

# On the Universal Speculative Philosophy

## *Johann Nicolaus Tetens*

---

**Si quis universam velit vituperare, secundo id populo facere posset.[1]**

[1]

### **Prefatory Notice [*Vorerinnerung*]**

The intention of this essay—if the title does not already specify it sufficiently—is to present, from the nature of human knowledge [*Kenntnisse*], the motivation for [*Veranlassung*] *universal speculative philosophy*, its genesis and the path [*Gang*] of reason within it. [The essay will also present] the final aim of engaging in [this universal philosophy], its advantages and relative indispensability, its relations to the cognitions of the common human understanding, what it lacks and stands in need of, the manner of the emendation [*Berichtigung*] of its fundamental concepts and principles, as well as its relation to *observational philosophy*. When I look at the turn that philosophy took a few years ago amongst us, and still seems to be taking, I think [*meyne*] that it is not untimely to be reminded now about what I have said here. Those who, outside of the *British observational* and the *French rationalizing* philosophy, are familiar with the *geometrical genius* of the *Leibnizian-Wolffian* philosophy might perhaps find little here that they would not have thought through for themselves previously.

Initially, this essay was meant to be the first in a collection of many that pertain to *observational* philosophy. The latter concern themselves with some of the most important characteristic features of human nature: the principle of sensation and of thinking, autonomy [*Selbstthaetigkeit*] and freedom, the nature of the human soul [2[2]] and its perfectibility and development. As a study of certain aspects of the understanding, the present essay could have a place amongst those others and draw our attention to some of them. However, its inner relation to the greater part of the same recommended afterwards that it be separated out and placed before them.

[3]

### **The Activity of the Common Human Understanding in the Emendation [*Berichtigung*] of Sensory Knowledge**

Since we know nothing of the objects outside of the understanding other than what we have accumulated in ourselves by means of our representations, any investigation concerning

the qualities of external objects is nothing but a certain elaboration [*Bearbeitung*] of the ideas present in us [*vorhanden*] that relate to them. Yet there are two ways of engaging [them] which differ in many respects: [we can] study [*erforschen*] the objects by means of representations of them, and [we can] subject these internal [*in uns*] representations themselves to investigation, examine them, and assess [*urtheilen*] their value or lack thereof, their truth or falsehood. We sense [*empfinden*] bodies and their qualities. We compare, differentiate [*unterscheiden*], and recognize how they differ from one another [*kennen sie von einander aus*], and we relate them to one another through and in those sensations and representations as through [*als durch*] their depictions in us. In doing so, out of a natural propensity [*Hang*] to identify ideas and things with one another, we presuppose that what we have immediately before us and what engages us are the things and not their expressions [*Abdrücke*] and representations. In this way we investigate the objects. However, should some uneasiness over the confusion to which these representations lead us or some other cause spur us to want to consider more closely [*näher begreifen zu wollen*] how things stand with our representations [*was es mit unsern Vorstellungen für eine Bewandniss habe*], it becomes a pressing matter to gain certainty regarding their correctness or incorrectness, their reliability [4[3]] or tendency to mislead [*Trügelichkeit*]; at that point [*alsdann*], we consider our ideas from a different perspective. Then, they are no longer something *objective*, not things outside of the understanding; they are something *subjective*, modifications of ourselves. The series of ideas appear to us as a scene within us and not as a series of things outside of us. We endeavour to know their origin in us, their inner content and compass [*Gehalt und Umfang*]. This latter [investigation] is an *observation of representations*, and belongs to the *physics of the understanding*. The former belongs to the *philosophy of objects*. This distinction also applies just as well when the understanding itself is the object of its own representations.

Nevertheless, the objects outside of the understanding are nothing for it other than what they are through their representations in it. Let us then ask the question: are our representations true and real representations—that is, do they correspond to their objects to the extent that is required to be able to compare and evaluate [*beurtheilen*] those objects by means of the representations—or are they empty semblance [*leere Schein*] that misleads us? For we cannot go beyond [*aus...herausgehen*] our own representations. We cannot consider the objects for themselves beyond representations and without them. And we cannot hold the things themselves up against their ideas and thereby ascertain [*ausmachen*] whether and to what extent the latter agree or disagree with the former. Our understanding finds itself among its representations as the eye in a gallery of paintings of people and things that it has never seen nor will ever see. Whether, therefore, representations correspond to that which they represent can only be established in a similar way, and using similar auxiliary means [*Hilfsmittel*], through which it would be possible to judge concerning the resemblance of paintings to their objects under such circumstances [*in einem solchen Fall*]. Everything that [5[4]] reflection can do thereby ultimately comes down to this: It compares representations with representations and ideas that it receives in one

manner from objects with ideas that pertain to it in another manner and in another way; it then attends to the greater or lesser harmony of ideas among themselves and with other parts within the compass of its thought [*mit andern Theilen ihres Gedankenumfangs*]; and, finally and most importantly, it isolates [*aussondern*] some ideas that are connected to one another, lasting, and constant, which it receives through a naturally necessary use of its powers and is constrained [*gezwungen wird*] to declare as true copies corresponding to objects and to accept as reliable originals among its [*ihren*] depictions; it proceeds to evaluate the remaining ideas in terms of their relation to these. These are the means through which the power of reflection finds out [*herausfindet*], from the various forms of semblance [*Schein*], that which is reliable and complete [*vollständigen*], that which is no empty semblance, that which agrees with itself and with other ideas, and that which represents things and presents them as they are and not only from one side or how they might perhaps [*etwa*] appear under contingent circumstances [*zufälligen Umständen*] or considered from a single, particular point of view.

The *common human understanding* has amassed a great number of correct representations of outer, corporeal, primarily [*vornähmlich*] visible things, and procured the habit [*Fertigkeit*] of judging objects correctly in accordance with them without ever having had a pressing occasion [*dringende Veranlassung*] of initiating a deliberate investigation [*geflissentliche Untersuchung*] into the nature of these ideas and their origin from sensations. Without doubt, it has transpired that some appearance has struck the common understanding as foreign [*hat den gemeinen Verstand ... befremdet*], as one can observe in children. Comparisons of a representation with others became necessary and this constituted [6[5]] an investigation of ideas. However, as this happened only incidentally, and with so little effort, one did not sense that one had undertaken it and afterwards one was no longer aware [*nicht mehr wuste*] that it had been undertaken [*vorgenommen ward...vorgenommen worden war*]. A distinctly conscious, deliberate investigation of the manner of proceeding was unnecessary for the common habit of relying on the senses [*die Sinne zu gebrauchen*], even though the reflections that occurred to reason as this unfolded [*während dieser Entwicklung*] ultimately contain in themselves the whole germ of that which, upon further articulation, constitutes the philosophical investigation of the understanding and its modalities of thinking [*das weiter auseinandergesetzt die philosophische Untersuchung des Verstandes und seiner Denkart ausmacht*]. All manner of sensory impressions, and primarily those that come to us through the sense of sight, quickly fall into discordance [*Uneinigkeit*] when their number is only slightly increased. The power of judgment, which is supposed to take the objects [of these different sorts of impressions] as the very same things [*die, wenn sie einigen folgen will, dieselbigen Gegenstände für einerley Dinge halten soll*] according to some impressions, finds itself in some embarrassment when it must declare them to be different according to other ones. In such cases, however, natural perspicacity knew, at least most of the time, how to gain the appropriate information [*eine gute Auskunft zu finden*]. Sometimes in one of the appearances which presented itself there was more strength, more light, or still some other circumstance, perhaps a certain suitability

[*Schicklichkeit*] for the power of representation or a certain facility with which the imagination took it up, that conferred upon it a preferential status. At other times, it was better supported by other simultaneous sensations, especially by the sensations of touch. At still other times, it was more compatible with other representations and thereby elicited the assent of the understanding. Subsequently, such judgments became established [*setzen...fest*] within us, and, provided the decision was not too hasty, if a new confusion came about, a certain internal feeling instructed one to proceed in the same way as one had done already in previous cases. The judgment [7[6]] thereby recovered its correct determination and the manner of thinking that was employed in this way became habitual. From such common experiences one no doubt learned that there was, generally speaking, a deceptive sensible appearance by which one could be misled. Yet, at the same time, one also acquired the capability to guard oneself against being misled, through attention to feeling and through caution in judging. And this without finding it necessary to further seek out the cause of the disharmony amongst *appearances*. In this way, humans arrive at the customary use of their senses. Neither the hunter nor the sailor require any more psychology or any other [*mehr*] perspective than this in order to readily judge distances and sizes according to visual sensations with such great precision. In this they are, needs be, admired by the inexperienced who so frequently stumble along in these matters and err noticeably [*sich fühlbar versehen*].

But now allow there to be imparted [*bringe...bey*] to the reflective individual a curiosity [*Wissbegierde*] to comprehend [*begreifen*] how it happens that his representations often become untrustworthy [*ungetreu werden*], even those on which he had relied under different circumstances and which had correctly guided him. Or, since he is used to taking counsel from another sense, and in most cases that of touch, when a contradiction among his visual ideas arises, let him be led to such objects with respect to which he must do without this auxiliary means. One might introduce him, for instance, to the familiar claims of astronomy [*Astronomischen Kenntnissen*], and oppose its principles and conclusions to his sensory representations. How does the common understanding now behave? That understanding [*Der*] which is too weak to grasp the persuasive force of the inferences will never be brought to a true, inner certainty that, as the astronomers claim, the sun exceeds by many times the magnitude of the moon, or that the earth revolves around the sun, and so on. That understanding, however, that grasps these [8[7]] reasonings [*Raisonnements*] would nonetheless have to still harbour doubts about these truths [*bey diesen Wahrheiten*], as weighty as they are [*so sehr sie es sind*], if it were not at the same time instructed regarding the nature of visual sensations. Lacking this there would be no complete conviction. Certain doubts would still withhold the assent which proofs could coerce from us, until it is made completely intelligible how matters stand in us with respect to these mutually conflicting ways of representing the arrangement of the heavens, the one consisting in knowledge through inference, and the other in knowledge through sensation. The least that is required for a conviction of the truth of the theory is that one has a general insight into [*einsehe*] how sensory representations of things in us can arise from sensations without their external

objects corresponding to them, and without being able to judge according to them in the same way [auf die nämliche Art] as has happened in other cases.

[8]

### On the Metaphysics of the Common Human Understanding

Does the human understanding not proceed in the same way with respect to its *ordinary concepts* [Gemeinbegriffen] and *principles* [Grundsätzen] as it does with its sensory representations? It provides itself with the former just as it takes up the latter, and employs them, applying them correctly and usefully in ordinary life and the sciences without concerning itself with their nature or origin. The common human understanding knows what cause and effect is, what action and passion is, what a thing and a property is, what is necessary and contingent, what order, time, and space are, etc. It investigates [geht... nach] these concepts, thinking them in accordance with [denket nach] universal axioms of reason. If they get confused or conflicted anywhere [9[8]], then the more exact consideration of the particular objects with which the understanding occupies itself guides it for the most part to the correct decision. The physicist, doctor, jurist, historian, artist, linguist and even the practical philosopher continually help themselves to ontological concepts and theorems without having articulated [entwickelt] them. They enquire after their particular objects, assemble principles proper to their science and can even scientifically establish connections between pieces of their knowledge [kan auch seine Kenntnisse wissenschaftlich verbinden]. The debate among natural scientists over the change of water into earth [Veränderung des Wassers in Erde] can and will be settled, just as another dispute that erupted 20 years ago regarding the transmutation of grains [Umartung des Getreides] was decided, without it being necessary to enter into a discussion of the metaphysical canon, of the immutability of natures and species of things, which some improperly included among the disputed issues [Bestreitungsgründen]. Foundational science [Grundwissenschaft] is just as little required for this investigation as the ordinary use of our [der] eyes requires the science of perspective. An exception should only be made once the reflective individual wishes to extend his curiosity beyond the essentials of his particular science [das Innere seiner besondere Wissenschaft]. If, namely, he would like to know not merely his own field but also acquire an overview of how his field is related to, and how it stands [auf die Lage] in comparison with, the remaining fields [Theile] of the intellectual world, to the extent that human understanding has gained knowledge of them, his end requires that he adopt [hinstelle] a higher standpoint that lies only within the domain of transcendent philosophy.

