science at work in the war massacres on the various fronts, with no distinction as to who was right or wrong. But this experience, traumatic for everyone, for him translates into an attempt to recover with a little homemade hopscotch. There is in this puerility something dark and unremitting, I sensed it at the time and I sense it now. He says: "The misunderstanding of the alleged utilitarian character of science arises from surreptitiously transferring to science the character of instrumentality proper to its object. The being, the reality of this object is its usability; but science is the disinterested and pure ascertainment of that reality." (Ib., p. 141). Incessant return to the same tracks as before. Abbagnano does not miss a beat, he does not leave a single glimmer. One of the characteristics of metaphysics is inflexibility. Not deflecting gives the sense of a completeness that is a ghost to itself before entering into the apparent paraphernalia of doing. I can't evaluate the intellectual effort, at the time it seemed considerable, even as a logical exercise, today it seems to me like a sort of scholastic walk and a shiver runs down my spine. I am not - as I thought - in front of a work of precision, even if questionable, but of something aboriginal, made to exercise the profession, without commitment and without talent. Behind, the objective repetitive obsessiveness, persevering, implacable. Nothing must move from the general line. From problematicity to transcendence and from this to the stable foundation of a possession. Hence the conclusion presents the usual acrobat flip. "Science does not need to propose to itself any pragmatic end, nor does it need to restrict itself to the search for results of evident and direct usability. The spatio-temporal order of things in the world that it tends to determine is already in itself the instrumental order and the project of the usability of things. The fundamental characteristic of science is precisely here; that it cannot be useful to man unless it disregards utility and constitutes itself as a disinterested search for natural objectivity." (Ib., p. 142). The leading word is "order". Any deviation is inconceivable. But science is something else; it cannot be reduced to a reservoir of tools that can be used for doing. This is what happens in the activity of didactic and police interviews and interrogations; its cognitive force lies elsewhere and can

provide tools to break the encirclement of doing. The problem is not in the contrast between pure theoreticity and use for man - always, or almost, directed to the cave of massacres - but it is in the cognitive content. My former polemic still rings in my ears. My scheme was childish and self-centered, but what was the alternative? This game of compasses, an orderly and schematic game, cloying and functional to the common direction of every philosophical theory? Does a veil of doubt thus fall over the whole theoretical consistency of Abbagnano's positive existentialism that lies behind the problematic existence highlighted? I could answer, the appearance of doing. What about all the worries about welding circles and dialectical leaps? Obsolete techniques to stay away from the rocks of nothingness, always surfacing in the chaotic sea of being.

I pass over the problem of mathematics and logic that, in Abbagnano's treatment, has no relevance. It is a series of outdated statements that would say little to the critical attention of today's reader. At the end, however, it is good to read the conclusion of the science-philosophy relationship. Here it is: "The truth of philosophy is not the truth of science; the universality of philosophy is not the universality of science; and reciprocally. The truth of science is determined by the reality of the object, the truth of philosophy is determined by the authenticity of the commitment. The universality of science consists in the pure and simple agreement on concepts and methods and in the controllability of the results: the universality of philosophy consists in its ability to help man to understand himself in his true relationship with himself, with others and with the world. In the search for the objectivity of nature, the scientist presents himself as a pure universal subjectivity that makes use of methods and procedures common to all; in the philosophical search, man presents himself as a single individuality that must find for itself the way to consolidate and ground itself in the totality of its concrete relationships. On no point, therefore, can science and philosophy clash as rivals. But philosophy cannot ignore science, which realizes man's authentic attitude towards the world; and science cannot ignore philosophy, from which alone it can draw the awareness of its essential humanity and clarity regarding its fundamental orientations". (Ib., pp. 154-155). These contrasts now live only in this tired page, put here to demonstrate the paucity of the metaphysician when he deals with things he should leave aside. The whole tirade about reciprocal duties is a labored and ineffectual sequence of efforts to prove the difference in method between science and philosophy, chiefly, however, aimed at assigning to philosophy the baton of command, if only in the search for the foundation.

One could conclude that Abbagnano's many attempts to give positive space to the problem of existence, at least as far as science and its usable potentiality are concerned, have failed. This is not true. The philosophical method never proposes clarity that can prove its emptiness. There is always in it a reserve of expedients that apparently save the results, albeit with a rebellious attitude of defense. But, after all, weren't these purported results directed at the productive appearance of doing? So they are in the end perfectly correlated with the expectations of the philosopher and the coercive mechanism itself. There are no contrasts or disappointments, everything flows slowly and peacefully as in a novel with a happy ending. Philosophy often has banal and irrelevant analyses, never irresponsible or disrespectful theoretical behaviors towards its task of feeding the cave of massacres. It always knows what it is saying, even when it seems to go ahead by hand, inventing ingenious turns or improbable reversals. The philosophical problem of science

After an analysis of the differences between classical and contemporary science, uninteresting here, Abbagnano asks what is the relationship between man and these more recent scientific developments. "In one respect, no part or element of man escapes the investigation of science. But in another respect, the whole of man escapes this investigation: inasmuch as he himself is the problem of this investigation. No limit can be set to science in the extension of its means of investigation and measurement to man: all the problems of science concern man as much as any other thing or object.

But they have with man another mode of concern, much more intimate and close than that which they have with any of their possible objects: because they are man. This mode of concern is particularly evident in the scientist himself, who lives his problems to the point of making them the fundamental interest of his life, his success or failure. But it can reveal itself equally in all men. We can indicate it by the name of subjectivity, but only on condition that subjectivity is not understood as a mysterious mode of being or in any case characterized independently of the observations that precede it, but that it is understood as meaning only that man is the problem of the problems that concern him". (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., pp. 167-168). The good starting point - due in part to the theory of indeterminacy well known to Abbagnano - is wasted here in a dialectical involution. The latter concerns the relationship between problematicity and the scientific way of considering knowledge, including man. This hypothesis is frightening because it resets to zero any critical possibility regarding the object produced by doing. This is not a philosophical skirmish but a concrete problem that will explode in the question, what is the world? There are certainly secondary elements, derisively marginal, more or less equivalent, seen from today's point of view, to a tortuous drawing room conversation, but the consequences are still deadly. Science conditions man and binds him more closely to the course of forced action, but at the same time it provides him with tools - objects as well - that can be used to disturb the productive tranquility. Heisenberg and Gödel are two physicists who are builders of dangerous tools of this kind. Abbagnano knows this and tries to recover. Obviously, he cannot go into the nerve points of their theses limiting the powers of prediction and control, but he affirms that scientific investigation must include man because man "is the problem of this investigation". Metaphysical trivia that could have been spared. This statement personalizes a problem that did not need to be problematized in this way. Hilbert's dream of a mathematics without gaps is gone forever. One no longer seeks the axiomatization of science, without making one's contribution to the cave of massacres. It is just that coercive making is a very ductile mechanism, and it is able to adapt quickly to the modification of contributions. However, Abbagnano is not satisfied. He fears that these changes - described in the pages that I have avoided examining because I assume they concern topics that are known to everyone - can have dangerous influences on the quantification of the world. The punishment, in this case, would be a proliferation of different consciousnesses and qualitative experiences not easily recoverable. In short, a possibility of what never happened happening. Here, in the end, is why Abbagnano considers science as the only authentic knowledge.

And here is the answer to the previous question, what is the world? "If we call world that mode of concern of scientific problems for which man is one of the terms of the problems themselves, we can say that man is in the world. This expression means that man is or can be the object of any kind or form of scientific investigation. But it also means that man recognizes himself as a part or element of a totality that includes him. Since this totality is essentially characterized by the fact that man is its part or element, that is, by that mode of concern for which man is the possible object of a scientific investigation, this same totality can be called the world. The world is then the totality of which man is a part." (Ib., p. 169). The carrier term here is "totality." A bad totality, because it is obtained only through forced making, a partial and dim object, from which quality is far away. Reducing this totality to portions and assigning the study to single scientific specialties - it is not by chance that physics and psychology are chosen as examples - is mortifying. Abbagnano does not want this uncertain condition of science to cross over into philosophy, where it would destroy the dialectical method, but he does want philosophy to be able to continue to control its own problems, setting them in such a way as to guarantee an accommodating and safe answer. Think about what might happen in the case of an extension of Gödel's theorem to the dialectical mechanism. Think about what happened - with my small contribution - with the extension of Heisenberg's theorem to philosophy and logic. According to Abbagnano, the formula, "all knowledge to science", aims at delivering to philosophy the monopoly of a different knowledge. But in what would this diversity consist? Certainly not in a search for quality.

The eternal game of words goes on forever. We shall see in due time. For the moment it is important to underline that this assignment of competences is a limitation not an enlargement. Implicitly, it also means that knowledge - scientific knowledge, at this point, should be put in brackets - is not the goal of man, but that this goal remains life. Nice discovery. However made without consequences for the integrity of the productive mechanism. Here we are dealing only with apparent life and with knowledge that lies in accumulation and from here sadly channels itself - with the methodological supervision of philosophy - towards the cave of massacres. This is the sanctuary that Abbagnano wants to guarantee from undue intrusions, and in particular he wants to forbid the remembrances of quality that unconscious and brave pilgrims of the unknown can bring to the fertile womb of doing, where they could find a shocking resonance. The monotony of certain conclusions of Abbagnano is all here, he is the crusader of shining armor who fights the infidels in the name of an appearance that he wants at all costs to pass off as being.

And here is how he moves his unbreakable mechanism: "For a man who refuses to recognize himself in the world as part of it, there would certainly be no knowledge or science; but neither would there be any other form of knowledge, activity or research. All knowledge, activity or research is in fact born of doubt, restlessness, uncertainty, indecision: all names that express a single fundamental reality, which is the problem. Man lives essentially as a problem; the problem is his fundamental mode of being, his specific existence: he is continually a problem to himself. No manifestation of this original problematic nature of his escapes: neither religion, which is the problem of salvation, nor art, nor any other of his specific activities. But a problem, as soon as it is recognized and formulated by man, immediately includes man as one of its terms: it includes him in the world." (Ib., p. 173). Here is the "original problematicity," a carrier concept of this page. Obligation to accept the world, otherwise man's rejection of himself. Here is hinted at true knowledge, here is the obstacle to the other, scientific knowledge, which had also been considered the only possible. But these are marginal contradictions. The ghosts of metaphysics appear in the light of day. Who had said that they belonged to dreams? A lawyer. We are faced with a great manifestation of expertise regarding survival. The demons of object partiality are always at work. They support the limited puerility of making and bring it to the threshold of the illusion of completeness. But the object produced cannot get out of its fictitious dimension of puppet. It is his appearance that holds up the world and it is he who makes the supporters of the mechanism get excited. These are fantasies that bear excellent fruit not only as an accumulation of knowledge but also as a possibility of exploitation. Nothing can stop this mechanism forever if not its total destruction and the construction of a new world. Defeating the demons of objectuality in a partial way is not possible, they are the partiality themselves and it is precisely they who dictate the terms of the clash in their favor. For philosophers - to make a list of those endowed with a different consciousness puts one to shame - the overcoming towards quality is to go to the devil's arms. In fact, reducing the problem to the bone, for them any criticism of knowledge that questions the foundations of doing is a raging harbinger of bad conclusions.

