It is not in the manner of a memoir or a eulogy that I think in this piece to offer something in honor of Erwin Straus. He was with us, he is gone, he is remembered — and we for our part continue to wonder what we are in our being here, in our passing, and in the human remembrance that may keep us. We continue to wonder over and ponder the questions and realities that we are, and in this we find ourselves brought back to what was most pronounced in those days of meeting with and talking with Dr. Straus. For he was someone who before all else wondered at and pondered over what it is to be a feeling, sensing, living soul in this world of brightness and fellow men; so that to think about these things in the wonder of our being is to remember Erwin Straus in the deepest truth and affection.

It was not for many years that I knew him, far less than many who work in phenomenological philosophy, but it was nonetheless for the period of his last years in, not the twilight of his thought, but its retrospective upon itself. A virtual retrospective it would perhaps be better to say, since it was not as if Erwin Straus looked back upon his intellectual life, assessed it, or drew an accounting of it. If I speak of a virtual retrospective, it is because in the many conversations I had with him in the last three years before his death he would return again and again
to certain topics, not new topics, but ones he had already searched and meditated upon in many of his writings; yet he could not leave them, nor did he reach dramatically new insights regarding them. They were as if primitive givens that one must repeatedly confront and wonder over, that one could neither reduce nor lose sight of except at peril of the loss of firm grasp upon elemental determinants in human being. They were things from his past work that he could not leave off wondering about, and they are what lead to the considerations I wish to find my way into here, even if to do so is to go somewhat afield of the area of concentration that Dr. Straus worked in himself. Let me offer, then, toward a philosophy of technology, reflections on themes in the work of Erwin Straus.

I

Time, light, and opposition to the force of gravity — I do not know how many times Dr. Straus would ask me, of one or the other of these, did I not see what it was and what its basic import was. And each time he would ponder aloud again the notions about each that he took to be primary: of time — that one could hold then, now, and the future together in one's conception, that the beginning of an event was not lost after its happening, nor was its outcome, however distant, unrepresented intimately in one's experience of a present actuality; of light — that the world was open to us out to the uttermost points in an irrefutable sensuous presence, that the world was simply visibility which no account in terms of processes in cortical matter could explain; finally, of opposition to gravity — that the upright station, the direction of self-assertion in precarious opposition to the force of heaviness and falling, which was maintained only by constant exertion and in continuous wakefulness, inscribed our life with the species-proper axes of value and gave articulate expanse and comprehensiveness to the experience of world. Transcendence over the seriality of time's passage, the visibility of world, and self-assertion against the weight of mass in the substance of our being, these were three ever repeated protothemes in Erwin Straus's philosophical anthropology; and they form the starting-point for some reflections on the question of technology, the question of this animal rationalis, this animal