tempts to provide it with its adequate concept. Althusser's argument culminates with the production of the concept of 'structural causality' (186). The social structure is present only in its effects; it has no empirical existence nor is it 'an essence *outside* the economic phenomena' (188). It is 'a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that *the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects,* in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects' (189).

Jameson interprets structural causality as Althusser's attempt to retain the Marxist commitment to a model of the social formation as a totality in which all levels are related, in contrast with the capitalist 'fragmentation and ... compartmentalization ... of the various regions of social life' (40). Although Althusser explicitly rejects the concept of mediation, Jameson argues that 'Althusserian structural causality is ... just as fundamentally a practice of mediation as is the "expressive causality" to which it is opposed.' The distinctiveness of structural causality is that, while it 'necessarily insists on the interrelatedness of all elements in a social formation[,] ... it relates them by way of their structural *difference* and distance from one another, rather than by their ultimate identity' (41). The relations of the economic, the political and the ideological to the cultural may only be perceived by way of the 'detour of a theory of language through ... structure, as an ultimate cause only visible in its effects or structural elements' (46). Structural causality can also be related to other poststructuralist concerns, initiated largely by the work of *Jacques Derrida, with effective features of textual reality which are present only in their absence. (See *poststructuralism.)

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Subject/object

The relationship between subject and object is *the* crucial issue for *Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and for those philosophical schools, like existentialism, which spring from it. (See *phenomenological criticism.) Husserl states frequently in his works that the aim of phenomenology is the examination of the necessary conditions for the possibility of absolutely certain knowledge concerning human experience. He writes that philosophy should be 'a science of true beginnings, or origins' and that, in the pursuit of radicalism, it 'must not rest until it has attained its own absolutely clear beginnings, i.e., its absolutely clear problems, the methods preindicated in the proper sense of these problems, and the most basic field of work wherein things are given with absolute clarity' ('Philosophy as Rigorous Science' 196). In his search for this absolutely true and self-validating foundation for human knowledge, Husserl consequently rejects both metaphysics and any empirical investigation of the sense-given world (Sinha 8, 14–15, 22–3). In other words, metaphysical questions concerning the nature of reality are abandoned in favour of an examination of how we come to a knowledge about the world as it appears to us in consciousness (Sinha 24). To us, these two alternatives – metaphysics and empiricism – may appear to exhaust the possibilities for the absolutely sure grounding of philosophy and the natural sciences, respectively. Husserl, however, states that there is a way of avoiding the taking of the vague, probable and variable 'laws' of empirically founded disciplines for the clearly defined, absolute and invariable laws of essential structures. Through the practice of *transcendental phenomenology,* Husserl believed that he could indeed arrive at an absolutely true, a priori and self-validating foundation for human knowledge which reverted neither to the assumptions of metaphysics nor to those of empiricism, and upon which (subsequently) all sciences could be grounded (Kockelmans 271–80).

As the final and most advanced stage of his philosophy, transcendental phenomenology clearly builds upon the more descriptive orientation of Husserl's earlier works. As phenomenology aims at an absolute certainty which it feels that neither metaphysics nor empiri-