But Abbagnano recoils. "These considerations throw light on another aspect of the human character of science. Science is, as we said, disinterested knowledge, since man has no right to any privilege in it. As a consideration of the world, it includes man as one of the objects of its investigation. But at the same time, science serves man: it contributes to the ever better and safer satisfaction of his needs, and can indefinitely increase his power through technology. This hidden correspondence between science and man's needs, which technology reveals in an evident way, is not a miracle. It has its root and its justification in the human attitude that gives rise to science, in the attitude by which man recognizes himself and roots himself in the world as part of it. This attitude, which subordinates man to the world and makes him dependent on and subject to the world, that is, in need, is also that which makes possible that disinterested knowledge of the world which is science". (Ib., pp. 173-174). Science at the

service of man. Indeed - here is the logical leap - the more it is dehumanized, the more human it becomes. The more it is critical, the more it is able to enrich man and his possessions, which, from being problematic, become concrete so that they can be defended. Abbagnano thinks that this reversal is the inevitable effect of the rooting of science in the world of man, and he is right. He just does not ask himself how the most insane and bloody perspectives come from this rooting, always in the name of reason. This question he should have asked, if only out of some sense of responsibility. But then he would have ceased to enjoy the status of a philosopher and would have descended to the level of a firefighter, an image that most of all - I am sure - scared him. Better the supply of the cave of massacres accompanied by a life of modest interest. Professional utility comes before quality, that is, before being. In order to face the clash with doing, one needs that audacity of conscience that Abbagnano completely lacked. That's why - scraping the metaphysical dialectic - his defense of doing is many times scruffy and clumsy.

Abbagnano also points to the experimental character of science in order to insist on man's rootedness in the world. He writes: "There is no science without observation. The critical trend of contemporary science excludes the legitimacy of any statement that does not formulate the result of an observation, not only executable, but actually performed. Now observation is the act of insertion of man in the world, his rooting in the world, and realize himself as part of it. To observe any physical reality, man must himself become part of physical reality and become an instrument of observation. But by penetrating in this act into physical reality as part of it, he alters reality itself. Hence originates the relation of indeterminacy characteristic of today's physics". (Ib., p. 175). Again, the key word is "rooted" in the world. Unfortunately, nothing is said about this world except that it is considered as "totality". But the totality of facts is not the complete world, it is the incompleteness that tries unsuccessfully to complete itself. Here it is the common sense that Abbagnano gives account of, the point around which a good part of the positive existentialist problematic revolves. There is not even a shadow of the solitude that generates quality or, at least, the anxiety of quality. The existence of other experiences is not even mentioned. Of the remembrance that speaks to destiny in terms of happiness or death, only silence. Doing only, only for doing has words, only for doing Abbagnano is a philosopher and has remarkable dialectical connections. Of the irresistible appeal to knowledge as a qualitative adventure - as I suspected him to be - he only grasped the accounting aspect of a cost-benefit calculation. In fact, he was convinced that it opened the way to certain ruin. Yet he passed, and continued to pass, for a problematic philosopher, for an asserter of risk, for one who considered existence as exposure to this risk. Nothing could be more wrong. This assertion is substantiated by the page devoted to the language of science, mathematics. He writes: "This ultimate foundation of science also justifies the choice of its language, mathematics. Every language is a determinate kind of rationality involving a determinate ordering of the elements of the world. Common language constitutes such an ordering or, if you will, a set of orderings that outline the design of immediate uses, behaviors, and reactions. Common language most often means things whose reality is the immediate possibility of use. Mathematical language is not a specific type of rationality and does not imply a specific ordering of its elements. Rather, it is the very possibility of every type of rationality and of every possible ordering, and as such it carries within itself the possibility of measurement. By expressing itself in mathematical language, science frees itself from the suggestions and limitations of common language, becomes able to order the results of its observations in every possible form and therefore in the most appropriate form, and can indefinitely extend the possibility of measurement. Within the limitations of common language, science would necessarily have to express the results of observation in an image of the world that would limit to the terms of this image the possibilities of observation, hence of measurement and prediction. In mathematical language, science encounters no limitation in ordering the results of its observations, and thus guarantees to itself the widest possibility of measurement and prediction." (Ib., pp. 176-177). This exaltation of mathematical omnipotence has

some questionable implications for those who possess a minimum of preparation in this regard. At the time I did not possess it and I was skeptical but cautious. I had no way to counter it. Now I feel like I'm breaking down an open door. The myth of metalanguages is long gone. Men have always dreamed of a language capable of overcoming the drawbacks of the generality and conflictuality of common languages, but this dream has been shattered in the silence of formulas. A superstition like any other. What made the metalinguistic crest lower was the same technical hubris that went off at a tangent, without bothering to save, if nothing else, its own ancillary role. Abbagnano does not persevere in his dream - which is not his, by the way - he is first of all in the error, that's all. He does not understand that it is his own linguistic extremism, his technique of notation, that kills the function of mathematics for doing and for the essentialization of knowledge. After all, doing would suffer a great deal of damage from the reduction of language to a role of mere support of scientific research, but this would not make me melt into tears. Not to take into account that the search for quality, even if it is the absolutely other, always starts from doing, that is from knowledge, is one of the biggest obstacles for the overcoming, besides making the remembrance practically not intelligible.

The role that philosophy must cover is therefore the one mentioned before, and here Abbagnano reiterates it by confirming science as the totality of knowledge. "The affirmation that science is knowledge means only that all possible problems concerning the world fall within its ambit: meaning by world the totality of which man is part in the same way as the other objects to be considered. The nature of knowledge or science is therefore characterized and defined solely by the mode of concern that its problems have with man: man is included in these problems as one of their terms alongside the others.

"Now each problem has with man (as we have seen) a second, much more intimate and close mode of concern. In some way man is the problem (not one of its terms); indeed he is the essential, irreplaceable, ineliminable problematicity of the problem. Philosophy must, if it is possible, find a way to access this problematicity: a way of access that must clarify this problematicity in a way that guarantees its specific mode of being.

"This way of access is not knowledge. A cognitive problem is a problem of which man is only one of the terms without privilege of any kind over the others. But the problematicity of a problem is man himself, and insofar as he is this problematicity man is not a term of the problem." (Ib., pp. 178-179). Return to problematicity as the essence of man himself. No disinterest between philosophy and man, while this is the rule between science and man. Questionable distinction. Abbagnano starts from the assumption that man lies in silence within the philosophical protection that catches him at the moment of possible risk and accompanies him to the possible foundation of himself. All this is meaningless. Or else it has sense in superabundance, a common sense that puts in place the objects produced by doing while avoiding any dispersion. These philosophical operations - eminently technical - have the task of giving the appearance to human problems of being traceable to the most intimate nature of reality. This is not so. Being remains unmanifest in the face of philosophy, bound to the qualitative network from which it cannot separate itself by mere metaphysical play. The philosophical doer can fret, realizing his own impotence in the face of the incompleteness of doing, but his claimed achievements are there to testify to his own inconsistency. At times philosophical theory gives the impression of being ready to denounce the imbroglio of doing, of knowing how to deal with a power that manages to manage itself in the most absolute overpowering way. But this is only an impression.

Abbagnano clarifies his conservative thinking even better. "Philosophy is a commitment of man in front of himself. The problematic nature of which it tends to clarify the meaning is not present to it as an object of investigation, as an objective being, but always and only as a duty to be, a norm that

incessantly calls for decision and choice. Clarifying the constitutive problematic nature of man does not mean making explicit its objective meanings, but deciding on its authentic meaning and assuming the resulting attitude. The problematic nature itself becomes, in every attempt to clarify it, its own measure and its own norm, and the analysis of it, proper to philosophy, has no other task than that of keeping it and of guaranteeing it always open and alive in the future". (Ib., pp. 179-180). Once again a "should be", a "norm", comforting words that have nothing to do with being. Once again Abbagnano shows philosophy as he understands it, as a protective shield against any adventurous intrusion of quality. Only the fictitious version of being, that is, the coercive factual appearance, connects with the philosophical consequences that all lead to the cave of massacres. Philosophical complicity is evident - to tell the truth, not only with regard to positive existentialism - as soon as one lifts the mystifying veil that surrounds and covers the hegemony of doing. That is why there is always a particular benevolence of this philosophy, apparently risky, towards the guaranteed possessive accommodation. At bottom it is a simple metaphysical modification of the coercive factual mechanism. The spider web of this collaborative metaphysics could be easily torn apart, and we have tried it several times, but it is not worth it to pursue this possibility to the end, to rage against it to the bitter end. After so many years, I realized that Abbagnano elaborated his positive existentialism, this apparently feverish and convulsive creature of his, in order to respond to the historical necessities of the moment - the forties-fifties - and to be able to retire safely and breathe after the brief bric-à-brac with Fascism. Others, at the same time, let themselves be consumed by other theories and this did not happen to them with impunity, even without wanting with this to affirm that by taking more concrete risks they realized where to hook the quality. I don't think so. I am referring to philosophers such as Gentile, Renzi, Paci, certainly not to philosophers such as Aliotta and Croce, who were aligned on opposite horizons. But perhaps the reference is out of place. As far as I know, Abbagnano has never been proud of his conservative contribution, but he has always thought of giving a push towards the problematic nature and the risk of existence. Well, in this he was wrong.