There are a many items of theoretical rational knowledge [Vernunftkenntnisse] concerning God, the human soul, and the world, as well as the relation of the Creator to his [10[9]] creation and to man, to which the common understanding can attain without being outfitted with an articulated [entwickelten], universal theory of reason. There is knowledge of these objects that is easily found and accepted without excessive subtleties [vernünfteln]. There is a *theory of reason* that is independent of all systems of metaphysics. The concepts and

principles of the understanding are employed without being precisely determined, set apart distinctly from one another, and integrated into a system. In the absence of any antecedent universal speculations about substance, space and time, and so forth, through their reasonings [*Raisonnements*] and through their detailed examinations [*dargelegten Proben*] Reid, Home, Beattie, Oswald, and also various German philosophers have established this fact [i.e., the independence of this theory from metaphysics] beyond doubt. In fact, it would not have required as many declamations as Beattie and Oswald, in particular, have applied to this purpose. Why should it not be possible to select out those items of knowledge of the common understanding and separate them from those that require an articulated [*entwickelte*] metaphysics and logic? The greatest merit of these philosophers, however, consists in the attempt that some of them made to carry out their proposal [of a metaphysics-free theory of reason]. Since it is in the course of doing so [*in diesen*] that it is easiest to see how far their proposal itself suffices, where it falls short, and what one must otherwise determine more extensively on the basis of [*aus*] reasons. In short, the logic for such a philosopher is this. One assembles knowledge of the corporeal world and the soul, that either consists in experiences or is not far removed from them. One sharpens the natural capacity for reflection through some exercises in geometry. This enriched and strengthened understanding casts its observing eye over the entire world, and over the situation of man in it, and enquires into the creator of things. One can also read up [*nachlesen*] what [11[10]] others have thought about this. The *feeling of the true* is the inner sensation of that which harmonizes in our thinking, which suits our power of comprehension [*Fassungskraft*] or not, and of that which the understanding easily accommodates or resists. This inner sensation, this feeling is the guide. [Whenever] the desire for knowledge itself is effective [*muss...würken*] in no other way than as a calm passion at the furthest possible remove from prejudice, without a furtive feeling unsettling it with doubts, then one accepts as truth and places it in the list of *certain* rational cognitions that which, upon quiet reflection, presents itself as true and correct to the common human understanding. One can connect and compare these, and one will assemble a stock [*Menge*] of knowledge that is true and of matters of the highest importance [*angelegentlichsten*], without allowing oneself to become engaged [*einlassen zu dürfen*] in a deeper investigation of the nature of the understanding, and of the source and reality of first foundational concepts and principles.

[11]

### Relation of Speculative Philosophy to Popular Philosophy

If such philosophical *raisonnements* as make up the true *popular philosophy* were to have the good fortune to incorporate nothing but pure truths— and to anyone who has cast even a side-long glance at the history of philosophy this will seem to be a very stringent requirement— but given [*vorausgesetzt*] this improbable state of affairs: is one now supposed to have good grounds to declare the *acroamatic speculative philosophy* as useless or to declaim loudly against it like Beattie and Oswald do? It is and remains a weakness to let oneself vent one's anger against a good thing on [12[11]] account of its misuse, irrespective of where one encounters this fault. Was it otherwise when the British

philosophers mentioned [i.e., Oswald and Beattie], on account of the misuse of speculations [*Speculationen*] within scepticism, were seduced into portraying speculative philosophy – which has its origin in human understanding and differs from it only according to “more” or “less”, that is, merely by degree – [portraying it] as human understanding’s enemy [when in fact] she is its best friend? Why did one not assail the particular principles of *Berkeley*, *Hume*, and that *heroic* sceptic, the author of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, who pushed sceptical doubt to its *non plus ultra*? And why did one not let reason itself render judgment over their particular [*ihre eigene*] aberrations? But for this, of course, it is required that one pursues the nature of human knowledge up to the point of its first beginnings, and moreover, that one explicates [*auseniander setzt*] the process of thinking in the attainment of knowledge more precisely and carefully than either Reid, Beattie, or Oswald, despite their otherwise excellent perspicacity, appear to have done.

What, then, is this *speculative philosophy*? What should it be? It is undoubtedly something more than those sound [*gute*] reflections of the common understanding, which it does not nullify but should rather secure and clarify. It should be *articulated* [*entwickelte*] rational knowledge, that is, rational knowledge that is ordered and coherent, precisely determined and purified of all falsely associated ideas [*Nebenideen*]. It should be a more encompassing, elevated and more secure rational knowledge. It should carry a stronger conviction with it [than common understanding], one, namely, that originates from the distinct awareness of certainty in us. This is the true spirit of philosophy, and this is its aim, which [even] amidst the errant steps of individual philosophers one nonetheless recognizes as the goal, a goal [13[12]] systematic philosophers, who wish to distinguish themselves from philosophical *raisonneurs*, have pursued [*laufen*]. The knowledge of the common understanding is the ground one should cultivate [*Boden...bearbeiten*] in speculative philosophy. Should the cultivation [*Cultur*] succeed according to the wish of the mathematically-minded metaphysician, just as it has already succeeded rather well in some areas, then together with the rational knowledge thus prepared with scholastic mastery [*mit schulgerechter Kunst*] (this expression contains no genuine reproach), it should differ from the unarticulated knowledge of the human understanding just as much as contemporary astronomy differs from that ancient knowledge of the heavens that one can still find in Seneca’s writings.

[13]

### **Necessity of a Universal Foundational Science [*Grundwissenschaft*]**

With such an intention in mind, a thoroughly elaborated foundational science becomes not only useful but in many respects indispensable to philosophers who reflect upon God, the human soul, and the universe of actual things. In fact, it is just as indispensable as geometry and arithmetic were to Kepler and Newton. All the knowledge we have of actual things is provided by observation and reasoning. Both of these can take another’s place [*ersetzen*] to a certain degree, just as with observation and calculation [*Calcul*] in astronomy. Where objects lie before our senses, and where we are able to gain sensate

access to them under various aspects and in various circumstances, an experiential insight [*Erfahrungseinsicht*] into the nature of things and their relations to one another is possible. And although this may indeed require some reasoning [*raisonnement*], it can nevertheless be achieved without articulated speculation based on universal concepts. By contrast, inasmuch as [*wofür*] [those] things can ever become objects of our knowledge, the less *they are accessible to the senses* [*empfindbar*], the more we must make do with one-sided impressions [14[13]] of them. And the slighter their similarities with other sensate objects, the more indispensable general theories become for us. To which of these classes the objects of metaphysics belong is shown by the most casual attention to the investigations that one has instituted in this science. Amongst these are the properties of the infinite being that is elevated above all the senses, its spiritual nature and its relations to creatures; the inner natural power of the soul and the soul's relations to the other parts of creation; the first elements of bodies that cannot be made sensible through any analysis [*Zergliederung*]; the concatenation of the parts of the entire world-system. These are all genuine [*lauter*] objects, most of which lie farther outside the domain of the observable, than the remotest fixed stars from the earth. And yet, inquiring [*Nachforschende*] reason wants to know something of them. Even if [*Wenn*] it gathers all the experiences that it has available to it [*um sich herum haben kann*] and adopts the ensuing perspective [*Standort der Betrachtung*], the distance between it and objects that it desires to reach is still infinite. It would not be conceivable by what means we might bridge this chasm, were it not the case that the very same reason which made its way through the galaxy by means of its mathematical theories, had not been able to avail itself of similar auxiliary means. One can without question [*Zwar*] point to some foundational knowledge of intellectual objects that are illuminating beyond all measure [*über alle massen*]. The great truth: *There is a God* has a light in itself which strikes every intellectual being like the light of the sun through immeasurable space as soon as reflection is but prepared to receive [*zur Aufnahme*] any [*irgend einer*] insight. But how [15[14]] many more instances are there of such knowledge when reason

*removed from earthly concepts*

*dares to sail into the wide ocean of the Divine [der Gottheit][15]*

and when it generally seeks a certainty of which it can itself give an account? The procedure of the understanding in physics [*Naturlehre*] has been compared with the voyage of a ship which, as in times gone by [*wie die Alten ihre*], keeps firmly to the coast.[16] One reasons in physics; and if it is supposed to be *philosophy* and not merely a *natural history*, then one must reason all the more therein. But one always keeps a check on experiences and looks out for these as one does for shorelines and lighthouses to which one soon returns when one has lost sight of them. To continue this comparison, metaphysics is [like] an oceanic voyage around the world in which, in order to be instructed on the direction the journey is taking [*ihrer genommenen Richtung*], one encounters here and there some few islands and shorelines [*etliche Inseln und Ufer*] in the form of [*an*] certain general propositions of experience. The passions are the sea-storms and prejudices are the cliffs which repulse reason or cause her to run aground. Indeed, how many good reasons there are, and weightier ones than for other journeys, to equip oneself with good compasses,

maps and telescopes, and to verse oneself well in the art of navigation before departing. How many reasons there are to study the science of reason and foundational philosophy! I wish to add just another reflection. May we not hope that in the future our *experiential knowledge* [*Erfahrungskennntnisse*] will be sufficient and render *universal theories* dispensable? We have only just begun to look around us; and how much have we not already seen? Observations of the nature and origin of animals, of the invisible animal kingdom, of plants, of the mutual relations of organized and animated [16[17]] beings amongst themselves, and of their relations to the remaining entities of the world of bodies [the inorganic world]. A stock of observational data has thus been placed at our disposal. And although it may derive in the first instance from individual and proximate objects, the understanding, drawing inferences on the basis of *analogy*, thereby gains access to a universal outlook which encompasses the totality of beings. It is even able to perceive something of the most distant parts of the system [of nature] and of their mutual relations and connections [*Beziehungen und Verhältnissen*]. I have a good level of confidence in our current spirit of observation and am hopeful that a sort of *physical metaphysics* can be elaborated, such as we are supposed to find, for example, in *Robinet's System of Nature* or in the *Palingenesis of Bonnet*, works which, to my mind, contain wonderful fragments of such a metaphysics. The more general considerations we draw from observation, the more data we have, data which to the metaphysician are what individual experiences are to the physicist. But even with the greatest success which I hope human assiduousness will meet with on this path, I do not believe that universal philosophy could ever become completely dispensable. At least, not as long as knowledge is understood as consisting in *distinct* insights. And neither do I think it probable that even this condition [of what constitutes knowledge] will be abandoned, in that we rest content with no more than a lesser degree of reliability and certainty. Indeed, should we expect that there will ever come a time that we are in a position to see and feel that the Sun is as large, and as distant from the Earth, as our astronomers currently ascertain with the help of their trigonometric theories? At least for as long as we have not yet arrived at such a fortunate epoch of human knowledge, reason will always have need of a *universal foundational philosophy* for its most important cognitions.

[17[18]] Such a *self-evident metaphysics* [*evidente Metaphysic*], is related to the *philosophy* of the common understanding, as insight and conviction to mere opinion and persuasion. But is it a science that is possible for human beings? Does it really lie within the bounds of our understanding? Or will it end by disappointing our hopes, like some contemporary Philosopher's Stone, sought after in our times with the same zeal? I leave this question unanswered, not because it is now fashionable to interrogate this science, formerly Queen of the Sciences, as to its status. How one answers this question with respect to the *whole* of metaphysics depends on the prior question which asks to what extent it can be understood on the basis of the foundational science [*Grundwissenschaft*]. The thing that in Germany we call *metaphysics* or, indeed, *speculative philosophy*, is an assemblage of various sciences. *Universal transcendent philosophy*, otherwise known as *foundational science* or ontology, is

a distinct science in itself. It appropriates only those principles which are *more elevated and more general than the concepts taken*, on the one hand, *from corporeal things* and, on the other, *from immaterial objects* which affect us solely through inner sense. [Foundational science] is the common stem of the two large branches of *theoretical philosophy*. One of them treats of objects which are incorporeal and immaterial beings – *souls, spirits, and God* – and which, for this reason, I wish to name *philosophy of the incorporeal* or *philosophy of the intellectual* [*Intellektual-Philosophie*]. The other, opposite branch concerns itself with *corporeal* things and their qualities and comprises mainly *physics* and *mathematics*. [18[19]] In relation to form, there is no difference between the *philosophy of the intellectual* and the *philosophy of the corporeal*. Both have their basis in experience and acquire the status of philosophical sciences thanks to the connection between general theory and experience. Rational [natural] theology has this same property. These are precisely those sciences which are of the same nature as astronomy and other fields of applied mathematics, where the essential element consists in the application of general theory to actual objects, observed either directly or through their effects. In contrast, transcendent philosophy is nothing else than a universal theory which, in itself, takes no actual thing as its object, just as the analysis of mathematicians takes scant account of actual things. In fact, transcendent philosophy is of the same nature as mathematical analysis and, comparing the two, one could call it – if it didn't already have enough names and titles – a more elevated analysis of things. It has nothing to do with actually existing [*vorhanden*] objects, and concerns itself only with that which is possible or necessary for all types of things in general. However, once it is applied to experience, it facilitates a philosophical insight into the properties of actually existing things. Were one to simply take the inner relation of the *foundational science* to the *philosophy of the intellectual* and to *the physics* of bodies into account, one could just as easily combine it with both, as have it precede both. It seems to me that the reason why it is customary to combine it with the sciences of the immaterial, and codify both under the name of metaphysics is that [19[20]] the propositions of psychology, which together with *natural theology* constitute the ground of a practical rational religion, depend less on observation than they do on general, ontological reasoning. And so foundational science is more often used here than it is in physics or mathematics. On the other hand, the physics of bodies interests us inasmuch as it is an experiential science, and this to a greater extent than in its general, speculative aspects. These are the reasons why the whole of metaphysics depends so strongly on transcendent philosophy, that the reality of the former either stands or falls with that of the latter. We have a *real speculative philosophy* at our disposal when we have command of a foundational philosophy which has the right to bear the name of a true and secure science of things. If we do not have the latter, the former will also be missing.