Regarding the language of philosophy - the language of science is mathematics - Abbagnano is even more accommodating. He tries to reject the technicality of a philosophical metalanguage, borrowed from mathematics, as well as the difficulties of many languages used by philosophers, who derive them from the so-called language of common sense. And here he writes: "As every authentic philosophy, even in its diversity from the others, is always philosophy, so the philosophical language must have a fundamental intersubjectivity, which is always more or less explicitly expressed in the premises of philosophy, but always goes beyond them and can act and occur even when it does not act and does not occur according to the expressed intentions of it. Now the only protagonist of philosophy is, as we have seen, man, insofar as he is living problematic or living problem to himself. So that the tacit or expressed mode of intersubjectivity of philosophical language is the possibility of language to promote clarity in man about himself and his attitudes." (Ib., pp. 183-184). The leading word here is "clarity," persuasive clarity. In short, the basis for any doing that does not want to fall into confusion. But how can one capture the world, the very world of forced doing, in the shrunken honeycomb of clarity? How can one tear away the many tangles that make it, after all, an unknown world? Is it possible that Abbagnano did not notice the smallness of this project? Did he think that it is much better to preserve than to risk? Perhaps. Much more probably he did not think that, but exactly the opposite. The illusions of philosophy are infinite. His task was entirely clear to him, it was just not exactly what he thought he saw before him. The phantoms of appearance are pernicious and hard to wrest away, especially when every effort one makes refreshes them in their task of making appearance itself appear well-founded and solid. It would be necessary to act with courage and wisdom, two qualities not possessed by the philosopher, by any philosopher, at least with a few exceptions. The way of overcoming cannot accept the ghosts of appearance, it must critically question them. To do this, it needs knowledge. Abbagnano's philosophical-scientific diatribe on this point is a ridiculous attempt to muddy the waters. But this

knowledge, cannot be used in the qualitative adventure, at least it cannot be imposed with the absolute attitude of objectivity. Every such attempt, even if brave, is destined to go backwards. Remembrance itself is not able to understand well why. Quality is freedom from ghosts and it is also freedom from knowledge, access to wisdom, quantitative emptying. Otherwise one remains disfigured. There is a movement of the soul that cannot be translated into metaphysical expedients, it is a direct relationship - once the overcoming of doing has been carried out - with quality. We are faced with a forcing of our physiological defenses, against which it is not always easy to go. The simplest deep breath can become something reckless and the greatest guarantee a burden from which we want to free ourselves at all costs.

The paradox of technology

After highlighting the failures caused by the senseless development of technology, in his time not even comparable to what we have before our eyes today, Abbagnano tackles the problem by setting it in the relationship between man and the world. He affirms: "...we must immediately face the misunderstanding into which we fatally fall by conceiving the development of science and human work, of the regnum hominis, as a progressive detachment of man from the natural world. Man, of course, is not a slave to things or to the forces of nature when he comes to make use of them; but this independence from the world does not mean a break in his relationship with the world, but a strengthening and deepening of that relationship. This means that technology, among other miracles, cannot isolate man from the world and give him that kind of independence which allows him to completely ignore the world around him and to live as if it were not there. On the contrary, it multiplies ad infinitum the determinations of the fundamental relationship between man and the world and thus multiplies and strengthens the threads that on all sides bind man to the natural totality of which he is a part. Therefore, technology multiplies needs in the very act of providing the means to satisfy them. The independence that it confers on man does not consist in an impossible self-sufficiency, which would render useless the use of any instrument, simple or complex as it may be, but only in the possibility, always better guaranteed, of a relationship with the world that is not resolved by man's defeat or renunciation in the face of it". (Philosophy, Religion, Science, op. cit., pp. 189-190). Here again the carrier word is possibility "guaranteed" better. This is what technique does. It strengthens the relationship to the world and authentically roots man in his choice. We know that this claim is at least dubious. Basing this relationship on the greatest possible advantage to be gained is precisely an assertion that rests on the logic of accumulative doing. The more the better. Perhaps Abbagnano would have modified his views if he had seen the failures that were not foreseeable in the 1950s, perhaps not. But even then, a calm and unobtrusive reflection could see the danger of a senseless use of resources, an economic problem of which the philosopher ignores the essential bases. In fact, he limits himself to maintaining a certain distance from this problem. For him, the forces of technology are in the hands of man, who uses them and controls them. It does not occur to him that there could be unforeseen disastrous results due to the consequences of an unbridled delirium. The apparitions of nuclear ghosts do not disturb him, he looks at the use for man and does so with relief. After all, isn't man the lord and master of the world? It is enough to follow the technique in its productions and modifications to enjoy its benefits and live happily in front of the massacres. An honest philosophical theorist cannot ask for more. This is the hidden substance of his teaching and it is also his model of quantitative freedom.

Here is the answer-solution. Destructive power, artfully confused with constructive power is sucked into the same medium. Here is how he continues: "Now this relationship is not resolved to man's advantage if man abandons the attitude that gives rise to technique. If man abandons the search for the instrumentality of things and the work aimed at reshaping them for the purpose of their usability, he not only terminates his relationship with the world but he disowns it and becomes its slave because he becomes incapable of providing for his simplest needs. Therefore, the only real alternative open to him

is that of accepting and fully realizing his relationship with the world and of courageously pushing forward, as far as possible, scientific research and the technical organization of his work. It may well be that all the ills complained of derive, not from technology, but from the insufficient or timid acceptance of it, and that therefore the only effective remedy consists in the explicit and radical acceptance of all that it is and must be.

"In that case, the correction of technique could only be technique itself. Its anti-humanity would derive only from the fact that it is not yet sufficiently technical, that it is not yet realized as such. And in turn this unrealized would depend on man's timidity and flight from it, on the fear with which man himself is sometimes seized in the face of it." (Ib., pp. 190-191). Once again, the solution is indicated in strengthening the road one is on. The highest level of conservatism I believe is reached at this precise point. After all, this attitude toward the world is not only blind faith in the forces of doing, which hold up the productive structure and make objects intelligible, but it is also fear of the different. Now, as we know, this fear hides another, more serious and greater fear of death. All positive existentialism is an escape from the danger of uncertainty that comes dangerously close to death. A hint of the problematic nature of life that could be lost in death - even now, the unexpected guest could suddenly arrive - is fine, as long as it is a hint that is immediately brought back, through the usual dialectical leaps, to the order and rhythm of measurement. The fear of death is, considering the problem in all its aspects, the presence of the gods that urge to the completing perfection precisely that which cannot complete itself, in the world of doing, except with death. How can we get out of this circle of fears that is getting tighter and tighter? By letting things go as they have always gone, one avoids drawing the attention of death. No one should disturb the sacred stillness of doing, and the philosopher is the priest of this rite that changes only to remain the same. The core of conservatism lies right here. Staying in one's own house or invading the house of others, only when one is sure to make it one's own with little risk. Conservatives are the 3% capitalists, not bandits or marauders.

This is how one should correct technique with technique. Abbagnano borders on the unbelievable in this page decidedly out of time: "To the extent that technique develops, that is, becomes truly technical, the tasks of work become more complicated and difficult. A complicated machine requires an active spirit of vigilance, control and initiative. The number of technicians and skilled workers multiplies in technically equipped workshops. Laborers do not disappear, but in a certain sense they are outside of technology, which demands a specific skill or talent for each task. Technique promotes and brings out individual talents, making it possible to use them; and in this way it enables each person to do the work for which he is suited and promotes the differentiation of both tasks and people. And it also determines the formation of a hierarchy of tasks and functions in which direction naturally belongs to intelligence and good will. It demands, it is true, a rigorous discipline without which the entire organization will be jammed or broken down, but this discipline has nothing arbitrary about it because it represents the order of an intrinsic device of which each element has its own reason for being." (Ib., p. 192). Leading words are once again "hierarchy" and "discipline." A huge effort to secure the development of technology, to silence the evil gods that hide in it. No longer the discouragements of the old days, but philosophy. The fact is that the conservative never feels safe, so he multiplies his expedients and his prudence ends up becoming an obsession. If he is a philosopher, he narrows his field of observation so that he can more easily find comforting feedback. What he lacks is a solid point where he can rest his feet to develop his chains of comforting reasoning. Doing is certainly a solid point but not a complete one, so it invokes arbitrariness and uncertainty and, therefore, once again, the fear of death. In the darkness of incompleteness obscure forces seem to hinder the quantitative mechanisms and the philosopher warns them at work, he feels that the danger is so serious that the whole world could collapse and coexistence with the world also become uncertain. That's why he wants to remedy it. But his theories and, even worse, his dialectical squiggles, are only a stammer.

Therefore, technology is humanized by man and does not dehumanize him. Abbagnano writes: "...technique is not the machine, but the creation and the conscious use of more and more complex machines, requiring functions in which the part of the individual initiative and of the solidarity of tasks becomes greater and greater. Technique includes the machine in the totality of a properly human organization, which cannot stand and develop if not on the basis of a specifically human, and therefore spiritual, attitude. Technique includes as a first and fundamental condition of itself the understanding of technique; and the understanding of technique is man in his fundamental attitude." (Ib., pp. 193-194). Here there is an absolute rejection of the danger that man will fall captive to the factual mechanism, of which technique is the apotheosis of the capacity for exploitation. These are not sincere words; it does not seem possible to me that Abbagnano really believed in this conservative extremism. As a metaphysician, he must have known that no dialectical mechanism is able to include itself in the justification to which it is called. In doing there are dark forces, impossible to clarify them to the end, and this is what leads philosophy to the cave of massacres. The unleashing of these forces - indispensable for forced production - produces visible shady effects of which little or nothing is known because those who could investigate them prefer not to take risks and not to be at the mercy of anxiety. Is there a different way to make philosophical theories? I don't know. The sadness seems to me generalized. When one of Croce's collaborators, Antonio Bruno, told me at the moral philosophy exam not to talk to him about the usual philosophical chatter but about my experiences in prison, I think he came a little closer to this problem. Just a matter of millimeters, nothing more. Abbagnano would not have been able to do it, even though he was immeasurably deeper than Bruno in philosophical knowledge. From which it follows that it is not a question of knowledge. This problem gives me no respite, it has never given me any, even now, in the terrible nights of the Greek prison where I am writing this book at the age of seventy-three. The vanity of all this should be clear to me, and yet here come my ghosts to visit me wrapped in the usual haze that swirls around my recollective experiences. And the desire for knowledge takes over again, and I go over again with my mind and heart the many paths that have been started and not finished, the many readings, the systems that would have guaranteed me an infinite multiplicity of learning, the memorization techniques, when will all this end? When will the emptying out come? When will wisdom come? I am not afraid of death, though my current physical weakness encourages thoughts of it. I am not afraid of the unexpected guest because I know how to speak to fate, at least I think I do.

But back to Abbagnano, his position on technique is completely wrong. The same dialectical skill cannot hide it. Unfortunately for philosophers, when they talk about concrete things they are forced to raise their paw, and then you can see the tail. He writes this lapidary sentence: "Now technique by the very intrinsic necessity of its realization, excludes man from becoming mechanized or losing his properly human capacities because this would immediately amount to his arrest and dissolution." (Ib., p. 195). And instead technique is just the opposite, however perfected its achievements may be. If the philosopher does not act - and how could he if his ideal is only the philosophical object - he remains harnessed to the power of the cave of massacres. He sits comfortably systematizing his beautiful theory, he observes that this theory takes shape and that it channels itself towards its underground dwelling, but he cannot and does not want to intervene, he averts his eyes, after all he is only a philosopher why insist on telling him something more? What else can he do but develop his theory? And if someone like me points out to him the blood, down there, in the underground, guarded and remote from everyone's eyes, this someone remains unheard. The philosopher is deaf by profession. Philosophy is an argument against quality, it reconfirms and guards only the dominant reason, the quantity produced by doing. It cannot go further. How did it happen that it was weakened to such an extent? I don't know. I wonder if there was ever a time when it was different, stronger, able to go beyond. Perhaps the insights of the early philosophers? I don't know.