With this intention in mind, we require of foundational philosophy that which has made theoretical mathematics into this type of science. The external garb is irrelevant. In philosophy, geometrical form has fallen out of fashion, and it is, at least for the time being, without importance whether it is ever introduced again. Besides, it is in textbooks that it still

maintains its most suitable place. The essential properties of a true, real science on which the inner strength, reliability and self-evidence [*Evidenz*] of mathematics depend are the same for every other science. First, *determinate and real foundational concepts*, along with *self-evident principles*. Then, a type of *notation* which ensures that the original meaning [of concepts and principles] is present to the mind, unchanged and undistorted, whenever they are applied. And finally, their reciprocal *comparison* and *connection* [20[21]], providing knowledge of their mutual relationships. Now it is true that within universal philosophy each of these requirements encounters particular difficulties [*Hindernisse*]. But the very first difficulty, related to the foundational concepts is also the foremost one and the remaining ones can be subsumed under it. As long as the foundational concepts are real concepts, that is, such that correspond to objects outside of the understanding, the foundation-stone is laid. And if, in addition, the first axioms are self-evident, the whole foundation is in place. I admit that the edifice is not yet complete. But so much work is already done, that I would venture to affirm against all those who begin to despair over universal philosophy, and whose number is greatest amongst the free-thinking [*selbstdenkenden*] philosophers: Were principally only this one thing lacking, then the remaining defects could certainly be overcome.

We require *real* foundational concepts. It is not sufficient that they be exactly determined, nor even that they be distinctly articulated in some aspect. For despite this they could, in part or in whole, still be insubstantial wordplay [*sachenleeres Wortwerk*]. We must carefully separate out everything that is *subjective* and whatever our own power of thinking contributes in our universal notions, from the actually [*wirklich*] *objective*, that is, from that which corresponds to things outside the understanding. It is the latter which constitutes the *reality of concepts*. It is this characteristic which makes them into pure air through which we see objects. But if subjective elements are mixed in with the objective, mists and fog arise. Objects become displaced and hazy, and one sometimes sees things that aren't there, just as at times one overlooks that which really is there.

[21[22]]

### **The Reality of Universal Foundational Concepts and Principles**

Our understanding contains concepts and principles, and a large category [*Gattung*] of them possess in themselves such a prominent and noticeable self-evidence that their discovery and setting forth is exactly equivalent to a proof of their reality and truth. This being the case, we can spare ourselves an examination of, and research into, their origin in the understanding. Their compass, limits and essential [*innere*] content are in themselves so exactly and so evidently determined, that a prior search of all their particular applications with a view to rendering them manifest in their complete determination, would be a superfluous task. Amongst them, it is the *arithmetical* and – inasmuch as we assume the reality of our concept of geometrical space\*) – also the *geometrical* concepts, postulates and axioms that stand out to an eminent degree. It was Euclid who stated: This is a triangle, and this is a circle. He stated: A straight line can be drawn from each point [22[23]] to every

other; the sum of two equal magnitudes is equally large. He stated this. And the understanding, grasping these words, can neither doubt nor deny these propositions. It can, at most, and at the cost of great effort to itself, play [intellectual] tricks with them, as *Sextus Empiricus* did. Were the geometer, instead of stating without further ado: "It is so", to provide a base for each one of his principles; were he, for example, to add the experiential proposition: "I represent it this way, and no other way, that a line can be drawn from each point to every other, and can represent it in no other way"; were he to claim, further, that this way of representing is the universal mode of representation of the human understanding; and, furthermore, that this judgement is grounded not in contingent habits, nor in conventional forms, and not even in the necessary limitations of his understanding, but in the nature of the understanding itself; that consequently the understanding *qua* understanding judges in this way inasmuch as it is a thinking and judging power and that even a limitless understanding would have to think the same, as soon as it obtained and combined such ideas; that, indeed, it would necessarily think in this way, just as fire burns out of an inner necessity of its nature, and an elastic spring stretches under tension; and were he, finally, to posit upon this foundation the postulate that his affirmation corresponds to objects outside of the understanding, indeed, necessarily so, [23[24]] and, therefore, can and must be accepted as an objectively true principle; were the geometer, to nervously creep forward [in his demonstration] at such a snail's pace: would this useless precision have convinced his reader more effectively than if he had just directly stated: "I demand that [these concepts and principles] be conceded"? It would [all] have simply annoyed and confused the reader, since one sees just as badly when something is too close up to the eyes, as when it is too far away. Were [the geometer instead] to present his first concepts and propositions as a foundation on which to build without any digressions, he would undoubtedly proceed more fittingly. Indeed, the understanding would comprehend them with approval, would see in them a solid position, and spin its scientific web around them, drawing its unyielding threads outwards, as far as its strength allows it, on the road of demonstration.

But as [we move] beyond mathematics, and speak of things and properties, of substance, power, necessity, space, etc., do we possess equally distinct and determinate concepts of these things, indeed, so noticeably distinct and so sharply de-limited concepts? The Apart from the Principle of Non-Contradiction and a few others, do we possess such self-evident principles, in which the conditions [*Verhältnisse*] and mutual relations [*Beziehungen*] of things are contained? I do not doubt that we would certainly want such principles – self-subsistent [*die es an sich sind*], and just as determinate, real, and reliable – [even] in their generality – as those geometrical ones. Are [these principles], however, so self-evident that some philosophers to whom their own principles appear to be such, would not, for the purposes of illuminating for others the inner certainty of their foundational truths, have reason to resort to proofs [24[25]] – or, at least, methods – against other, different philosophers to whom they are not self-evident, so as to make them see their point [*an ihre Stelle setzen*]. The intellectual standing [*Ansehen*] of the opponents who judge differently

concerning the principles of some philosophers – a standing that has been substantiated in other cases – is too great to suspect that [their] opposition is due simply to a lack of acumen or love of truth, or to allow the free-thinker to immediately take those philosophers at their word [when they claim] they are only following common sense [*gesunden Vernunft*], whereas their opponents are not. The great [Francis] *Bacon* sharply rebuked the human understanding. He claimed that the great number of concepts and common principles that we call *human reason* is nothing more than a hotchpotch made up partly of childish notions sucked in during our youth and received in the mould that our teachers had received them; partly of ideas acquired by chance; and partly of spontaneous creations [*Selbstgeschöpfen*] of the fantasy which we then revere as concepts of reason (*idola intellectus*). \*\* I do not wish to support this accusation and not even to undertake its proof, at least not in its full scope. I have already adduced the geometrical propositions as ones which are beyond this reproach. Nevertheless, this reminder deserved to have been more seriously taken to heart than it has been by the systematic metaphysicians, to whom it most proximately and directly applies. It is precisely [these metaphysicians] who have taken the least trouble to justify the reality [25[26]] of the concepts of understanding placed in question. The work that has been done with this aim in mind can be accredited to *Locke*, *Hume*, and a few others, authors who had no wish to set out an ontological system. Was the scant involvement with [Bacon's] reproach due to such a distinct and lively consciousness of the inner self-evidence of the foundational concepts and principles, that a defence of them in the face of sceptical attacks was rendered unnecessary? Mathematicians may well think this way in similar cases. But one has only to delve into the chapters of philosophical textbooks concerning the Principle of Sufficient Reason, concerning necessity and contingency, concerning substance, and space and time, as well as other things, and has only to look back at the disputes about these [in the past], to doubt that everything to do with these concepts is so easily settled, or has long since been settled. Even those who, in the spirit of philosophical syncretism, find it so agreeable to dismiss from philosophers' disagreements whatever arose simply because one and the same thing was considered from different points of view, and [claim that the disputes are] resolved as soon as *differing perspectives* are not confused with *different objects* themselves (such cases are not rare) will still have enough [material] to see that, as *Bacon* claimed, there must be certain *Idola* in the understanding of one or other of the parties. [These] are concepts and modes of thought which are taken for true models of objects and for necessary objective principles whilst they are actually nothing more than psychological phenomena [*Erscheinungen*], self-made fictions [*Selbsterdichtungen*], a concoction of the imagination rather than a production of the understanding.

And so, some course must be adopted [26[27]] which leads [us] out of these confusions and this darkness. Throwing out once and for all the universal concepts and principles contained in human reason as it is in its present state, just as *Bacon* advised in the above-quoted text, and accumulating new, more correct and determinate ones through abstraction from the pure ideas of sensation, is to venture upon an undertaking as heroic as Descartes' [method of] doubt, but which, moreover, would be expected to succeed for the very first time. The

introduction of new definitions into foundational science has been tried so often, and with such paltry gains for knowledge, that, in the end, such system-making has become wearisome. This may be useful and pleasant, if it is original geniuses that are carrying this out, thus communicating to us their own perspectives and the discoveries of an incisive and broad-ranging vision. Moreover, for the progress of knowledge, perhaps this is necessary in no other science more so than in metaphysics. For, geometry aside, it is difficult to find any type of knowledge which at an earlier stage did not perforce consist in opinions, conjectures, and hypotheses before it arrived at insight, and reached certainty and evidence. Indeed, one would expect from the higher flying altitudes of reason within speculative philosophy, that one should at least be able to set its trajectory in the appropriate direction. Thus, I gladly rate as worthy of attention the ontologies which insightful philosophers might wish to add to the ones we currently possess. But even supposing they be more than hypotheses, and contain *pure* and *real* rational theory, and are so true and correct as the idea of the old Pythagoreans – transformed for us into solid truth by *Copernicus* [27[28]] – concerning the arrangement of the planetary system; given all of this, what can render them so secure against being regarded as that for which their predecessor-theories were regarded, unless their foundational concepts and principles – excluding those few of them which are completely self-evident – be supplied with proofs from which their reality and correctness incontestably shine forth?

[27]

### **On the First Common Principles and their Realization [*Realisierung*]**

Such proofs can be provided by, and exclusively by, the *realization* of concepts and principles. If one wishes to discover the characteristic marks by which one can distinguish real representations corresponding to objects, from those that are one-sided, and so are only appearances, one must turn back to the course already taken by Locke, namely, to the investigation of the understanding, its mode of operation, and its universal concepts. How should this realization be undertaken? The so-called *first most general principles* are certain universal judgements concerning the mutual relations and properties of things. The *first most general concepts* are our representations of things or objects themselves in general; they are the *ideal objects* within us. Regarded within metaphysics as *objective*, that is, as the objects themselves, such principles and ideas are, however, only subjective modes of representation and thought which, just like other modifications and activities of our power of thinking, are observable within us. The axiom: “Nothing comes out of Nothing”, is, considered in that aspect in which it is stated of objects [28[29]], a *material, objective principle* in foundational teaching [*Grundlehre*]. But when we consider this affirmation as an utterance of our reason concerning objects, and brought forth instinctively when judging the origin of things, we accept it as an experiential proposition that reason can in no way conceive a thought in which a thing comes into being without simultaneously thinking the presence of a cause which brings it forth. This rule then specifies a way of judging objects which belong to a general class. The material principles differ hereby from the *logical* or *formal* principles in that the latter give the manner in which we combine concepts in our

judgments, and combine judgments themselves when we infer and draw conclusions. We determine the form of judgments thereby only in a general way. In contrast, [the material principles] give the particular manner of thinking and judging which are natural and necessary to the understanding in connection with certain general classes of representations or objects.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the philosopher makes the affirmation: "This or that is a universal principle of reason", he feels within himself, at least in the moment of affirming this, a certain necessity to combine the ideas and so to judge as he does. It is this feeling which guides the power of thinking when it goes from ideas over to objects. We assume without thinking that things themselves possess such properties and mutual relations in themselves, that they possess them necessarily in the way we necessarily confer them. We become aware of that which we can only think in one way and no other as a natural way of thinking of the understanding, regard it as something that must thus be so outside of the understanding [29[30]], and make an objective principle out of that awareness. Putting aside all unnecessary obsession with scrutiny [*Untersuchungssucht*], should such a procedure require justification and be defended before other philosophers who are of the opinion that they have discovered a different foundational truth in the same way, it is easy to see [*begreifen*] that one should be prepared to answer the following questions: Is the manner of judgment currently [seen as] necessary to the understanding by one of the parties, also a universal manner of judging of the human understanding? Do all other human beings judge similarly regarding the very same ideas? Or rather, is it merely accidental, being grounded in previously accepted forms? Is it just the reason of a one-sided system that judges in this way? Further, is the given way of thinking universal? Or does it then perhaps have its cause in an incapacity which is simply a consequence of the finitude and the necessary ignorance of human understanding? Indeed, there was once a time in which no man could but help believing that the Sun revolved daily around the Earth because this is what sensation registered. Similarly, perhaps this is simply a way of thinking in the current state of our mind? Or, on the other hand, is it so profoundly, so universally, so intimately [*innig*] grounded in the nature of the understanding, inasmuch as it constitutes a power for thinking and judging, that, if the understanding should wish to doubt and contest it, it would not be able to without conforming to it in its very doubting, and thus presupposing its correctness? If this is the case, the power of understanding, present as such in other beings - even the infinite understanding, to the extent that we can have a concept of it - judges in the very same manner. *Such investigations constitute the realization of principles.* [30[31]] But how can they be conducted without observing our understanding within us and its modes of thinking, comparing them with each other, that is, without returning to the source of our universal judgements[?] *Aristotle* proceeded in this way to a certain extent when he assumed the Principle of Non-Contradiction as a foundational truth.