That's how these statements of Abbagnano's about technique find their nature, their way of placing themselves at the exact point where the world needed, and perhaps needs, them. This world founded on slime, of course. Abbagnano's last words on this problem of technique are a tombstone on his philosophy. "With man's recognition of his relation to the world as essential and constitutive of himself, the first condition of the self-humanization of technique, that is, of its realization as technique, is guaranteed. The second condition is man's limiting himself to a specific task of work and to commit himself to this task. Commitment supposes the free choice of the task and the ability to carry it out. Technique requires not only that each person perform the work for which he is suited, but that this work be freely chosen and that the choice take place as a commitment. An automatic selection of aptitudes is contrary to the principle of technique, because it supposes that technique is based on the automatism of work, whereas, on the contrary, it is based on the freedom and the capacity for initiative of individuals within a common solidarity.

"Technique is an order, in which each person performs the work or function for which he is suited and which he recognizes as his own. This implies that in the determination of the work task of each individual only the consideration of his ability, his initiative and his choice should enter, and any extraneous consideration, that is, one not deduced from the intrinsic necessity of the technical organization, should be excluded. Technique demands that no privileges or prejudices of any kind should enter into that determination and that each person should have the place he deserves in relation to his aptitudes and his capacity for initiative and commitment". (Ib., pp. 195-196). What Abbagnano lets slip out of his mouth here is exactly the opposite of what technique achieves. One could rewrite this page by turning it upside down and find oneself in the end in front of an acceptable analysis. Note that here - a sign of exasperation or fatigue? - the metaphysical mental leap of the dialectic is completely missing. His words are a hymn to preservation, but a hymn in which the usual tone and skill have greatly deteriorated. I have quoted them because they belong to his way of seeing the world but also because they are a rare example of how modest a philosopher's contribution to arguments of a practical nature can be. He has a vision of productive activity that does not even touch on reality. He observes technique as a ghost and predicts ghostly movements. The appearance of making is violently concrete, it does not have the inconsistency of an ectoplasm. Its products, the objects - thus also the reflections of philosophers - travel far in the company of other objects, and play an essential role of correspondence and coordination. That we cannot be very pleased with this situation that is destined to worsen is a reflection that many other philosophers were making at the time. Abbagnano, however, pursued his own positive program - what would later become the neo-enlightenment - to which he wanted to be faithful to the very end. But, after all, isn't the task of philosophy - particularly of its metaphysical appearance - to be intimately coherent, that is, not to betray its own premises? And this was, after all, his intention and that of his scanty school, which crumbled in the short span of time. Research always weakens in preservation, and the test of technique is to be considered a real donkey's bridge. Abbagnano failed to go beyond a justification of doing, which might sound strange for a problematic philosopher, but this uncertainty was only in the intellectual tension of the relationship with possibility, a tension only apparent, the ancient corpse of the object lay beside its logical and dialectical leaps, inanimate.

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"Philosophizing can resolve itself neither into the self-observation of consciousness, nor into the construction of the ever-present consciousness in general, nor into historical knowledge. Consciousness is a limitation. Even when it is the object of consideration it escapes all objective consideration. The thesis according to which, in philosophizing, we start from consciousness, is false if it pretends to

consider already as a philosophical thought the universal analyses carried out in logical, psychological and historical terms by that consciousness which is at everyone's disposal at all times, it is true if it refers to those clarifications that have as their starting point and scope of realization the existential consciousness. Being has remained in suspension because of the incomprehensibility of being-in-itself. It has appeared as a limitation in the analysis of being. But while being-in-itself remains completely inaccessible to me because, as absolute otherness, it is almost nothing for thought, I am in turn that I which is placed as a limit to the analysis of being. In the search for beingness, this is the further step that must be taken. The being-ego as empirical being, as consciousness in general, as possible existence. If I ask myself what I mean when I say "I", the first answer, comes from that process of objectification that takes place when I reflect on myself, and for which I am this body insofar as I am this individual, with an indeterminate self-consciousness that reflects what I am worth in that sphere of things and people that surround me: I am as empirical being. Second, I am an "I" essentially identical to every other I: I am substitutable. This substitutability does not refer to the identity of the average qualities of empirical individuals, but to the being-ego in general that expresses subjectivity as a condition of all being-object: I am as consciousness in general. Third, I experience myself in the possibility for unconditionality. I do not want to know only what is there for reasons and counter-reasons, but I want to know starting from the abyssality of an origin; and in acting I have moments in which I am certain that what I now want and do, I want authentically. I want to be in such a way that this wanting to know and this acting belong to me. In the way I want to know and act, my essence comes into action, of which I am certain even if I do not yet know it. Because of this possibility, which is the freedom to know and to act, I am "possible existence". The "I" is therefore not uniquely determined, but has many meanings. As consciousness in general I am the subjectivity for which objects subsist as objective and universally valid realities. Every real consciousness participates in this consciousness in general insofar as it grasps the being that becomes object as it is for all. I am empirical individuality insofar as I am objectified subjectivity. As such, I am part of the indefinite multiplicity of individuals as a particular individual who presents himself only once. For consciousness in general I am this individuality as an empirical being, and as such I become the object of psychology, an object, indeed, inexhaustible. In this way I can observe and investigate myself, but I cannot recognize myself as a totality. Ultimately, as a possible existence, I am a being that refers and relates to its possibility, and as such is not the object of any consciousness in general. With the understanding of the meaning of possible existence, the circle of all modes of objective and subjective being is broken. Philosophizing refers to the modes of being-ness in the sense that it admits their existence and avoids resolving them into a generic identity. Each of these modes possesses, from a given point of view, a primacy that in philosophizing is conditional on the absolute primacy of possible existence. The primacy of the empirical "I" is recognized to that "I" which is subject to the conditions dictated by the necessity of being; it is a relative "I" which does not exist for itself. The primacy of consciousness in general consists in being for my subjectivity the condition of all being. It is a formal primacy that dominates all subjectivity and all objectivity and that can be clarified by these two orders of considerations. I do not merely be there as life, but I know that I am there. I think that I might not even be there. If, however, I attempt to think of myself as not existing in general, then I cannot help but notice that with the world I involuntarily let myself subsist as well, in the form of a punctual consciousness in general for which this world would be. I also think that there may be nothing in general. But even this thought I can only express and not really realize, because to think it I am always and still "I", and therefore I can not avoid assuming my existence even if I deny that of the world. There always remains the being of the questioner as his consciousness in general, so it seems that I can really continue to think all other being. The being of the thinker thus demands its own specific primacy as consciousness in general, if only in that limited sense that provides for the impossibility of not thinking it, at least provisionally, as the ultimate being without which no other is given. The "I" as possible existence holds the decisive primacy for philosophizing, because it breaks into the circle of being formed by being-object and

being-ego. Possible existence is that movement on being-in-itself that in this circle is present only negatively as a limit. It perhaps discloses in the world of objects that path which is precluded to consciousness in general. This philosophizing, which for empirical being is nothing, and which for consciousness in general is an unfounded imagination, for possible existence is the path that leads to itself and to authentic being. Existence is what never becomes an object, it is the origin from which I think and act, it is what I talk about in that succession of thoughts that do not come to any knowledge; existence is what relates to itself, and in this, to its transcendence. Can what cannot be realized as an object among objects exist? Obviously, the "I am" cannot be an object; it is accessible only if it is conceived as an empirical being and as consciousness in general. The problem now is to determine whether with the understanding of being in all its objectivity and subjectivity I have concluded my task, or whether I can make myself present as myself in another way. With this we have come to the point around which the meaning of philosophizing moves for us. It is not possible to define the being of existence with a concept that should assume a reference to a certain being-object. First of all, the word is one that only means being. From an obscure beginning this reality entered into history, but in philosophical thought it was only a presentiment to which, later, Kierkegaard gave expression with this word whose content for us is historically conditioned. To be means to decide originally. For me, I am as I am now and for one time only, even if, as an individual, I am a case of the universal, subject to the causal law and obedient to the legitimate demands of what is objectively imposed as dutiful. But there where I am the origin of myself everything is not yet decided to the end and according to universal laws. Not only do I not know, because of the indefinite number of conditions, how something is to be decided, but, on another plane entirely, I am also the one who decides for himself what it is. This thought, which cannot be objectified, is the consciousness-of-freedom of possible existence. On the basis of it I cannot think that in the end everything follows its own path, and that there is nothing left for me to do but what I like best, justifying everything by general arguments that are always available, because, prescindng from all the dependence and determination of my being, in the end I realize that something depends only on me. What I can grasp or leave, what I put before as first and only, what is still kept in the sphere of possibility and what I realize does not result from universal rules that can guarantee the correctness of my behavior, nor from psychological laws that condition me, but it springs, in the restlessness of my being, from the certainty of being-being in virtue of freedom. Where I no longer consider myself psychologically conditioned and therefore I no longer act naively under the pressure of the unconscious, but, starting from the positivity of my impetus, in the clarity of a certainty that, while not offering me any knowledge, founds my own being, there I decide what I am. I know an appeal to which I respond inwardly with the realization of my being. I sense who I am, but not as an isolated individual. Rather than in the randomness of my empirical being locked in its obstinacy, I catch myself in communication. In fact, I am never so sure of my identity as when I put myself at the complete disposal of the other and, in this revealing contraposition, I come to be myself because the other also comes to his identity. Starting from possible existence, I grasp the historicity of my being which, from the multiplicity of knowable realities, reaches the depth of existence. What externally is determination and limitation, internally is the manifestation of authentic being. Whoever loves only humanity, loves no one, loves instead whoever turns to a determined man. He who is rationally consequent and keeps to his agreements is not yet faithful, but he who accepts as his own and recognizes himself in what he has done and in the places he has loved is faithful. He who wants the exact and definitive organization of the world wants absolutely nothing, but he who, in his historical situation, grasps the possible as his own, wants

something. If I am rooted in historicity, temporal being does not make sense in and of itself, but only if in time it is decided for eternity. Time, in fact, as future is possibility, as past is fidelity, as present is decision. Time, therefore, is not a mere passing, but it is the manifestation of existence that, in it, is realized through its decisions. To the extent that one recognizes this sense of temporality and is aware of it, one immediately overcomes it, not in favor of an abstract timelessness, but in the sense that, in

time, I am beyond time and not outside of time. As the consciousness of a life dominated by vital impulses and its finite longing for happiness, I want the perpetuation of time as if the solution to the anguish of being is in blind duration. As a living consciousness I cannot annul this will, just as I cannot eliminate the pain of transience. Both belong to the nature of my being. But if in time I act and live unconditionally, in time is eternity. My intellect is not able to understand this truth that is illuminated only in a few moments and then in some uncertain memory. For my part I cannot reach it as one reaches an external possession. The difference that constitutes it says nothing to the intellect as consciousness in general, but is an appeal for possible existence. In all known objectivity, real being loses its reality in temporal duration, in natural determinism, or in the nullity of what is only transient; existence, on the other hand, is realized by making choices in temporal historicity where it has the possibility of projecting itself, despite the dissolution of objectivity, toward the completeness of time. Eternity is neither timelessness nor temporal duration, but the depth of time as a historical phenomenon of existence. Existence meets other existence in the situation as in the world, without becoming knowable as being-of-the-world. What is in the world I grasp insofar as I am consciousness in general:

Of existence, on the other hand, I do not ascertain except in the transcendence of possible existence. The being that is possible to recognize in a binding way is there before me as a thing. I can grasp it directly, and I can do something with it on a technical level if it is a matter of things, or on a logical level if it is a matter of arguments between me and another consciousness. In it there is the resistance proper to a given, whether it is the material resistance of empirical reality or the logical resistance that accompanies what is necessary or impossible for thought. In any case it is an objective being, either as an original object, or as something that is properly objectified as in the models and types employed as instruments of investigation. Existence, which for itself is not there on the empirical plane, appears as being for possible existence. Obviously the leap that exists between world and existence, between what can be known and what can only be clarified, between the being-object and the being-free of existence is ineradicable in thinking. But both of these modes of being in fact are so intimately connected with each other that to separate them, for a consciousness that is at one and the same time possible existence, is an infinite task, in the fulfillment of which the knowledge of the being of the world and the clarification of existence are produced together. Only in the abstract is it possible to express in formulas the split between objective being and existence as the being of freedom. Objective being is given as mechanism, life, and consciousness; while as existence, I am origin, obviously not origin of being in general, but origin for me in being. For the being of things there is no freedom, for freedom the being of things is not an authentic being. Being as substance and being as freedom do not constitute a contraposition of two coordinating modes of being. While they are in a reciprocal relationship, they are absolutely incomparable to each other. Being in the sense of being-object and being in the sense of being-freedom exclude each other. The one passes from time to timelessness or endless duration, the other from time to eternity. That which is or is valid in all time is objectivity, that which, while disappearing in the instant, is eternal, is existence. The one exists only for a subject who thinks it, the other, while never being without object, really exists only for existence in communication. From the point of view of the world every manifestation of existence is pure objectivity, hence consciousness, self, but not existence; hence one can never understand what one thinks by existence. From the point of view of existence its true being is only a manifestation in beingness, and beingness, which is neither manifestation of existence nor authentic being-ness itself, is only fall. It is as if originally all being should be existence, and what is only being in it should be understood as an emptying, a misrepresentation, a loss of existence. There is therefore no indication capable of guiding from objective being to other being, except, indirectly, the splitting and opening of this being. Yet existence, penetrating the forms of objective being, understands them as means for its realization and as possibilities for its manifestation. Situated at the boundary between world and existence, possible existence sees all being not only as being. From the most remote point of view, from the mechanism, being, as it were, becomes closer in life and consciousness, to find itself authentic in existence. Or,

from this limit, one thinks, with consciousness in general, of being as pure and simple being; but every being has the possibility of being able to be relevant to existence as its impulse or its means. If existence exists only with and in virtue of other existences, from the objective point of view it makes no sense to speak of a multiplicity of existences. Since their being is always historical and is realized in that communication between existence and existence which makes each of them, in the obscurity of the being of the world, a being-for-another, this being of theirs, which allows no other mode of being than that of mutual reference, has no value for a consciousness in general which can judge only from the outside. Being invisible from the outside, existences cannot be considered as a multiplicity. On the one hand the possible existence is offered the being of the world articulated in the modes of being envisaged by consciousness in general, on the other hand existences are. Nowhere is there a being closed in on itself, neither objectively as could be the constitution of the being-of-the-world alone, nor existentially as could be the constitution of the world of existences alone as the only sphere of thought and possible considerations. When I think of a being it is always a determined being, not being. When I ascertain possible existence I do not consider existence as an object, nor do I ascertain existence in general, but only myself and the existence that communicates with me. We are from time to time absolutely irreplaceable, and not cases of a conceptual genre such as "existence" could be. At this point, existence becomes the sign to indicate the direction of the self-assertion of a being that cannot be thought of objectively, nor in terms of universal validity; it is the being that no one knows and that no one can affirm in the fullness of its meaning, neither referring to itself, nor referring to anything else. The initial question, "What is being?" has not been uniquely answered. The answer to this question satisfies only those who, in asking it, recognize in it their own being. But the very question that asks about being is not unique, because it depends on who asks it. For being as consciousness in general, the question has no original meaning, because this consciousness is dispersed in the multiplicity of determined being. Only possible existence gives rise to the passion that makes one question being in itself beyond all being and all being-object, but the definitive answer does not come to it from determined knowledge. What there is is appearance not being, nor is there anything. In this proposition the sense of the term "appearing" possesses its categorical origin in the particular and objective relation that is established between how a thing appears from a point of view and how it is in itself prescinding from this point of view. In the objective sense, then, appearing is the appearance of something that is thought of as objective background, something that, while not itself the objective, as an object is only thought of because, in principle, it could be known to me as such (e.g., atoms). In the category of appearing, transcending with it that determinate and objectifying relation which is established between what lies as background and what appears, one thinks all being when one seeks being. But now in temporal beingness, the appearing being remains in an insuperable duplicity that provides for the inaccessibility of the being-in-itself of transcendence, which is unthinkable as an objective background, and the being present to itself of existence that is not empirical consciousness. Existence and transcendence are heterogeneous, but in mutual relation. This relation is also manifested in being. Insofar as being is the object of inquiry, it is the appearance of something that theoretically poses itself as ground. Neither existence nor transcendence is accessible to investigation."

(K. Jaspers, *Filosofia*, tr. it., Torino 1978, pp. 123-132).

Brief conclusion

These accounts do not add up. Wasted effort? Not really. I was advised not by remembrance but by recollection. Poor thing, I might - and should - add, an added vanity, a senile weakness, remembering the good old days? No, it isn't. It wasn't a good time and it's not quite gone yet. This is not nostalgia, but reinforcement of the old force field. Ridiculous consolation, some might add, perhaps with a thread of reason, but only a thread. There was in my ancient claim to impose an unacceptable model for the

great master, a youthful cockiness and an ignorant obtuseness, of course there were these aspects, but there was also a blind desire to go further, not the desire for the oblivion of myself in a comfortable and safe place. There was a sense of deep, visceral, intimate union between myself and knowledge, without explanatory intermediaries, without justifying incisions, without lightening splits. I didn't listen, I didn't read, I didn't select, I just lived and my life was to know in any way, my raw material was knowledge, not only philosophical but of any kind. Memorization techniques allowed me to store - and forget - incredible influxes of knowledge. What was circulating in the force field, was perhaps a minimal residue - always in the quantitative sense - but it provided unthinkable diffusion and reverberations, completely incomprehensible to a cathocratically conditioned mind. Such a war machine arouses around it a halo of distrust and fascination, two opposite and strident tendencies, towards which I did absolutely nothing. I was a scapegoat and a spiritual guide, I made a vacuum around me and I made unthinkable friends among cheaters and jugglers. I couldn't be otherwise.

Otherwise it was Abbagnano. His analyses are constantly oriented towards bringing the problematic nature of life back to the authenticity of certainty, where the ridiculous conservative consciousness rests. He could not do otherwise, everything in him converged towards this ideal of guarantee and security. To leave the problematic nature of life to itself would have been for him an outrage against the lay sanctity of philosophy, against the mission of which he felt invested. If he had been asked to withdraw a little from the daily truth of his poor interests, he would have answered that there was no ulterior motive in this attitude, no personal purpose, but what held everything together was the obvious and natural connection of his own theoretical presuppositions. I am a philosopher, he could have said, and I cannot be anything else.

In my analysis I have repeatedly spoken of coercive making. It is one of the crucial points of my vision of life; it is not Abbagnano's terminology. Yet it is for doing as appearing and against acting as being that his whole philosophy is organized. It is linked to objectivity - mind you, not objectivity - with a short chain, and he would not have liked these analyses of mine precisely because they call into question not I say his chain but at least the length of it.

The different elements of positive existentialism, problematicity, authenticity, rootedness, assurance, choice, risk, etc., - I quote at random - are only symbols, or rather, images equipped with a particular sign that recalls their semantic meaning but is not completely identified with it. The use of these symbols is always connected with a dialectic recovery that leads back the extreme hypothesis that the symbol could contain in the image, to a reduced and tamed condition, I would say homely, full of common sense and positive optimism. This is not a game, even though it may seem so. These images are real and Abbagnano derives them from the society of his time - the war and the post-war period - but from the same society he also derives the need to arrange things in the best possible way, even sacrificing not only legitimate conclusions but logic itself. He experiences these symbols thus constructed, pushed to their inherent consequences, and then recovered in a dialectical rescue. The wound that choice should impose in the individual and in the social body is not there, there is only the emblem, the sign of a wound. Not that this wound has disappeared or healed, a swab and a simple disinfectant has been placed on it. The gangrene is left underneath to simmer, so that its result can safely make its way to the cave of massacres. For their part, the metaphorical movements of the dialectic are also symbols that are summed up in emblems.

By themselves, these pages of positive existentialism could be considered as banal university exercises, but in my opinion they are something more. They are the sign of the pertinacity of not wanting to see the conditions of reality, of not taking into consideration the cruelty of the mechanism that governs and justifies it. And this refusal to see is not necessarily partisanship, cowardly partisanship, it is also the

incapacity of not being able to bear the collapse of a world, irreparably compromised by an active involvement in quality. The philosopher surrenders, lays down the critical burden and merely hints at conservation as the only possible outlet. Perhaps there is also a paltry entanglement in some store interest, and I have only hinted at this here and there, but it is not the main pivot of my critical attitude. In some applications of his dialectic there are losses of correspondence. Clamorous is the one concerning technique. As if between the lines the philosopher wanted to erratically pass a difference in level, an exchange not well accepted, something metaphysically headless. Mine is not a pitiful consideration, but a critical supposition, nothing personal. I am not writing a condemnation sentence, I am not a judge. I am not going around concrete obstacles, these are there and I have never tried to mitigate them. But it would seem to me that I would be giving birth to a mouse by going deeper into the technical aspects that are sometimes clearly insufficient.