For the most part, metaphysicians have sought to avoid such examinations. They have one principle, the *Principle of Non-Contradiction*, whose self-evidence justified them in assuming

that it satisfied all the requirements of a self-subsistent [*an sich*] foundational truth. They accepted it as [their] first principle and attempted to derive all the others from it. Were this to be accomplished, as they claim it has been, then the matter of principles would be completely settled. In the impossibility to think a four-sided triangle and to regard it as something that outside of our power of representation could not exist anywhere or be constructed, we would possess the understanding's first and naturally most necessary law of thought, which would concomitantly encompass the understanding's whole nature, considered under this aspect, and would have to be the source of all the remaining necessary laws of thought. To derive other rational principles from this one would amount to demonstrating the self-evidence of the fact that the understanding necessarily complies with the remaining laws of thinking precisely because, as a power of thinking, it is naturally necessary for it to explain what is contradictory in them. For example, it declares perforce the proposition "Nothing comes out of nothing" as an absurdity [*Unding*]. The objective Principle: "*Nothing comes from nothing*", would be a consequence of the first objective proposition, namely, that a contradictory thing outside the understanding is an absurdity [*Unding*]. All that is required for the realization of Principles would thus be achieved, and their [31[32]] invulnerability to doubt [*Unbezweifelbarkeit*] would be even more intimately and more strongly transparent to the understanding – and in the greatest possible degree of distinctness – than one could ever expect from the psychological investigation of modes of thinking. For [the psychological investigation] takes us no further than we have come so far. It is the tried and tested mode of thinking that is really universal for human beings. As far as one inquires, one finds that it is independent of contingent circumstances; it is not an effect of the senses or a consequence of the limitations of thinking being. This is a natural tendency: the understanding judges in no other way, indeed, cannot judge in any other way. All this is unquestionably the case with the Principle of Non-Contradiction, and it should be obvious that [this characteristic] would have to be found in all other Principles, if they could be shown to be necessarily independent of the Principle of Non-Contradiction. This is the farthest point of arrival of psychological observation. In fact, however, it seldom gets this far. It commonly lags behind the last characteristic, namely, that the understanding can think only in the given manner. Some philosophers have contested the central importance [*Würde*] and have denied the general validity of the *Principle of Sufficient Cause*, of Leibniz' *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, and of other principles. How should one make it evident to these opponents that they [themselves] comply with such principles thanks to a natural necessity of their thinking and must assume them as principles, if they do not experience [*empfinden*] such a necessity? But in such cases one may not abandon the task of justification. Even if a gap still remains in that direct demonstration, one possesses the means to complete the proof, at least for the sufficient reassurance of reason [*dass die Vernunft beruhiget wird*]. One compares the principle under examination with others which are unquestionable. When, with respect to themselves, as well as in their general consequences [32[33]] - as far as these can be tracked in the domain of truth - the principles are compatible and fit together, this mutual harmony between them dispels all potentially residual doubt concerning their reliability. Within the understanding, the mutual

**Commented [K1]:** Does Tetens mean here "something" instead of "nothing"? The phrase doesn't seem to make sense.

**Commented [K2]:** Perhaps Tetens means here that the Principle "Nothing comes from nothing" would be devoid of independent content, that is, reducible to Non-Contradiction?

harmony of true [propositions] functions like mutual attraction between bodies. Without overlapping in the manner of an overlay on its base [*Oberlage auf ihr Fundament*], through their mutual attraction they constitute a tightly cohering system. Such an inner mutual fit between true propositions is sufficient by itself to dispose human knowledge positively and give it the required confidence so that the understanding is reassured.

Nevertheless, my previous claim remains true. If philosophers were able to derive all remaining principles from the Principle of Non-Contradiction, the task would be completed in one fell swoop. In certain respects, self-evidence admits of no degrees. But if one were to admit gradation in analogy with the bright light of noon, when compared with the other principles, the Principle of No Contradiction possesses a maximum of self-evidence, and is *a principle of the first order*. (I am presently not talking about experiential propositions such as the Cartesian “I think, I am.”) Now here is the question: Have systematic philosophers really demonstrated their remaining universal principles from the Principle of Non-Contradiction? This is not the place to go into this further. I am so unconvinced that they have done so that I cannot even conceive how it might be possible, and, surveying the nature of the consequences and conclusions we draw, am constrained to declare that it is impossible. As soon as some insightful philosopher has attained to this achievement, I will withdraw the dues I placed above on those who would want their [own] principles [33[34]] to be accepted as principles of *pure reason*.

What has been said so far relates only to the *common principles* [*Grundgemeinsätze*]. Their self-evidence rests not on the properties of the *concepts* that are combined or contrasted within them, but on the *necessity* and naturalness of the mode of thinking with which the compatibility of those concepts is affirmed or denied [*von einander bejahet oder verneinet werden*]. Every judgement is a work of the understanding. In technical language, the ideas which modify the understanding constitute the matter of the judgement. Judgement is a certain activity, or rather the effect of that activity, on the concepts which are its objects, just as combustion is an effect of the power of fire when it is applied to combustible matter. Thus, every judgement is also an effect. It is grounded in both the nature of the understanding, acting in a certain way and according to determinate laws, as well as in the concepts that are present which modify the power of thinking, arouse its activity towards them, and simultaneously determine it in some way [*solche in etwas bestimmen*]. However, most general principles, which one may call principles of *first rank* because of their universality, contain nothing proper to them which might depend on the ideas and make it necessary to consult the subject or the predicate. These are the *formal* principles, properly so called. They are productions [*Hervorbringungen*] of reason in which nothing other than the form or mode of proceeding is taken into consideration. Their subjects are any things whatsoever, whether they be an object outside of the understanding, or the idea of an object within us. In short, it is anything which is or can become an object of reflection. Judgements such as: “Every thing whatsoever is identical with itself”, and “Nothing can come out of nothing”, are pure modes of thinking, of putting ideas together or of denying

their compatibility [34[35]], without regard for the specific properties of the ideas under comparison. It is precisely so in the case of the Principle of Non-Contradiction. Those who claim this to be the unique source of all the other principles, see the situation somewhat differently. According to their view, the *derived* principles are formally no different from that principle. Nevertheless, they are supposed to possess some distinct character which gives them the appearance of self-subsistent principles. This distinctive property supposedly lies in the ideas, in the concepts of the subject and the predicate, that is, in the matter [of the proposition]. I am not of this opinion and regard them as indemonstrable principles. In consequence, neither can I believe that the explication [*Entwicklung*] of concepts – even if such were achievable (which, on account of their simplicity, is not) – could or should demonstrate the necessary correctness of those principles. They must possess their certainty as they are.

[34]

### Common Concepts and Their Realisation

By far the largest part of the principles belonging to the second class are those which constitute *transcendent philosophy*. Their form or composition [*Verbindungsart*] is one of those which is expressed, or, at least, serves as a foundation, in the most universal propositions of the first order. Their universality, as well as their remaining properties, depend on the concepts themselves. *Realising* them means as much as *realising* the universal *ideas* that make up their subjects and predicates. Here again, psychological investigations become necessary due to the obscurity and confusion found in so many and most fertile notions. And [such investigations] [35[36]] should still not be avoided even once the examination with respect to the afore-mentioned principles has been completed. The theory of space can serve here as a paradigmatic example. One party states: "We have a concept of space, and this concept is profoundly and everywhere embedded in the human understanding. Let us look into this idea. It is an idea of reason, a work of its natural power [*Naturkraft*]. We build our theory of space – both of extraterrestrial space [*ausser der Welt*] as well as of space close to the world [*vor der Welt*] – upon this concept. The properties of this thing lie within its concept. It is uncreated, necessary, and infinite." Another [party] adds: "It is infinite being itself." Yet another declares it to be a property of the Highest Being or, with Clark, to be a consequence of its properties, especially of immeasurability; whilst a third remains unsure to which general class of things space should be assigned, and ends up getting lost in conceptual obscurity. *Leibniz* and *Wolff*, on the other hand, declare this whole concept to be a psychological appearance [*Schein*], despite its splendid utility. For them, space is a nothing [*ein Nichts*], once one imagines it in abstraction from real bodies as its own thing. Just as images in a dream, it is nothing but an empty picture which owes its whole reality to fantasy. Reason errs in the cognition of its nature, either like a traveller lead into a swamp by a Will-o'-the-Wisp, or because it is distracted by speculations which are as vacuous [*Sachenleer*] as the declamations of that famous orator concerning the perfections of No-one. I will not even adduce here the particular opinion of *Kant*, which is, still, the closest to that of *Leibniz*.

Such diversity of opinion does not arise out of a diversity of manner in which the understanding [36[37]] looks into the concepts of things, perceives things themselves and their properties. The syllogistic is the same on both sides, even though the whole logic may not be. And so whether the claims and contested theories have good grounds or not depends on the reality of the concept in the understanding which one regards as a true representation of an object outside of it. *Realising* concepts means investigating whether the common concepts are of this sort, and gaining, with distinct awareness, an insight into their characteristic marks and presenting them. But in such cases this business is not an easily accomplished task. *Leibniz*' recommendation was that wherever it is doubtful whether the technical terms of metaphysics possess a real, complete and productive [*fruchtbarer*] sense, one should translate them into the usual language of [everyday] life, in particular, into German. Then, he thought, it would become clear whether they have meaning at all, and how much meaning they possess or whether they are empty wordplay [*leeres Wortwerk*]. This great man displayed here much too much confidence in our mother-tongue, as he did, in other cases, in the understanding and in philosophers' love of truth. One can convince oneself as often as one wishes through one's own experience that substituting popular expressions for technical terms should certainly not be a means to test the latter's true content. For, by some, their significance [*Werth*] is just as often under- as overvalued. An understanding that is too weak or too untrained to employ the universal perspectives provided by the common propositions of reason is surely incapable of discovering in [technical terms] as much of value as others can. It thus finds in them no accessory to its power of thinking. In any case, experience has long since established that *Leibniz*' assay proposal [*Waradierung*] [37[38]] is insufficient to cognitively separate out real and objective [concepts] from the fictional and merely subjective. As much senselessness and empty wordplay has been written in German and in popular language, as it has been in Latin technical language. Besides, I do not see how anything could be obtained thereby beyond a reduction of system concepts to the concepts of common human understanding, assuming, as I do here, that such a reduction is in our power. How would one [thereby] improve on what one already encounters in the concepts of the common understanding: obscurity and confusion, as well as the fantasy's admixture in with the real elements – that is, those separated out [*abgesonderten*] from sensations – of merely imaginary elements?

*All universal concepts have their origin in sensations. The former must, therefore, be reduced [zurück führen] to the latter, that is, one must discover the sensations from which the power of thinking has drawn [its universal concepts].* The real elements within them will thus be automatically separated from the imaginary. Such is the prescription of the more recent philosophers. In his essays concerning certain universal concepts, Hume worked according to this prescription, as did others after him. It is my conviction that the prescription is correct. It is as true, and in precisely the same sense, as the experiential proposition on which it rests, namely, that all concepts of the understanding take their material from sensations. But this is all it says. The prescription to reduce metaphysical concepts to

Commented [K3]: 'Wardieren' means to assay the content of pure metal in coins

sensation is, in fact, very unspecific. It says little more than the general rule that one should realise them or show that they are in accordance with objects [38[39]]. How is such a reduction undertaken, and to what extent does it prove the reality of concepts? Those are exactly the questions which remain unanswered. On a practical level, attempting to answer them comes up against so many difficulties that have often derailed the whole task. In his essays concerning the way in which concepts – such as those of necessity and contingency, such as the concept of power and several others – arise, the Briton overlooked much and failed to adequately specify the content of those concepts. I believe the cause for this is to be found in his procedure. He certainly felt it necessary to be attentive not only to the matter of concepts but also to the way concepts are elaborated by the understanding when it processes sensations into representations. However, the indeterminate [*unbestimmte*] assumption that concepts are untied [*aufgelösete*] sensations mislead him into thinking that all the required work would be done, and the whole content of those concepts would be discovered, were one to identify the sensations from which they are drawn.

[38]

### On Transcendental Concepts

*Our concepts have their origin in sensations.* It is not entirely appropriate to express the sense of this statement by the metaphor that calls sensations the source of concepts. I will in the future devote a separate investigation to the meaning that this statement must have inasmuch as it is a consequence of observation. At least in the case that one wishes to say no more of it than observation allows, it states no more than that sensations are *the first foundational material* [*Grundstoff*] at the disposal of reason for our *representations*, [39[40]] *thoughts* and *concepts*, the matter out of which the latter are made by the activity of the power of thinking. This statement thus teaches us nothing more detailed than that which we recognize from the corporeal products of nature and art, when we simply know that fire, water, air and earth belong to their first foundational material [*Grundstoff*]. This is certainly fertile knowledge. However, when one is, let's say, discussing the solidity or usefulness of this or that particular body, and this is to be judged from its inner nature, so to speak, apriori, one understands that it is of lesser importance to know the material from which it is made, than to know the way in which that material is processed, modified, put together and mixed up. It is no different with the tasks performed by reason. Both our dreams and our truest thoughts take their material from sensations. Therefore, the cause as to why some concepts correspond to objects whilst other are empty images cannot reside in this common relationship of all concepts to sensations. The difference arises in the way the power of thinking processes sensations into representations of objects.

Foundational science should encompass the *universal principles* according to which we judge and draw inferences concerning *all classes of actual beings*, spirits and bodies, the immaterial and the material, and the infinite and the finite. It thus follows immediately that the common concepts belonging to both subject and predicate in these propositions

possess the required universality. In short, they must be *transcendent concepts* or so-called *notions*. The concepts [40[41]] of *intellectual things* that extend no further than the compass of spiritual and immaterial things, and represent only the similarities of this class [of objects], are already ideas that are more specific [*mehrbestimmte*] and richer in content [*mehrbefassande*]. Because of this they are just as importantly as the concepts of *corporeal objects* not to be confused with *transcendent concepts*. The [concepts of intellectual things] present the properties of immaterial things; the [concepts of corporeal objects] those of corporeal things. *Transcendent concepts*, however, present us with what is common to both of these classes and, indeed, no more than this. *Thus, in order to arrive at transcendent common concepts, the first operation which is required, is to abstract the common transcendental [elements] in them from the immaterial and material [elements].* Leibniz and Wolff had this in mind at times, when they demanded that the *sensual* [*Sinnliche*] and *pictorial* [*Bildliche*] should be distinguished from the understandable [*Verständlichen*]. And when Kant insists so much on the distinction between pure concepts of the understanding and the concepts of sensate knowledge, it seems to me that this is ultimately the same that I am requiring here in the abstraction of the properly transcendent elements. At least, his end is achieved through this very same means.

In most cases at least, we possess a characteristic sign that will allow us to distinctly see whether the separation of the transcendent from the more specific has been effected, and that the complete universality of concepts is given. Universal concepts arise out of sensations. Now there are two classes of *sensation*: *external* sensations of bodies and corporeal properties, and; *internal* sensations of ourselves, our thinking, willing, etc. Grasped in their entirety, both [41[42]] of these classes are so heterogeneous in nature that they seem less comparable than any particular species of a genus is with another species of the same genus. Extension and movement are at least to the same extent incomparable with thinking, feeling, and willing as colours with odors or tactile impressions. Nevertheless, reflection has discovered something common in them, and abstracted this higher similarity, a similarity which, however, presents them in their completeness to an equally small extent, as the more general concept of an animal is the more determinate idea of a horse. We thus have three sufficiently strongly prominent characteristic marks for the three so conceived classes of common concepts. The sensations, from which common concepts are abstracted, provide us with these marks. If it is *only from the internal sensations* that a concept, for example, the concept of a feeling being, can be drawn, and if this concept presents only such properties, as can be perceived exclusively in the inner sensation of self of the soul, of its modifications, its action and passion; then it is the concept of an *intellectual object*. If the material of the concept belongs to the other class of sensations, the external ones, which spring from the impressions of corporeal objects, and if this material is found here exclusively; then one possesses a concept whose compass extends no further than the corporeal and material objects. In many cases, it is easy to discover this difference in the material of our ideas. But in some cases we encounter difficulties. Where do we get the concept of extension and our common concept of space from? Is it not drawn from

visual and tactile sensations? [42[43]] Were one to be able to dispossess the thinking I of only these two senses leaving it with all the other types of external sensation and internal sensation of self, would it really have any material remaining with which to form the concept of extension? I am only posing the question, and under the assumption that there are no concepts that are so innate, that they are present in us without a preceding engagement with sensations. Were it to be shown that without vision and touch the idea of space and extension would not be, and could not be, a concept of the human understanding, namely, one such as is actually present in the common human understanding; then it is thereby immediately settled that, in foundational science, this concept has no place amongst the transcendent concepts. \*\*\*)

[43[44]] For the *true, transcendent concepts* – for example, of reality, of substance, of cause and effect, or of change, and the like – we are thus left with the following characteristic mark. Insofar as the understanding needs material in this case, that material consists of both *internal* as well as *external* sensations. They constitute the highest common pinnacle of the edifice of our thought. To reach this summit, one can arrive, on the one side, by climbing the ladder of ideas of *corporeal things*, and, on the other, by climbing the ladder of *intellectual concepts*. For [the transcendent concepts] contain only *what is common to both*. Even if one were to remove one class of its sensations, whilst leaving [untouched] the second class of sensations, and intact to their full capacity its abilities to compare, judge, and draw inferences, the power of thinking would still be able to supply itself with transcendent concepts. And this, even though in its ascent the understanding [44[45]] will customarily use one of the idea-ladders more than the other. On account of this mode of origination, the *transcendent notions* possess their own independence from the particular modality of the sensations from which they are abstracted. For example, as soon as the concepts of *reality* and *substance* have become transcendent, they are no longer concepts of *real souls* or *real bodies*. Their object is the universal within them, in abstraction from everything that our fantasy might add to them. It contains nothing that depends on the particularities of the internal and external sensations, whichever of these may have provided the initial material; nothing that the transcendent concepts would not have contained, had they been abstracted from any other type of sensation or representation of particular things. They are a universal mind [*allgemeiner Geist*] contained in both classes of sensation and both types of representation, material and immaterial. Insofar as the understanding wishes to possess [such a mind] in its purity for use within transcendent philosophy, all that is particular to the material and the immaterial must be separated out.

And thus we have the first investigation required to correct and secure our universal foundational concepts. Mistaking that which is, indeed, general but only with respect to material objects, with the completely universal or transcendent that we represent to ourselves under the guidance of our concepts also in incorporeal beings gives rise to a cross-over [*Ueberspringen*] from things of one class to those of another (*μεταβασις εις αλλο γενοσ*). This oversight is also found [45[46]] in the rough reflection of a savage [*Wilden*]

who regards fire as an animal and ships as animated beings. It is due to an impetus of speculating reason, and is an excessive focus on similarities [*Verähnlichung*] which is a consequence of following limited concepts to where they could not, or should not, lead.

One encounters this error so often in the systems constructed so far, that it would be a cause for wonder, did one not grasp how easily our lively tendency to extend our knowledge and bestow universality on our concepts makes us slip up in this regard.

*Mosheim* and *Brucker* have claimed that the ancient philosophers possessed completely no concept of *incorporeal* being. The incorporeal – the *ἀσωματον* in Greek philosophy, the incorporeum in Roman philosophy – supposedly expressed simply the idea of a fine corporeal and extended thing, put together from *homogeneous* [*gleichartigen*] parts. It was contrasted with whatever was composed of heterogeneous [*verschiedenartigen*] parts. It was purportedly not a completely incorporeal being without corporeal volume, really distinct parts, and extension, like the Monads, souls and spirits in Leibniz' depiction. Several statements [one finds] in ancient writings seem to refute this view. \*\*\*\*) However, I gladly admit [46[47]] that it is only after *Descartes'* time that one finds the concept clearly presented in the writings of philosophers; the concept, that is, abstracted from the internal sensations of ourselves, of an active, feeling, self-representing and thinking substance, without extension, without separate parts, without figure, without shape, without colour, properties the soul's self-perception [*Selbstgefühl*] knows nothing of and does not encounter. The Ancients spoke of the incorporeal only obscurely, and never contrasted it with extended things, [understood] as a completely incommensurable [*gar nicht vergleichbare*] class [of things].

As far as the nature of *transcendent* concepts is concerned, Leibniz seems to have been the first [47[48]] to note their characteristic universality. He was the first to distinguish them through this universality from the more determinate concepts of the material, and insist on this distinction within metaphysics. The question is, however, whether in his cosmological doctrine this philosopher did not once more [*wi(e)der?*] mistake, or, at least, give his successors a proximate occasion to mistake, the immaterial for the transcendent, something that is nothing less than a constriction and narrowing of our concepts. Nevertheless, I believe, on the other hand, that this is a question which it would not be difficult to answer in the affirmative, on the basis of examples. One has only to read [his] cosmological explanations concerning movement, motive force, and the like.

If, when dealing with concepts of the understanding, philosophers had only done with respect to this requirement that which the nature of the matter and their purpose demand, a large and essential element of what is needed for realization would have already been accomplished. Were the transcendent to be precisely separated out from the merely general arising from external sensations, as well as from whatever is immaterial, we would know what we possess and do not possess by our principles. One would know in which

cases [wo] they are applicable only to the range of corporeal objects, to the externally sensible. One would know in which cases they are limited only to immaterial objects. And one would know whether they extend further, being guiding common concepts for all things in general. It is precisely this means that would remove the confusion in so many transcendent concepts, a confusion which arises out of the admixture of the particular with that which can only be the vehicle for the transcendent. By the way, I do not wish to go into the other errors here which, without doubt, have often enough been [48[49]] committed within the context of foundational explanations, but which arise out of mere oversight. Every science of reason warns against such oversights, even though the warning is ineffective more often here than in any other science. And so, I pass over the discussion concerning the secure determinateness of concepts. This provides enough material for many reminders. One overlooks determinations, one sees double – both errors of equal gravity. Or one slips in certain associated ideas [Neben-Ideen], or one leaves other characteristic marks out, that one had earlier associated [*mitgedacht*]. And to the extent that the understanding now combines these fine concepts – which Malebranche quite accurately named sharp points [*Spitze*] – and chains them together in demonstrations, they transform themselves during the elaboration, often without our awareness of the fact. They are then clearly pliant enough to make out of them whatever one pleases. But the series of thoughts constructed in such a way then fall apart by themselves. Or else they allow themselves to be effortlessly ripped apart by anyone audacious enough to go through them. It lies within the power of philosophers to avoid such errors, even though a level of caution one notch greater than in mathematics may be necessary here. The philosopher, especially the speculative philosopher, must allow himself to hear of his science – but more often and in an even stronger sense – that which the famous ancient geometer said of geometry: There is no royal road to her [*Er wisse keinen Herrenweg zu ihr*].

[48]

### **The Different Ways Common Concepts Take Their Origin from Sensations**

Only some – in fact, the smallest number – of the ideas we obtain from individual objects are pure ideas of sensation [*Empfindungsseiten*]. [49[50]] By these I mean *representations*, images and signs of objects *we receive exclusively from sensing* them, without any additions or changes, without any admixture of images from other sources, despite the fact that a full and lively imagination is otherwise immediately to hand. Such is, for example, my idea of the paper presently lying before me. These representations are true representations, and correspond to their objects as signs of them, at least in the present state of our senses. In regard to this type of idea, the power of thinking simply has the task of consciously embracing that which would otherwise be a mere perceived image of an object in the soul. In this way it forms the image into an idea, and uses it only for itself as a representation or as a sign for an object. Now it is true that experience teaches us that even these sensible representations possess something within themselves which does not depend on the constitution of their objects. In addition, they are altogether partial [*einseitige*]

representations, expressing objects within us only insofar as these have been sensed through particular sensing instruments, under certain usual conditions, from a certain side and under a particular aspect, and by the type of representing being that is our soul. At times, still other accidental conditions which accompany only the present sensation confer a particular appearance on the image, an appearance which is lost when the conditions change. [All] this is certainly true. It does not, however, pose any obstacle to the fact that *all the ideas of sensation* which do not partake of the fantasy, should generally be *real representations corresponding to actual objects*. In all cases in which sensations [50[51]] are accompanied by the same external conditions as the present [real] one, the former will also be such representations. In particular, however, it is those amongst them which depend on no other conditions, properties, or anything else, other than whatever is *constant [beständig]* in our sensations, and which occurs each time we use them as representations, [that are real]. Such images are constant enough in their relation to their objects to respect them as corresponding signs, and regard them as constant expressions [*Abdrücke*], of objects, and, through them, to compare and distinguish objects from one another. These pre-eminently merit the name of *pure* ideas of sensation. This is because they are free not only from alien additions originating from ourselves and from the imagination, but also from the other additions which do not belong to our usual sensations.

The *second class* of our ideas of *individual objects* encompasses all those which are, to a greater or lesser extent, creations of the imagination, even though they are of a material which has been introduced into the ideas of sensation. Some are such in their essential parts, and in a conspicuous way; they are called fictions [*Erdichtungen*]. Others are, in their most important part, their foundation, and according to their foremost features, *representations of sensation*. But they are amplified and shaded by the autonomous power of invention. Indeed, how many ideas that we take for ideas of observation are there that have not assumed some associated feature [*Nebenzüge*] from the fantasy? How many of them are there in physics, and how many in the psychology of our recent empirical philosophers [*beobachtenden Philosophen*]? How fruitful our present observations would be for philosophy in the future, if the power of invention did not have such a great input into our sensations which are then regarded as experiences! In some [51[52]] cases, these self-created representations are worked out by fantasy alone according to the law of the *association of ideas*. In others, this takes place more under the guidance of the higher power of thinking, taking a direction laid down for the fantasy by the faculty of reflection and by reasoning. This diversity suggests a further division of *self-created* ideas into two distinct classes: the one encompasses fictional representations [*Erdichtungsvorstellungen*]; the other, ideas of reflection [*Reflexionsideen*].