Being does not allow us to identify a structure within it. Quality is an experience that prevents any stiffening, it is faced in the storm and in danger, then it can also be remembered, but it could be a matter of speaking to the solid and impenetrable wall of the cave. Abbagnano never gave a hint of being, every time his philosophy spoke of it it was about its opposite, appearance, as we know it daily in doing. The "rootedness" of which he speaks suggests a dispersed life that, in order to save itself, anchors itself somewhere in the being, but what could this anchorage ever be in something that doesn't grant stops nor does it allow itself to be grasped in a structure, even if destined to deep modifications?

Being is a sudden wind that upsets the preordained order of our fears and generates confused profiles. Immersed in doing, we do not even notice its existence. Abbagnano, abusing the term, has often spoken of existence that transcends into being. *Bubbole da metafisico, ultima resistenza di un pauroso di fronte al pericolo*. Everything that is not comprehensible to the logic of doing, codified in the administration of a poco a poco, denounces the approach of the wind of being, involuntary gestures, fearful and remote metaphors, delayed reflexes, unfulfilled obligations, secrets brooded over for years that come to light like ghosts from the tombs. The desert wind has no mercy for anyone.

The recuperative instrument of dialectics can comfort weak hearts, for the strong it is only a logical metaphor, a passage from one side to the other of the same statement. The opposite verse, fictitious negation, takes the place of the straight verse, fictitious affirmation. Everything is played out in a process marked by movements that do not exist if not projected into the wall of the cavern of the lake of blood. The being rests far from human wounds and sufferings, wanted and imposed by a wickedness that pursues the achievement of appearance and for this reason opens the flesh and makes murder and slaughter. But it is not the being that kills, only its metaphor lived as life, where death had long taken up residence and was waiting for nothing more than a little push to greet its presence with an object disarticulation. Life lived in this way dies without noticing itself, that is, the being it could have drawn upon if it had not been afraid to die. Abbagnano often overturns these plans without realizing it and the exchange is continuous as well as inadvertent for the uncritical reader. In Abbagnano, dialectics has the task of removing the object from the role assigned to it by doing and presenting it as a tension or relation or project or transcendence towards being. Which is impossible. The object is adjacent to quantity and here it lives and modifies itself, here it is made dense and deaf, lacking the longing that it could feel towards quality if a courageous different consciousness - therefore objectively no longer immersed in objectuality - would drag it beyond. This risky movement is not a kind of splitting, but it is like the breath of quality that we all feel and that few ask themselves what it means, what it wants to tell us?

Philosophers and non-philosophers, when faced with doing, we are all little men afflicted by malignant fears. Everyone defends himself as he can, with the means at hand. If someone wants to rebel against

this normalizing law, the others look at him as if he were assailed by evil spirits. Attacking the apparatus of doing, declaring war on the reduction of everything around us to an object, that is to appearances, is considered a sign of chronic neurasthenia by many psychologists. Possessing oneself reduced to an object is indicated as a model of healing, of rediscovered health, of rooting in being - Abbagnano would say. But which being? It is once again embracing and holding a shadow to oneself while being gets further and further away. The search for being is a sort of uprooting, in practice exactly the opposite movement to the one predicted by Abbagnano. Every defense distances us from being, every attack on the Teutonic castle of doing brings us closer. Certainly it takes discernment to take into consideration knowledge packaged by doing, but this is not what we find in Abbagnano. Yet, he did not lack technical means, nor did he lack a certain irony, more in his speech than in his writing. But all this crumbles in front of the task with which he evidently felt invested. To recover was his historical necessity, to make existentialism a positive philosophy without taking a look at where this effort of reorganization ended up.

The addresses considered nullist of existentialism were not only contrary philosophies, theories different from one's own, but they were dangers for being, considering it a transcendence that could be drawn on where to root or stabilize the problematic nature of daily life based on doing. Here is that metaphysical technique is an instrument to fight on the frontier against the corsairs of nothingness, the adventurers of the impossible. That then these philosophers - Sartre, Heidegger and Jaspers - were equally distant from quality, that is another problem. Their remoteness was something that could not allow any rootedness, any positivity. On the contrary, it threw chaos right into the making, it did not allow only a glimpse of it, as I have done in detail in these pages and as I confusedly did at the time defending my very personal way of knowing and managing knowledge. Abbagnano reacted to these perspectives that threw chaos into his very orderly problematic world. He unveiled, to those who wanted to listen to him, the secret dangers of those other metaphysics, far from his own, at least so he thought. But he did not realize that he was conducting a fratricidal struggle. After all, all versions of existentialism give each other a hand in making every effort to remain bound only to appearance. There is no overpowering part over the others, maybe on the technical level there are differences, but on the theoretical proposals they vanish in the equivalences and contortions of metaphysics. To see in Sartre an exasperated nullism for his strong representations of the equivalence of choices is nothing but a partial approach, after all the same back and forth of his positions suggests that he also wants to recover but in a different way. Being is nothingness. If he intends to refer to doing as the appearance of being, to the object passed off as the only reality, the expression is unexceptionable. But this is not the case. Not going to being or not coming out of nothing are equivalent as movement, they are expressions of very acute tensions but only in appearance. There are no real collapses nor real recoveries, everything is simply represented on the wall of the cave of massacres.

Abbagnano does not accept this negative representation because he wants to stage his positive representation. These are still puppets. Puppets that lullaby people, that do not want to wake them up, but on the contrary want to advise them how to bear life, more precisely a productive sequence administered with the apparent appearance of life. How to evaluate this role of puppeteers? The simplest way would be to leave it alone, to abandon to oblivion the pages of these recuperators, Abbagnano in the first place. This did not seem to me the best solution. Besides, I had a personal issue to close accounts with Abbagnano, as if I wanted to close accounts with an important part of my youth. Instead, I wanted to tie the many elements into a logical series, contrasting each time what had been set aside, that is, quality. So I went back to the archetype of "authenticity rooted in being", an absurd formula, since being remains uncontaminated and remote, unmanifest. None of these dialectical measures is original, but neither is it a copy of the many modulations that from Aristotle to Hegel fill the history of philosophy. There is an innovative aspect and there is a performative aspect. Every

dialectical leap that Abbagnano makes in the attempt to recover the problematic by inserting it in the heart of his concern, is a hybrid between archetype and application, sometimes running the risk of losing the same capacity of conviction that one can legitimately expect from these operations. Each leap is thus projected to the recovery, sometimes labored, that he is interested in justifying logically, according to the known rules of dialectics. Each time the archaic nature of the archetype jolts the well-provided reader - it is not possible that these obsolete paraphernalia are still employed - and each time it is the purpose that prevails, covering with a patina of necessary contemporaneity that which generated the sense of detachment. There is a sort of mixture between diachrony and synchrony, never fully clarified. What moved in this realm of puppeteers is the ghost of recovery. No danger actually looms on the horizon but the philosopher is trained to fight with shadows, and he feels at a distance the possibility, however remote, of danger. Individual possibilities are an image of danger, the problematic nature of an existence linked to doing as dangerous as crossing a street. Abbagnano does not care about this and does not accept comfort for the dying.

Authenticity, of which he speaks so much, is appearance and movement of objects, coercively administered in appearance. It is only a concept derived by overturning dispersion and loss. In itself it could be but it is not, that is, it is not placed in being, it is not quality, but on the contrary it is an object produced by doing, in the technical sphere of metaphysics, it is a factual experience, therefore incomplete, therefore - strictly speaking - inauthentic. The different experience tends to complete itself in quality, this is never even hinted at by Abbagnano, who, on the contrary, is concerned to root this fictitious experience in the fictitious possession of a fictitious transcendence. What should lay the groundwork for a transition to a non-systematic form of vital experience is encapsulated in a strictly systematic appearance, captured in the world of doing and thus forced to hold itself in relation to other objects produced away from quality.

Appearance has many similarities, objects basically have something in common, whether they are philosophical theories or guillotines. Only the being that escaped from them would differentiate them from one another, no longer objects but qualitative experiences, recollections in which the object relives alongside a different illumination, coming from the quality experienced in the overcoming. Life is no longer an infinite separation and an infinite defense against the dangers of partiality, magnified by fear. It becomes complete - even if for the duration of acting - and then enlivened by the remembrance that manages to speak to destiny. Now there is a connection that was lacking before, in doing, there is no longer the restlessness and nagging of possession with all the consequent necessary guarantees. In extreme factual condensation, objectification produces the identical, or almost identical; differences are never objective. In qualitative experience completeness produces true and objective difference. In remembrance the balance between being and appearing-not their fusion, which produces nothingness-eliminates all necessary object individualization, all coercively administered concern. Appearance is a continuous modification, being is a continuous completion. This is why the image that immediately comes to mind regarding being is chaos. Only chaos can for a moment - or forever, if we go beyond the point of no return - give completeness, that is quality. In quality there is a different experience not a grounding. There is no longer even the fictitious problematic nature of doing, nor is there accumulated knowledge. The traces that are found in the remembrance are residues of a different experience, they are not quality, they help to disrupt the forced order of doing and to consider the future in a different way as destiny, but they are only traces, the original movement of the overcoming has already been left behind as the unknown being that has been experienced, even if chaotically, and from which the life of diversity as self-consciousness is transformed. Even if it is possible to indicate a sort of logic of the all and now, this is always *sui generis*, it cannot be considered a continuation of the logic of the *a poco a poco*. We are talking about another universe, not fully knowable, where knowledge, as we advance,

becomes a ballast that we must get rid of. All this experience never becomes a law or something similar to a law.

Abbagnano is satisfied with doing and pitches his tents in the entrenched field of compulsion. Here he starts from a problematic appearance, an objective production like any other. There can be no real problematic nature in doing because there is nothing true in doing except in the dim form of tautological mirroring. Few people know that Stalin was a theorist and a strenuous defender of this form of truth. Now, since there are no problems in making there is no need to make choices because these are essentially impossible. Not being able to choose, one does not choose but in appearance, while one remains tied to a mechanism that decides in our place. Continuing on this inclined plane, everything is fictitious. Recovery itself is apparent, in other words, Abbagnano defends himself from a danger that in fact does not exist, it is only a shadow cast in the cavern of massacres.

Many might ask, but are these massacres only apparent? Certainly, even the deaths of millions of men are appearances if the lives of millions of men, those same massacred millions, were only appearances. This does not take anything away from the consistency of pain and exploitation, from the physicality of the body reduced to an object and mass-produced. This does not mean that suffering is less, on the contrary, it is doubled by anxiety and fear and, at the end of the day, by the immediate consciousness that nebulously perceives that one's life is being wasted.