I would not have mentioned anything of this known diversity amongst individual representations, were it not for a similar one which is found in *universal* concepts also, and even in our transcendent concepts; and were it not of the greatest importance to take more precise account of this great difference between concepts as they originate in the

understanding. It is this which, in part, convinces us of the necessity of paying attention to the realization of concepts and, in part, clarifies the nature of this activity. Some of the *universal* concepts are *pulled away* [*abgezogene*] or *abstracted*. They arise out of a perceived similarity to other, more determinate ideas. The first [universal concepts] we attain to are taken from the ideas of *individual* things and are initially nothing more than the similar, particular representations of frequently recurring similar features which, on account of their frequent occurrence, distinguish themselves more deeply and more vividly in the fantasy. Up to this point, they are *sensual abstracta*, *general images*. Then, reflection becomes involved, notes these similarities more precisely, separates them more carefully from any differences, and attaches words to them. At this point they are *abstracted common concepts* or *representations of universal things*. [52][53]. Amongst universal concepts, this class is the largest. But, once again, we find a difference here which should be noted.

*Abstraction can contain the universal* [element] *of pure ideas of sensation*, such as the general ideas of genera and species of animals, plants, and other real bodies that we have sensed. These are, without doubt, *real* [*reelle*] *concepts*. They show actually present objects or, strictly speaking, resemblances of existing things. For the philosophical conceptual system, they are what nutritional juices are for the body. However, since the majority of our individual ideas are already mixed up with additions from pictorial fantasy, most abstractions are no longer abstractions from *pure* ideas of sensation. And thus, the commonalities they present to us no longer consist in similarities between actually [existing] things that we sense, but in [similarities] between spontaneously fabricated [*selbst erdichteten*] objects. It is obvious that the reality of such abstractions is no greater nor more reliable than the reality of the individual ideas from which they have been taken.

The second class of universal ideas encompasses self-created concepts which arise through the resolution of abstractions into their simpler parts and the modified combination of the latter. They are creations of our own power of thinking in the same respect as the *sensate fictions* are. They are characterised by a wide variety of modes of composition [*Zusammensetzung*]. Some are constructed according to the laws of reasoning; they are known as *ideas of reasoning* [*Raisonnementsideen*], or concepts of demonstration [*Demonstrationsbegriffen*]. Most, however, are projects [*Entwürfe*] of the autonomous imagination. [53][54] It is this that elaborates the universal representations as well as the images of particular things, severs them from one another, and recomposes them into its own new whole. They are the *self-invented* [*selbsterfundene*] or *autonomously contrived* [*selbstthätig ersonnene*] *universal representations*. Moreover, insofar perhaps as one should not introduce even more classes, those concepts must be here included which, indeed, are for the most part pure abstractions, but which contain additions, proximate determinations, and modifications which, considered in themselves, are certainly true abstractions, but which are combined with the former only through invention or reasoning. Examples belonging to this last class are geometrical notions, considered in their geometrical precision.

Some logicians [*Vernunftlehrer*] seem to consider common concepts without exception as abstractions from other representations, and ultimately from *individual* representations. This is the case, however, only according to their elements. Is not the number of *pure* abstractions from ideas of sensation small? But let us for the moment call all [the common concepts] abstractions. None of the consequences that I base on the afore-mentioned classification is thereby refuted. When considering the realisation of concepts, the same necessity to distinguish each class from the other remains and the difficulties involved in such an examination are not lessened. Neither do we gain anything if, for example, we put aside this diversity amongst common concepts, and would wish to reduce it completely to the similar diversity [found] amongst particular ideas. This works to a certain extent [*Dies geht auf gewisse Weise an*]. Whenever we try to maintain any common concept within us in our intuition, it is individualised by the fantasy. The fantasy amplifies [54[55]] its most conspicuous features on which our attention is focussed, [that is,] the universal, into a full image with volatile contours which are continually changing. It often constructs many such images. One can regard these images as individual ideas whose common concept is the abstractum. Whether the images appear with the abstraction or are already there before it, abstractum and images are related in the same way. The inventor's mind [*Kopf*] individualises its common concepts, just like the painter his design in his paintings. In the mind of whoever re-extracts the design from out of the paintings, and the abstractions themselves from out of their attire, the order is different, but the relation between both is the same. The simple geometrical concepts of lines and of more basic figures are abstractions. But the concept of a thousand-sided figure must first be constructed as an abstraction through rational composition before the fantasy can make an individual image out of it. Ultimately, what follows from all this? Are all common concepts abstractions from *individual ideas*? If this were the case, the question on which the whole difficulty converges is this: Are the individual ideas whose resemblances are presented in common concepts, fictions, dreams, or representations of actual things? Are they images whose internal absurdity is hidden from view, images of chimaeras, or of squared circles? Or do they contain true possibilities?

May one wonder, then, that so many theories are nothing more than ill-considered projects, given that they are built upon the universal concepts of the understanding, taken to be, just as they are encountered, foundational concepts without taking into account this great diversity? These projects might be reasonable enough. [55[56]] But they rest upon assumptions which have not been duly tested. One cannot but find it strange that the geometer expends careful and sometimes exaggeratingly painstaking effort to demonstrate with the greatest precision the possibility of a composed and non- self-evident concept out of other foundational possibilities [*Grundmöglichkeiten*], whilst the philosophers are immeasurably negligent on this point. It is as if *Bacon's* reproach that the common concepts could really be, in part, childish figments of imagination were so obviously groundless, as to be unworthy of any attention. The reason for this great confidence in the reality of universal notions may largely reside in the fact that one regards them as *pure abstractions* which

Commented [K4]: Philosophers of knowledge/epistemologists

represent the common element in sensate objects. The latter are taken to contain only that which actually is, and consequently can be, in actual things. It is uncontested that when we are dealing with *abstractions from pure ideas of sensation, they possess this virtue*. But one has had scant regard for the idea that the notions of substance, space, power, cause, etc., have been abstracted from individual ideas which could be inventions, or sensations modified by the power of invention, with additions which are only meteors in the understanding. The understanding, accustomed to general speculations, acquires a certain incapacity to observe sensate particulars sufficiently sharply to separate out the *pure sensation*. One was thus too eager to count as pure sensations the particular ideas in which one found common concepts, and to count the latter as genuine abstractions. But it seems to me [56[57]] more than apparent from the history of this part of philosophy that this cannot be so straightforwardly assumed. [Those notions] may or may not be [pure abstractions]; I do not wish to be the judge [of the matter]. But even if they are, they are not so in so self-evident a manner, and for everyone, that they do not require a specific examination to secure their reality against the doubts of those who think otherwise. Finally, what I have said about the variety of ideas and common concepts is also valid with respect to our *ideas of instruction* [*Instructionsideen*], which we obtain through being taught by others. If it is to become one's own insight, the knowledge we acquire through instruction must, indeed, be as closely examined as that which is supplied by our own reflection.

And so we arrive at the endpoint of these considerations. I have gone as far as it was my intention to go. My purpose was to show what speculative knowledge still lacks in order to obtain reliability by considering its relationship to our understanding. This is an issue around which philosophers have expended assiduous effort.

[56]

### **How Universal Philosophy is to be Perfected**

Without dwelling on the proximate prescriptions which one can discover oneself with some sober reflection, I will simply adduce the general result of the preceding discussion: *Before it can be made into a universal science of reason concerning objects outside of the understanding, transcendent philosophy (or foundational science) must, first and foremost, be treated as a part of the observational philosophy of the human understanding and its modes of thinking, its concepts and their manner of origination.* [57[58]] One must travel the path on which *Locke* has lead us with the torch of observation in his hand: one must seek out sensations from which universal notions are drawn. And one must distinguish these, more precisely than *Locke* did, from the effects of our creative power of thinking. Should not all obscurities and difficulties in *universal* philosophy be susceptible to finally *be dispelled through experience*? This is my view, insofar, of course, as it will ever be in our power to dispel them. Just like the difference in ways of thinking concerning practical and sensate objects, differences of opinion in the most abstract [areas of] knowledge ultimately have their roots in differences of sensation and in the way the understanding transforms the latter into foundational propositions. I will just add one remark concerning the realization of

common concepts. It is prompted by *Hume's* above-mentioned oversight in his philosophical essays.

Sensations from which a concept is separated out – I assume here that it is an abstraction – must be precisely given and, through precise observation, be distinguished from others which accompany them, occasion them, and often get mixed in with them unnoticed. Additionally, in order to obtain the complete internal content of the concept, none of those properties within the sensation which have yielded a feature or characteristic mark of the abstracted concept may be overlooked. The reason for this last requirement is instructive in itself: for without paying the necessary attention to this, the abstraction would only partially be recognized for that which it actually is in its complete compass within the understanding. Yet [58[59]] many difficulties have surfaced in this regard which were not always overcome by *Locke* or by *Hume*. The common concept of *cause* might serve as an example. *Hume* thought he had discovered that whenever we regard something as the *cause of an effect* – for example, a billiard ball on a billiard table colliding with another ball at rest as the cause of the movement in the impacted ball after impact – this happens merely because an association of two ideas [which has arisen] out of frequent previous sensations has become fixed within us. These are the ideas, namely, of a body approaching another, and of a movement in the latter, and they occur precisely in such an order that the idea of impact precedes, and the idea of movement in the impacted body follows. As soon as the idea of impact is evinced once more, the idea of the movement of the impacted body is also summoned forth according to the law of *association*. Reflection passes over from the former to the latter, and expects the latter whenever it perceives the former. There comes a judgement which declares what precedes to be the cause of whatever follows. Leaving aside all other objections to *Hume's* explanation, is this observation complete? Is it then a mere association, nothing more than the sequence of one idea after the other, that prompts us to the judgement that the object of the preceding idea is the cause, and the objective [element] in the subsequent idea is the effect? Is there not perhaps something more to be found in this association of ideas within us that is the proper motive [*Entscheidungsgrund*] for the understanding to make the judgement: Here there is a cause and an effect? Is not a certain necessity linked to the association of ideas, wherever it may come from? [59[60]] Perhaps it is nothing more than a consequence of habit, but perhaps it has a deeper origin in a natural and necessary mode of thinking. In a word, there is, nevertheless, a type of necessity or compulsion [*Zwange*] in the understanding with which it must think the effect once it thinks the cause. And this, the physical cause of our judgement, is the most important [consideration], not the sheer sequence of ideas, no matter how easily the latter comes to us. We feel this necessity. And is it not from this inner feeling that the notion of necessity has been abstracted? If this is the case, then we would want to attribute to the objects which we combine together in a cause-effect relationship something more than mere succession. Besides, they should contain something objective which would correspond to the subjective necessity of the association of ideas and, in other cases, to the *conceivability* [*Begreiflichkeit*] of one out of the other. Whether we use this concept correctly

in applying it to corporeal things outside of the understanding is another question. But when speaking of the concept itself, one cannot claim that nothing else is represented by it than a constant succession. Neither can one claim that one finds nothing more objective than this, since in our internal consequences, a feeling of compulsion is added which is over and above the succession itself. But that is enough on this subject.

One thus already sees sufficiently well from the above-mentioned difficulties that there are a large number of them, and this without even indicating further striking difficulties encountered in the analysis of the concepts of the understanding. It is only through observation itself that we learn the right method of observation. Thus, even in the physics of the understanding, we must first conduct several trial tests [*Probe-Versuche*]. [60[61]] It is out of the errors and defects discovered in them through more accurate observation that one learns the necessary precautions. *Locke*, *Hume*, and several others preceded us in this [endeavour]. However, they have not yet brought us to the goal, not by a long way. One must carry on, whether this be difficult or easy. The ground of universal philosophy must be cleared out and lined with secure foundational concepts. As a consolation to the philosophers engaged in this task one can add that, although the complete clearing up will never be accomplished, and never summoned that level of brightness called for by the undeceived and clear-sighted eye in the dark recesses of metaphysics, still one can expect from these observations many other discoveries concerning the nature of the understanding which make the effort well worthwhile. Since the universal notions of Aristotelian physics were abandoned, knowledge of the body has increased as one has from observations in part accumulated new universal concepts and, in part, improved the old ones.

[60]

### **The Self-Evidence of Speculative Philosophy**

Were speculative philosophers to have already successfully moved beyond the realization of foundational concepts and principles, it would no longer be necessary to inquire into the cause as to why this realization is not characterised by the same degree of self-evidence that is encountered in mathematics, a discipline which seems to possess a similar nature. [Neither would one need to ask] why the former has not been so progressively expanded as the latter. At this point, the reasons for this lagging behind would perforce become void or would become manifest in all their clarity. Is it any wonder [61[62]] that foundational science does not progress as much as geometry; any wonder that the former has not yet moved so far forward as Euclid had already done on the second page [of the *Elements*] where he had placed his explanations, axioms and postulates? [In this science] the ground was firm and even, and the materials which made up the foundation of geometry lay ready before every thinking mind wishing to consolidate them. But in the science [of speculative philosophy] it is not so. Confusion and obscurity in the foundational concepts make it necessary to perform pre-emptory exact research and testing of the material which is used for the foundation. Many causes have been given as to why geometrical self-evidence is hindered in philosophy. And there are [certainly] enough of them: Prejudices of incorrect instruction,

passions of the heart, a lack of certain signs, errors in scientific system-building [*Baukunst*]. Even though immediately after *Wolff's* times this system-building resembled its geometrical equivalent to a greater extent, and even actualised it in some [aspects], it still does not possess the determinateness and distinctness of the latter. I do not deny the influence of any of these causes. *Leibniz* said nothing more accurate than this: If geometrical truths had been close to our hearts and our prejudices Euclid's demonstrations would have been just as contested [*chicaniert*] as the proofs of the philosophers. One could make a similar remark with respect to each of the other obstacles. Were they to be found in mathematics, one would see how much that discipline would suffer from it. What would [these obstacles] be capable of all together? Their united force seems to be of such a strength that if it is a question of the *relative self-evidence* of metaphysics, that is, of its conspicuous clarity and certainty for all free-thinking [*selbstdenkende*] minds that are engaged in its elaboration, [62[63]] as well as of the consequent harmony amongst philosophers, I would give up hope for ever of resolving it. And I would give up hope even if nothing was lacking in its *internal and absolute self-evidence*. Not only just those obstacles by themselves work against such an effect as the general agreement amongst philosophers, but each one of them is even strengthened by the now customary prejudice against the reliability of metaphysical knowledge. Whenever I cannot precisely understand a proof in mathematical works or it seems to me that a proposition is even incorrect – not a rare occurrence when one delves into higher mathematics – one does not prematurely accuse the author of a mistake as one is held back in this by trust in the internal correctness of the matter being presented and of the demonstration. The prejudice is in favour of the matter and against my opinion. Were I to declare the claims of some great mathematician in mathematical matters as incorrect, I would have to previously survey his oversight from the beginning and from its first origins in its full compass. Otherwise, I would believe the problem lay with me, with an obscurity in, or a muddled arrangement of, my ideas which did not allow me to see the right side of the object. Due to this prejudice alone, I have often withheld my judgement in matters that have seemed to me singular and incorrect, and repeated my meditation. And behold! I discovered that everything was coherent just as my teacher had presented it. In contrast, in philosophy the prejudice in such cases is for the free-thinker against others. Only here one is even too lightly disposed to look into the first discrepancies and hold one's own reasoning as certain, as others hold theirs. [63[64]] From this change in prejudice it is easy to understand that in philosophy far more examples of contradiction must occur. These would have been avoided if one had only thought the matter over somewhat less precipitously and from more angles than the mathematicians. How often has the cognition of the true force of proofs been mistaken because they have not been thought through. Besides, in philosophy the understanding is better trained in acumen, in noting the multiplicity in objects, than it is in profundity, in the deep penetration into long series of coherent truths, and in thinking through greatly extended chains of inference. Supposing then that philosophers were to reach agreement on their principles and foundational concepts; how far would they progress in their speculations without already dispersing early on along different paths?

Speaking of the *relative self-evidence* of foundational science, I wish to take back what I said above, that the greatest obstacles to self-evidence would be overcome as soon as the foundational concepts are realised. I meant to say only that this applies to its *internal* and *absolute* self-evidence, a determinateness and certainty which is clear enough for those who perspicaciously, conscientiously, precisely think it through with – and this is of the utmost importance – the nerve [*Kaltblütigkeit*] of the geometers. However, with this the task is only completed up to a point. And so it may be impossible to render this inner firmness visible to each eye to the same extent. (Not even in the more refined and higher theories of mathematics is this possible). Yet the *relative* self-evidence [of foundational science] will expand and differences in opinion amongst original thinkers [*Original-Köpfer*] will decrease.

[64[65]] Some have regarded the neglect of true geometrical method as the most important factor in the retardation of universal speculative philosophy. (It is difficult to deny that this has also been a contributing factor). In their opinion, one has only to gather up the foundational concepts, determine them precisely, add to them the first and simplest common propositions, and combine and apply them with the precision with which the geometers customarily do so. Then one would see what a solid edifice of universal foundational theories could be built up. Were this the nexus of the matter, I would point to *Lambert's Architektonick* and say: Look! The matter is resolved, the preparatory work is complete and the difficulties removed. In this system, the essentials of geometrical precision are entirely complete. It is difficult for anyone to be more precise in method, more refined in division, more definite in explanations, more productive and insightful with classifications, and more careful in constructing links, than was this philosopher with respect to common concepts. And yet this is not the whole merit of his work, a classic of metaphysics. In each chapter it contains exemplary methods [which indicate] how the true content and compass of transcendent notions is to be determined from their application to concrete cases. When one intends to get to know with exactness the store of universal concepts and propositions which our understanding has already assembled and our language fixed, this procedure is a law [to be followed] before all others. And that is not everything one can say in praise of the *Architectonick* of this great man. Nevertheless, in all conviction I must admit that no matter how correct the rules and how beautiful the examples in some parts [of the work], science itself has thereby [65[66]] gained no appreciable illumination. One still misses the leveling-out of the ground and the adjustment of the materials. Lambert has differentiated many concepts of lesser importance which renders his work not so indispensable or so fertile. In some places, there is even an excess of distinctness which blinds the eyes of the understanding. In the most interesting pieces of instruction [*Lehren*], however, I miss the clarifying light which is still required. The superabundance of distinctness and explication is, in itself, only a small error, even though it is the one that will be more noticeable to most than the more significant defects. A German philosopher, admittedly, should not normally shirk subtleties. But when I go through Lambert's theories of space and time, of necessity and contingency, of substance, causes and effects, etc., [theories] in which distinctness is most lacking whilst being most necessary, I certainly find much that has been insightfully

thought out – this is the stamp of Lambert’s genius – but not that which satisfies me and what I would most wish to encounter. I do not encounter that which distinguishes *Leibniz* from *Clark*, and which brings to self-evidence what the understanding really possesses of the afore-mentioned concepts, and how much of it it possesses. Lambert takes the same notions as simple which *Locke* did. But are they? Do others see them that way? Is it already decided that they are something more than confused *semblances of the understanding* [*Verstandesscheine*], perhaps like sensate images of colour in sensations? [Is it already decided] that they are real ideas corresponding to objects? Has it already been made self-evident from the nature of understanding *to what extent* they are such? [Has it already been rendered self-evident] to what extent the axioms and postulates which are based on them, and the theory which, in turn, is based on the axioms and postulates, are *transcendent*, and applicable [66[67]] in cases in which we reason about beings which lie beyond the domain of sensations from which the notions are drawn? Are they applicable to cases in which reason uses them as a compass to reflect upon the divinity, the most eminent final goal of the whole of universal philosophy?

This being still the state of affairs in speculative philosophy, can one severely reproach our recent philosophers for being averse to the geometrical method in metaphysics, for being mistrustful towards synthetic speculations from universal concepts, and for fearing such speculations as they would a new scholasticism, as it might implicate us once more in precisely those haggard, materially vacuous, and hair-splitting investigations as the old version did? Has the era of systems already arrived? Can one be anything more than an observing philosophical user of reason [*beobachtender philosophischer Raisonneur*]? I would only wish that one would not, prematurely and with one-sided ideas, overstep the true mark in such essentially delicate remarks concerning the worth or worthlessness of the mind’s strivings. And I wish one would not do so – and [indeed] would not have [already] done so – with respect to universal speculations. The spirit [*Genius*] of fashion maintains its enthusiasm at all times and exaggerates. Our spirit, which is more amenable to shallow but clever reasoning than it is to deeply penetrating but dry thoroughness, always overreaches itself here. I believe one declaimed more energetically against the scholastics – whom Leibniz respected – than is necessary; not at the beginning when inquisitive reason had to be courageously torn away from the yolk of servile word-mongering; but now, in enlightened countries. And one also declaimed against it more strongly than the truth allowed. Let us just elaborate foundational science [*Grundlehre*] as a physics of the human understanding, and discover and gather up its real concepts [67[68]] and principles from observation. This is the analytic method guiding the work of *Locke*, *Hume*, *Condillac* and also the German philosophers. It will then become clear that only a part of the work, albeit the most important and most difficult part, remains and that another part is left for speculations from universal grounds. Perhaps with the latter one will find that something can be learned even from the Scholastics and that they are due some merit for the progress of philosophy.

Even now, one can find many individual speculative theories [constructed] from universal concepts by our [own] metaphysicians. As they stand, they provide, for the understanding that knows how to use them suitably, a large, broad, and fertile perspective [*Aussichten*] without the need for a further prior realization of their foundational concepts. This is because either the [foundational concepts] contain no confusion, or they have no influence on what follows, or because their emendation is accomplished incidentally when they are applied. Principal [amongst such individual speculative theories] is *the theory concerning the universal relationship between effects and causes, which consists in analogy*. If Hume were to have not so greatly neglected the cohesion [*Zusammenhang*] of the truths of reason, I would marvel at how, in his investigations concerning rational knowledge of the Creator of the world, someone of his acumen so frequently misses the point of the matter or goes around it, penetrating no further than the surface [of the subject]. However, the disdained foundational science took its revenge on him. It now looks as if metaphysics, considered as a science, is a property of the German philosophers, renounced by [68[69]] an increasingly large number of them, this having a debilitating effect on our otherwise good German national propensity to thoroughness. Should our philosophers lose, because of this, as much in rational strength and expanse on one side as they gain through the refinement of taste in elevation of the spirit, on the other? The British philosophers may be a model for us in observation. But they should not be so in speculative philosophy, which they hold in low regard. This [low regard for speculative philosophy] can appear strange, given that they belong to a nation which more than any other is accustomed to intuitively represent the strong influence of universal mathematical theories on the knowledge of actual objects. Moreover, they have had [such men as] a *Newton* amongst them whose greatness is revealed less in his otherwise important observations, than in his profound general theoretical insights. Why then has it scarcely caught their attention that there exists a universal theory of reason in speculative philosophy too, a theory which relates in the same way to the knowledge of the actual world? The history of their philosophy seems to offer an explanation. Their recent philosophy was formed first by *Bacon*, then by *Locke*. Neither of them were mathematicians or astronomers, at least not to the extent that the ways of reason in these fields could be vividly enough present to their minds as they abstracted their prescriptions on philosophizing. Treated as a directive on observation for increasing experiential knowledge, *Bacon's Organon* is a masterful work, and so exhaustive that no other subsequent logician [*Vernunftlehrern*] could add anything of considerable importance. [69[70]] *Locke's books on human understanding* contain a superb model of how to use the same method in the knowledge of our soul and its effects. But both these doctrines of reason [*Vernunftlehren*] are, on the other hand, deficient. For as far as the universal theories, their mode of origination, and the wide-ranging and deeply penetrating power they exhibit when applied to observations are concerned, one certainly finds a few general remarks about them in these works, and Bacon extols First Philosophy; but that is too little and too vague to draw the philosophical spirit towards the speculative side [of philosophy]. From the time Scholasticism lost its renown, British philosophy has almost exclusively been an *observational* philosophy, an experiential physics of the human. Recent

German philosophy, on the other hand, received its momentum from the prescriptions and procedures of Wolff. And it has, still now, not completely returned to equilibrium. But Wolff was acquainted with the genius of the mathematical sciences, and it was constantly before his mind as he established his methods and plan. And additionally, he had learned the ways of speculation from *Tschirnhausen*. This is why a universal foundational science seemed indispensable to him. Leaving aside the correct, advantageous, or deficient and false, as well as – if one will – the harmful stamp which, according to the opinion of some, he is supposed to have left upon our philosophy; [leaving such considerations aside], it was, nevertheless, a consequence of Wolff's method that German philosophers after him, even though they may have deviated within the system from Wolff himself, all the same presupposed that such a science exists, and must be elaborated and set up.