Abbagnano scatters his work with points of reference where to anchor his concerns. These remain constant instruments, as if every single rooting did not satisfy him, as if he sought a connection of roots, a network of dialectical reversals where, individually, every risk is advanced and then withdrawn into the appeasement of reduction to an object. There is a constant concern that resurfaces and does not want to disappear, can problematicity tap into being? The answer is negative, despite the positive labels of Abbagnano's existentialism. Why do we say this? Because otherwise we would not be able to explain the continuous search for rootedness, a sort of arché that should provide stability but does not. The same dialectical gimmicks are neither decisive nor demonstrative, they only serve to overturn the various problems, or rather the various fears of getting lost in inauthenticity. Which would be like saying to get lost in appearance. But if nothing has really ever come out of appearance, how can one get lost in it? Fear creates ghosts and then also creates antidotes against them.

The set of dialectical movements realized by Abbagnano is not a unique whole, presupposed to his applications, but is instead immanent to them, so that each time we start over with methodologically dubious but philosophically appeasing results. The historicity of this reward does not exist, Abbagnano proposes it every time, but whatever the recuperative module used, in the end it escapes, so it is more a sign than a real appearance in the objective sense. The object that emerges is thus captured in continuous movements without respite whose original purpose is to tranquilize but that do not obtain this purpose by making themselves comprehensible to themselves, movements of ghosts inserted in the general context of the factual appearance. This makes the present of the seeker more intelligible than that of the thing sought. It is precisely the philosopher who, disregarding the evidence, denies it and replaces it with its dialectical opposite, who calms himself down. Here I am not questioning his ability to understand the reality of his time - nor am I contrasting it with my own, for obvious reasons immature and presumptuous - I am only saying that this was not the object he wanted to produce, but rather a Chinese wall that would defend from the risk of annihilation the reality he should have first understood and then defended. In the end, the need to defend, fed by the ghosts of a perhaps non-existent danger, made a veil over the ability to understand.

Abbagnano is too much of a philosophy professor to imagine himself in the icy waters of life. He preferred to stand on the shore and watch, making assumptions and turning them around. This was his limitation. It could not be otherwise. Thus, for him, the problematic nature of life is only an accident, a sign of a probable defect, due to the fact that man is not being, but only aspires to it. There is in life the traceable sign of an original instability, due to the nature of man and his inability to choose authentic possibility. Therefore, he thinks, we philosophers must support him in this choice so that he identifies the sign of the problem, follows its trace and arrives at a rooting that eliminates the possibility of loss. Appearance, with which the world of doing is impregnated, is like a surface on which traces of paths are indicated to arrive at being that is not in appearance but in something transcendent. The psychopomp of this itinerary is the philosopher. He digs into the object and descends into its meaning and identifies the dangers for being. The philosopher fights against these dangers.

What Abbagnano does not want to see is that the storm passes over his head. The world of doing has problems that do not affect the appearance that remains, only that some of these problems, for example murder, mark in a particularly pernicious way the mechanism that produces them. What produces these problems is the life and nature of the being, his being a wolf to other men rather than an angel or simply a man. This mixture appears intricate and inextricable in coercive making. The original bestiality joins the impulses of goodness, the rules are overturned into whims, novelty into cloying convenience. All this is a conflict of objects without quality, a painful conflict incapable of questioning destiny. The philosopher remains delayed in fixing things, in reducing dangers, in preserving the heritage of knowledge, thus replenishing the lake of blood where murder is rampant.

Apart from personal reasons, of which I have tried to take into account as little as possible in this essay, what has pushed me most in this enterprise, which I hope is not in vain, has been the conviction that if Abbagnano's philosophy had told me something in its time, it could have told me as much today, or perhaps more. I have to admit that this attempt has given me very poor results. Going over his itineraries, I realized that whatever impression they made on me at the time, in the long run they left no perceptible traces. This conservative obstinacy, which raises so much dust in him, has slipped over me like fresh water. It was certainly not completeness that the philosopher taught, it was not completeness that he pursued. I never followed the path indicated, it was too suffocating for me and for the war machine I had built in my head. I was too self-conscious to accept a suggestion of prudence, a detail of defensive fortifications. What Abbagnano could not accept - or perhaps understand - was the tension towards quality, which in me at the time was embodied in the search for knowledge as a struggle and a trial by fire, not as a simple collection of tools in view of a goal to be achieved. This tension made me, and makes me, unpredictable, even when I seem distant from myself.

It is courage that suggests the way to give reality its full dimension, without enclosing it in the object to be defended and without elevating appearance to a being that it is not. In the absence of this, everything shrivels up in the defensive, and in the unfolding, it expands in the overcoming. But these two antithetical movements are not without consequences for those who carry them out. By enclosing oneself in doing, one encloses oneself in one's own misery and carries within oneself the signs and marks of compulsion, the traces of the chain. Going beyond, the quality drags one into an unknown adventure, it drags one into being, marking the itinerary in the forest with the chaotic signs of freedom. Abbagnano does not leave appearance and tries to mimic the problem and the risk of quality by remaining within the quantitative sphere. Appearance is the choice he proposes, appearance everything else. One cannot defend something that can never run any danger. So he invents the condition of possible danger, stages the loss, realizes the recovery and the defense. These in a nutshell are his metaphysical moves, conveniently arranged dialectically.

In custody of this recitation of appearance Abbagnano places the specific signs of recovery. They are symbolic words and bear a particularly strong marking. From time to time we have highlighted the most recurrent and the most loaded with conservative meaning. In "possession", for example, there is not only the capture of an object but, more, there is the mutual belonging. The possessor and the possession mark each other, they exchange guarantee and security. The philosopher acts as an intermediary between the possessor and the thing possessed, which must be defended from the risk that it vanishes in loss. The dual aspect of the dialectical mechanism allows the philosopher to seal the two sides of this relationship. Without the use of words that fix a delimitation of recovery and without the dialectic of reversal, would Abbagnano's discourse have maintained its positive foundation? It is not easy to answer. Perhaps not. Perhaps his hypotheses of risk would have remained open or, at any rate, they would have remained hypotheses of the possibility of appearance, clear denunciations of incompleteness, analyses of the disastrous effects of factual compulsion. But Abbagnano considered it his essential task to anchor positive existentialism in the safe, developing, erasing a broad iconography of risk reabsorbed in the parallel iconography of safety.

As I said, Abbagnano wanted to characterize his existentialism in a positive sense, but what did he really mean by this? Did he unintentionally refer to a scientific foundation? Certainly not. To a salvific or religious tradition? Not even that. Such references are familiar to us, but the discussion of "faith" leaves open several questions to bring it closer to a Marcel. It remains distant. To the specification "positive" he assigns a different title that characterizes in its own way the object in question. The reference links his philosophy to his way of conceiving life, to his existence. The former might remain incomprehensible if that marking did not stamp it in a particular way. It is not a positive philosophy, it is a philosophy that describes how to make existence positive, in other words, how to keep it away from dangers. The spaces of coexistence do not erase but emphasize the danger that this existence, thus saved from loss, falls into the anonymity of a false authenticity. In the same way, the technical means by which this safeguard is realized are nothing more than further objects accumulated to realize a further object, positivity. But this accumulation, in the perspective of danger, has the air of a network that is based only on the authority of the one who weaves it, the philosopher, not on a claimed objectivity that does not exist.

From time to time, the recovery of a single proposition of danger - not of a true danger of loss, which is never seriously delineated - curls in on itself in the dialectical claim to appease by sealing. But these are but words arranged according to a known pattern that cover like a demure veil non-existent nudity. Therefore, as Abbagnano suggests, there is no semiotic relationship between the proposal of danger and the system of recovery, but rather the fact that by insisting on this relationship, without it ever coming to light, it is moved into a productive sphere and an object is manufactured that is then inserted into a network of other objects pragmatically endowed with the meaning provided to them by the overall mechanism of forced action. Positivity is therefore not in the use of dialectical means of recuperation and, less than ever, in the sometimes ambiguous way in which the dangers are proposed from which to escape, but is shifted elsewhere, to a sphere that indicates to the user how to use positive existentialism and how to consider its author in this sphere of reassuring participation.

The positivity of which Abbagnano wants to gratify his existentialism is not, therefore, a characteristic of the latter but a juxtaposition that expresses the behavior held by the philosopher in recovering the dangers presupposed but not proven as really pertaining to the problematic nature of authentic choice. The choice is assigned to existence, but it is not specified that it is in essence inaccessible as a choice that could upset the arrangement of doing. The only such choice would be the one between quantity and quality, but Abbagnano never mentions it. He uses an incredible term that should replace quality, "authenticity", a notary term that refers to the administrative procedures of doing, where by taking root

we obtain some certainty in the face of the future, a guarantee for our possessions. Ultimately positivity is only a remedy not a characteristic of existence and of Abbagnano's reflection on existence, and this remedy works thanks to the metaphysical techniques we have talked about.

By removing this remedy, Abbagnano's existentialism would work the same, but as an open proposal, where one could insert hypotheses of development critical of any kind of grounding. But the various openings made in this way would have to be concrete choices, not apparent ones; they would have to singularly indicate the possibility of going beyond, exactly the opposite of rootedness. The dead ends of fidelity would thus be brought back into doubt or be deprived of meaning, they would remain mute and without reason to indicate a logical direction. Knowledge would now contribute to determining these real choices, no longer apparent, each of which would include a clear indication of the real risk being taken, of the risk that, in order to be taken, must be faced with courage. There could be many hypotheses to be made in this eventuality, which is possible but absent in Abbagnano, and none of them can be traced back to a recovery. With this mark on the choices existentialism could start to other conclusions, not necessarily nullist, depriving itself of the dialectical leaps of which Abbagnano is so generous.

The process of recovery, at whose service Abbagnano puts himself, has its point of reference in the dialectical mechanism that we have mentioned so many times. It is not unimportant to keep in mind now that the movement of affirmation and negation is in itself inert and silent, so that in order to achieve recovery, it must be animated by a program of danger that is flashed but not fully realized. The sign of danger is affirmation and is usually located in an objectified tension, that is, presented as an object. The sign of recovery is negation, which is also an object but not a tension; on the contrary, here the tension is reduced to a minimum, right in the rooting. These unreal figures, perfectly at ease in metaphysics and in factual appearance, lend themselves to each other reality, as happens to shadows that trample each other without hurting each other. In themselves, these dialectical procedures have had their day, but they might have some credibility if they actually served to recover in the face of real danger. After all, for a conservative, recovery is his bread and butter, but here there is nothing to recover from because the danger is only imaginary, so the mechanism does its job but screeches to a halt. It continually rolls up an object that has quite other consequences - first of all incompleteness and then partiality entrenched in itself - certainly not the danger or risk indicated by Abbagnano.

There is no doubt that Abbagnano realized that he was using a misplaced recuperation, as we can see from certain losses of cohesion with regard to science and coexistence in the world, not to mention statements about technique. Evidently his purpose was unreal, he did not have in mind concrete dangers, silent for him as his workroom, but philosophical dangers, theoretical failures and losses, as well as choices were not choices of life but of an interpretation of life that philosophy cares so much about. This is why he artificially prepares, without caring too much about the details, a dialectical recovery that is now outside of philosophy, just because he knows that this was enough to stop an imaginary avalanche and to turn - with a happy heart and with the task accomplished - to the mechanism of doing, soliciting a counter-evidence that confirms that everything has returned to its place in the cave of massacres.

Positive existentialism does not coincide with the sign that Abbagnano has chosen for it, let's say with the label. This is common, not even nullist existentialism uses an adequate label, but positive intelligibility is more risky because it involves in a backward process, emptying of meaning the object, not only the hypothesis of relation with being but also the justifications of recovery. The knowledge of this unreliable mechanism imprints in turn in the user the idea that only the empty sound of the term has a reconciling function, and that this emptiness works well being the contenders have reconciled on

their part well in time. Choice is devoid of risk in life because it is truly devoid of quality. In proposing itself as a reality of quantity, and only of this, it can only have the limited and harmless risk of greater or lesser quantification. The wandering in the factual maze needs these reference markings, ghosts placed to indicate fictitious turns in a path of ghosts, and philosophers, in their dogmatic sleep, are there precisely to provide these papier-mâché puppets. The whole world of making is an appearance that looms and remains visible, without disappearing altogether, thanks to a continuous maintenance that passes from production to explanation and vice versa. Inside the object there is no being, there is no hypothetical spiritual world, there is nothing but the panic of lack, the anxiety of incompleteness. The natural language of the object is addition, and life made up of additions and preservation is an object that is not even that beautiful. But the foundation of this object, lost in the continuous repetitiveness of coercion, lies elsewhere, in its quality, that is, in its being, which has been taken away from it by the greed and fear that hover over the world.

Words, on which the philosopher feeds, are not able to tell the quality. Not even as a remembrance, although in this case they can enrich the object almost to the point of completing it and speak to destiny, tearing it away from its banality of the future. They are only able to attend to the maintenance of the forced mechanism within which the object struggles in its incompleteness. The word is therefore an effective instrument and a model of quantity, not quality. I can speak of danger, but saying it does not make the real danger arise; I can speak of courage, but there is no courage in the word. Action is beyond words, even those that may be called to recall it. And yet the word carves a sign into the object and, by insisting, can provoke a sort of cognitive upheaval, that is, the preparation and selection of instruments suitable for going beyond. The operation of action is different from oppressive and controlled doing, therefore it cannot allow the word to cover and justify it in the same way as the latter. If this were to happen it would give the word the force of active involvement that is the work of a different consciousness, it would be a kind of melancholy objective initiation, an exorcism. I don't need words to act but only to recall my action, and these words, in this case, have a particular charge and upset the object's coercive arrangement - within certain limits - but they did not participate in the triggering of the action.

In the same way that I thought half a century ago, I also think today that philosophy, knowledge among knowledge, cannot only be used for the feeding of massacres, as it happens in its current use, but also to make possible the overcoming. There is in the word that looks at the great questions of life a mystery not yet solved, not even by the many hermeneutic analyses, and this mystery is linked to the enactment of action. Is there a relationship between action and knowledge? There is, but it is not easy to say. One can encircle the doing and force it to retreat into the simple stronghold of the object, but in the end one must put aside the word and throw oneself into the fray. If this does not happen, the sign of the word is not only wasted but also functional to recovery. There is no guarantee with words, and the philosophy that uses them knows this well, only that it often twists them according to its own ends, which are always those of murder. Returning to Abbagnano's positive existentialism and the use of this word, I have always wondered what would have been the result of a more consequential use of the term "factual". The support provided to the word "positive" was of a metaphysical nature, opening the field to the corrective intervention of hypothetical risks, as I said non-existent. The word "positive" would not have provided any metaphysical support, but it would have openly grafted his philosophical reflection in the forced making, in the production of objects, a prior declaration of modesty that certainly would not have hurt his philosophical credibility, wanting to distinguish himself from the rampant nullist existentialism.

Yet the use of the word "positive" has a logical foundation that cannot be ignored. Abbagnano has never specified it in detail, but this is normal, since philosophers are often the least suitable to

understand their own philosophy. This word means at the beginning, before the prospect of risk, the limiting project of recovery, in itself it does not give anything concrete to the choices of which existentialism in general is the bearer, but the concept of recovery is emphasized and therefore, by the commutative property of dialectics, also the concept of danger and loss. Such a word establishes a propitious condition to make move two phantoms engaged in a completely apparent clash, the loss and the recovery.

As far as doing is concerned, the realm of ghosts, I have to acknowledge a certain effectiveness of the word I am discussing here, as effective as a well-articulated rhetorical figure or a well-written work in comparison with a sloppy one that is unpleasant to read. I cannot say that these are unimportant questions, only that they are distantly, or not at all, related to Abbagnano's philosophy and his claim to save man and his existence from the dangers of loss and loss into nothingness. I think Abbagnano's reasoning is quite close to the following. The word "positive" does not produce recuperative effects in a direct way but prepares, thanks to the dialectical mechanism, the recuperative process and therefore, in this way, has its own effectiveness. In other words, "positive" is a sign that at the same time labels and prepares, obviously remaining in the appearance of forced doing. The preparation, however, can remain hidden if the process of dialectical overturning and thus the concrete operation of recovery is not set in motion.

All of Abbagnano's work tends towards conservation. In it, existence remains a sort of habitus not to be tested except in the abstract, that is, in the choice that is not a choice. This conservative attitude produces and accumulates in existence a power that keeps away dangers simply because it has a positive character, that is, it is ordered to be rooted in transcendental tension. The positive character of existence is in being, and the more it is rooted in this, the more the sign of this positivity is deeply imprinted in existence. Here there is a double misunderstanding, the first places being in the appearance of doing, the second leads the character of positivity back to conservation. A paradoxical conclusion that takes care to fix with precision correlations that perhaps do not exist in Abbagnano. In the end, following the thread of the sign, we are following what exists only in the world we imagine, not in Abbagnano. Just punishment of those who persist in attending metaphysicians.

Having therefore nothing to counterbalance with his grounding, no danger to avert, Abbagnano creates in his philosophy a completely imaginary dialectical overcoming - not a transcending -. Like all advocates of something abstract, in principle he is even more radical than would be necessary in the face of concrete dangers. His recuperative intentions are even more conservative. There is more deputation in the realization of the defense than there is in the indication of the danger itself. Since this is a movement of phantoms acting in the sphere of appearance, it has its effect. The danger is glimpsed by the user not in the indication of the choice but in the rooting of defense. What sense would there be in setting up defenses without a precise direction from which the danger is perceived? Abbagnano always puts this danger before the conservative measure. From the restricted metaphysical sphere, the inverted relation of reversal has considerable demonstrative power and it is this that makes the non-existent danger stand out as if it were really in front of the reader. The choice remains impossible, the sphere of doing remains sealed in the usual way, but conservation is activated and produces its effects. As if to say that the danger is not a real movement of existence, it does not bring it into play, but the preservation designated in the dialectical procedure brings it to light as a marking imprinted on the object itself, which in this way is dangerously harmless. Through the philosopher, the user experiences as in a dream a condition of danger, is put at risk - fictitiously - and is drawn out and rooted in conservation.

What we are emphasizing in Abbagnano applies to any philosopher. Exactly, in the theory that the philosopher develops - in Abbagnano this is only more evident because of his extreme conservatism - a relation of opposite sign to reality is established, so that the mere fact of saying this reality is assimilated to theory. This is the way philosophy produces objects, and this production is always directed towards the cave of massacres. Unencumbered by any commitment to correspondence with the productive organization, philosophy is rooted in unpredictable consequences, in its past as well as in its future. With all its elevated sentiments it always works to fuel murder, but it is not just any productive mechanism, or at least it does not work like all other mechanisms of coercive making. That's why it can give birth to objects that while remaining such - like dialectical mechanisms - enter the market in another way and are used in a different way. They don't create a different consciousness, they can't do that, they don't manufacture a different consciousness, but they fascinate with a network of correlations that the rigid foundation of control struggles to keep within the limits set by the logical consciousness based on the a poco a poco. The figures that emerge feed a vast imaginary world that extends with wide boundaries, spreading parallel to the doing and respecting the rules of the latter but in its own way. There is always in the philosophical object the impalpable presence of a secret companion, only imagined by the user but fed by the ability of the philosopher, and this hidden figure takes the place, many times, of an always apparent imagination of being, and consoles and helps, covers and moves shrewdly accomplice to ensure the underground supply of massacres.

This is why the justifications of philosophers are enigmatic, even when they seem direct and clear, animated by an iron deductive logic. They do not have as their foundation the objects of doing as they are in the forced production, but as they appear in the imagination of the philosopher, in this very close to what happens in poetry or literature and even closer to what happens in music or in the figurative arts. Philosophical images do not reflect reality and are not duplicates of objects, even though they are objects themselves, but are imaginary operations gathered and focused on a problem which is itself a non-philosophical object. It is this problem, for example existence for Abbagnano, that marks a philosophy and that constitutes what provides the content or the meaning or, if you prefer, the root of philosophical imagination. The influence of philosophical reflection and its consequent image on the object of coercive production constitutes the mark that philosophy, thanks to its own signifier, imprints on the object in such a way as to render it an appearance more adequate to the function for which it is intended. This link, or impression or mark, is the way philosophy marks reality and the forced world that imprisons us all, covering it with a blanket of verisimilitude that keeps away any desire to go beyond. Abbagnano's positive position, with its conservative concerns, is very representative of this way of working of the philosopher. In this impression we can read more than what the philosopher has written, which we have followed step by step here, and it indicates a zone of undecidability, a place full of unmanifest surprises for those who have the will and the courage to lift the veil of Maya.

Among the many paths hidden in the forest that suddenly turn towards quality, without claiming any privilege, there is this one of philosophical imagination. By itself, enclosed in the logic of the a poco a poco, this imaginative force ends up covering the forced object and leading it towards the cave of massacres. Yet, in an unusual way, it can be diverted from its institutional task and find itself projected elsewhere, toward involvement in quality. Unfortunately, this is not the case with Abbagnano and I am sorry for myself, not for him.

I cannot say that at the time I was able to fully grasp this intention, that is, how the philosophical image could take an unthinkable different path. With time, however, and now, in these very hard days of the late evening of my life, I realize that a real suggestion came to me from that same conservative obtuseness that stood before me. Perhaps by a virtue of contrast, as belongs to my character, when I stand before the absolutely dull I feel in me the best insights, the breath become wider and the hopes

soar. Like a flower of the most arid and hostile land, puny at first and then increasingly robust and self-confident, it is precisely here that the idea of crossing over was born. The experience of quality was yet to come, for the moment I was just getting into the forest.

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