I close with this admonition. Given that universal [70[71]] speculative philosophy cannot attain its self-evidence until foundational concepts have been realised through the observation of the understanding, should then every concept which has not yet been subjected to such an examination be rejected as erroneous? Should the explications of some, as given by observational and analytic philosophers, be preferred to those of others who have either completely omitted such an examination, or undertaken such without constantly taking account of the mode of their procedure? Far from it! The first [proposal] would obviously be a premature decision. I admit to being far less sceptical and find in many philosophical theories in our possession more solidity and reliability than I might appear to wish to concede. I demand there [simply] that one inspects and checks their first grounds. The latter [proposal] would be no less of a prejudice. As if those who one sees setting off on the right road should have to keep to it right to the end in regions where confusion is possible. In my opinion, our *Leibniz* gained a much deeper, more acute and more correct insight into the nature of the human understanding, its modes of thinking, and, in particular, into transcendent rational knowledge, than did the assiduously observant *Locke*. He saw farther than the otherwise insightful *Hume*, farther than *Reid*, *Condillac*, *Beattie*, *Search*, and *Home*. For similarly, without knowledge of the science of perspective, an excellent eye and a strong reflective ability often grasp visual objects more accurately and judge them more correctly, than a weaker eye and a blunter reflective power do, even when the latter enjoy the full command of that science. Upon following the way some of Leibniz' own propositions [71[72]] arise in foundational science and in cosmology, it seems to me that I find here the productions of a strong understanding which has been guided in its work by a refined and vivid, even if underdeveloped, feeling for its own modes of thinking. Here is an understanding that, just as it should, has elaborated its sensations as material for its common concepts and propositions. And this despite the fact that [Leibniz] often found himself in difficulty when he had to give an account of his procedures to himself or to others. To go into the fine detail of one's own self-perception [*Selbstgeföhle*] of the workings of the understanding, and to take note of [its elements] individually, one requires a particular impetus of the spirit [*Genies*] and patience, something that is not so easily combined with such great a vivacity as that of Leibniz. The active power of representation

prefers to urge towards universal statements. This weakness in the spirit of observation – and it is truly a weakness, even if a weakness in Leibniz – was the reason why he was able to form true and real concepts to a greater degree than prove their reality. When Clark demanded a proof of his proposition [stating the Principle] of Sufficient Reason, he answered only that it is an axiom of reason, opposed by no other instance. But he knew of no other support go give in favour of this claim. Was then every foray of Leibniz' mind successful in a similar way? And was it then any wonder that those who were unable to follow him, and possessed no indication by which to distinguish whether he remained on the right track, or whether he had erred from it, regarded his discoveries as unreliable whims or even as empty fantasies? The analysis of the understanding following *Locke's* method must make it clear how much or how little of Leibniz' fruitful [72[73]] perspectives constitute, or do not constitute, genuinely real rational knowledge. In universal philosophy, the realization of concepts is the equivalent of exegesis for the theologians. Those amongst the latter who believe it necessary to take up exegesis once more with the new aids offered by knowledge of languages, philology, and history, so as to lay anew the foundations of faith or to examine those already laid, certainly make a reasonable claim. However, if because the interpreters [of Scripture] of earlier times did not proceed in exactly this way and, indeed, in particular cases also committed errors, they feel themselves justified in declaring the earlier principles for ungrounded and in harbouring a disdainful prejudice against those earlier exegetes, then I would not wish to side with them. For this, again, is nothing more than one of the customary effects of a vivacious but one-sided manner of representing [a state of affairs], [which is] the general source of all hastiness and excessive activity [*Zuvielthuns*].

---

[1] Full quote: "Est enim philosophia paucis contenta iudicibus multitudinem consulto ipsa fugiens eique ipsi et suspecta et invisita ut vel si quis universam velit vituperare secundo id Populo facere possit" (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* II.1). Translation: "Philosophy is content with a chosen number of votaries. It makes a point of shunning the multitude, to whom, indeed, it is an object of suspicion and abhorrence. So that if anyone would visit it all with censure, he can do so with the applause of the people"

[2] Header: "Relation to the *Philosophical Essays*"

[3] Header: "First, the subjective manner of investigation"

[4] Header: "Distinguishes between reliable and empty semblance [*Schein*]"

[5] Header: "The common human understanding is embryonically philosophical [*keimartig philosophisch*]"

[6] Header: "The collision of sensory representations leads further"

[7] Header: "Intellectual [representations] parallel to sensory representations"

[8] Header: "A higher standpoint in viewing a foreign domain [*fremdes Feld*]"

[9] Header: "Metaphysics of the common human understanding."

[10] Header: "Relation of speculation to it."

[11] Header: "Speculation articulated rational knowledge"

[12] Header: "Speculation is indispensable"

[13] Header: "The farther away from the senses, the more indispensable"

[14] Header: "Comparison with an ocean journey"

[15] Source: Haller, "Gedanken über Vernunft, Aberglauben, und Unglauben"

[16] See, for instance, Bacon *New Organon*.

[17] Header: "Experiences never replace fundamental science."

[18] Header: "Possibility of Metaphysics. Its scope."

[19] Header: "Transcendent philosophy and philosophy of the intellectual."

[20] Header: "Metaphysics possible if ontology is."

[21] Header: "Ontology possible with real foundational concepts and principles."

[22] Header: "Parallels with mathematics."

\*) One should not be inattentive to this condition. Geometrical propositions, as *Kant* (in §. *Disp. de mund. sensibilis atque intell. forma et principiis*) has most insightfully noted, belong to the principles of intuitive knowledge, or, more precisely, to knowledge limited to corporeal objects. They do not belong to the *transcendent common propositions* [*Gemeinsätzen*] of reason. Even the subject predicates in these propositions have a limited meaning, specified by the nature of the underlying concept of space. This concept comes from visual and tactile sensation. One can explain this as *Kant* has done, or in the way I will mention below. Often enough, this and related concepts have been applied outside their proper philosophical sphere to souls and spirits, as *real representations* of objects and their properties. For, indeed, considering their origin, they are to be used for nothing else than for the *sensate semblance* of these things, moreover, for a semblance of a certain particular type, that is, for *representations of things as phenomena* (*rerum phaenomenorum*). This is, in itself, importantly useful. The same can be said of *arithmetical* propositions referring to corporeal magnitudes whose ideas arise from external sensations of pressure, movement and extension, of light, etc. But more on this elsewhere.

[23] Header: "Mathematics simply posits, does not actualize [*realisiert nicht*]."

[24] Header: "Why this does not work outside mathematics."

[25] Header: "Bacon's reproach against reason."

\*\*) *Nemo adhuc tanta metnis constantia et rigore inventus est ut decreverit et sibi imposuerit, theorias et notiones communes penitus abolere, et intellectum abrasum et aequum ad particularia de integro applicare. Itaque illa ratio humana, quam habemus, ex multa fide, multo etiam casu, nec non ex puerilibus, quas primo hausimus, notionibus, farrago quaedam est, et congeries. ["Up to now, no-one has been found who would stipulate and impose on himself the abolition of theories and common notions, and apply a scoured and equitable intellect completely to particulars. And so, that human reason which we possess is like a hodge-podge and heap made up of notions taken greatly on faith, greatly at random too, as well as from whatever we first sucked in as children" – my translation. "There is no-one yet found of such constancy and rigour that he has deliberately set himself up to do completely without common theories and common notions, and apply*

afresh to particulars a scoured and level intellect. And thus the human reason which we now have is a heap of jumble built up from many beliefs and many stray events as well as from childish notions we absorbed in our earliest years” – *Francis Bacon: The New Organon*, Ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne, 79. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000]. Nov. org. Libr. I, axiom. XCVII. There are more passages in this work, in which Bacon speaks of the *idola intellectus*.

- [26] Header: “Attempts at justification in the face of the reproach.”
- [27] Header: “Re-elaboration or justification?”
- [28] Header: “Actualisation of Principles.”
- [29] Header: “Material and formal principles.”
- [30] Header: “Realization means demonstrating their (psychological) necessity.”
- [31] Header: “All propositions to be derived from the Principle of Non-Contradiction?”
- [32] Header: “The limits of psychological realization; its supplementation.”
- [33] Header: “Principles of the first order.”
- [34] Header: “Nothing material follows from their formal character.”
- [35] Header: “The realisation of foundational concepts; why it is necessary.”
- [36] Header: “Example of the concept of space.”
- [37] Header: “Leibniz’ assay project [*Waradierung*] insufficient.”
- [38] Header: “Hume investigates origin from sensations.”
- [39] Header: “A sharper grasp of Hume’s procedure.”
- [40] Header: “Transcendental = most universal ontological class concepts [*Gattungsbegriffe*].”
- [41] Header: “The merit of Leibniz, Wolff, and Kant in their regard.”
- [42] Header: “Origin equally from external and internal sensation.”
- [43] Header: “The concept of space is not transcendent.”

\*\*\*) The feelings of our *activities* and *modes of thinking*, from which the concepts of *thinking* and the *understanding* take their origin, also belong to internal sensation. The qualification that *Leibniz* introduced into the proposition “Nil est in intellectu, quod non ante fuerit in sensu”, [namely] “Excepto intellectu” is, therefore, unnecessary. (Nouveaux Essais sur l’ent. Hum. L.2. C.I. §2.) As far as the concept of space is concerned, we certainly do not possess it by *abstracting* from external sensations, if by these we understand singular modifications and impressions arising in the soul from external objects. Do we, rather, not obtain this concept from the *act of sensing many things next to each other*, and particularly from the acts of touching and seeing? The *general* concept of a *space* in general is formed through abstraction and proximity [*Dichtung*]. The concept of *space*, that is, of the *whole* of space, is an individual idea, drawn from the complete essence [*ganzen Inbegriff*] of visual and tactile sensations taken together. The concept of *time* is similarly related to the *act of sensing*. But it draws its material from every type of sensation, including *internal ones*. This is how I understand these matters, and invoke experience [to back me up]. If this were the place to look into this [question] [*wenn hier der Ort wäre da herein zu gehen*], ultimately it is

**Commented [K5]:** Scholastic adage: “Nothing is in the intellect without being antecedently in the senses.”

**Commented [K6]:** “Except for what is in the intellect [itself].”

experiences which must decide the issue. I do not think that *Kant*, that insightful philosopher who made such incisive observations concerning the understanding, wishes to say anything else when he holds *space* for an *intuitive idea*, [formed] in the same way as the power of sensate representation coordinates sensations *according to its certain*, naturally necessary *laws*? (I limit myself here to visual and externally tactile sensations, that is, in cases in which we are talking of the common image [*gemeinen Bilde*] of space). The way Kant presents the origin of the concepts of the understanding, and the expressions he uses, seems to me to depict the issue more obscurely than he might have done, and more obscurely than the way I have presented it which conforms more closely to the customary lecture of more recent philosophers. Perhaps this is the innocent circumstance that has occasioned many to believe that Kant's reflections indulge in metaphysical hairsplitting on such matters whereas, in actuality, they constitute real and fertile distinctions of things, the mixing-up of which has been a continual source of many obscurities and confusions within speculative philosophy.

[44] Header: "Leaving out what is particular in internal and external sensation."

[45] Header: "The error in this operation."

[46] Header: "An example of this error in the ancient concept of soul."

\*\*\*\*) How was Epicurus able, according to Diogenes Laertius (B. 10. Reg. 67.68) to reproach those who explained that the soul was incorporeal, and object that, if this were the case, the soul would not be able to do or suffer anything, nor effect anything in other things, nor be able to receive anything from them? This objection seems to presuppose that Epicurus attributed to his opponents a conception of the incorporeal which implied that it had no sides from which it could be touched, and no parts, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous. One surely cannot doubt that when the Ancients attempted to represent their concept of an incorporeal object with *positive* properties, the same happened to them, as it does to us, namely, that the fantasy presented to them a certain confused image of an extended, in some way circumscribed and pre-figured thing derived from visual sensations. This image was so intimately joined to the concept of a *self-subsistent* [*für sich bestehendes*] being, that it was only with effort that they were separated from each other in representation and thus thought as a representation of the understanding. The same happens in reflection every day to persons unfamiliar with the united cooperation of fantasy and understanding. Should they represent the soul as a thing without any extension, they do not know what to make of it, and often end up with the dilemma: the soul is either extended or nothing at all. This is a consequence which has ground that are no better than the conclusion drawn by the famed blind man: when a colour is not the beat of a drum, nor any other type of sound, then it is nothing at all [*ein Unding*]. Having said all this, however, I do not intend to pronounce judgement over the so-called *ideal extension* of the soul. Presently, I am investigating only methods and approve of [*liebe*] this incorporeal extension as a useful sensate concept.

- [47] Header: "It was only with Descartes that the error was corrected."
- [48] Header: "Leibniz confuses immaterial and transcendent."
- [49] Header: "Further errors, particularly indeterminateness."
- [50] Header: "Individual concepts are either pure ideas of sensation."
- [51] Header: "Or the fantasy plays its part."
- [52] Header: "The same distinction with universal concepts."
- [53] Header: "The universal in pure ideas of sensation is real."
- [54] Header: "The second class of self-created concepts."
- [55] Header: "Are all common concepts abstractions from individual ideas?"
- [56] Header: "The invented is not real."
- [57] Header: "Perfection of foundational science."
- [58] Header: "Must first be experiential science, psychology (Locke)."
- [59] Header: "Humes concept of cause."
- [60] Header: "Incompletely analysed."
- [61] Header: "Self-evidence of mathematics and metaphysics."
- [62] Header: "Obstacles to the self-evidence of metaphysics."
- [63] Header: "Including the prejudice of unreliability."
- [64] Header: "Nevertheless, an expansion of relative self-evidence is to be hoped for."
- [65] Header: "The geometrical method by itself does not help."
- [66] Header: "The proof is in Lambert's 'Architektonik'."
- [67] Header: "Analysis is necessary before synthetic speculations."
- [68] Header: "Individual syntheses of concepts are already possible today."
- [69] Header: "The English, weak in speculation, understand nothing of mathematics."
- [70] Header: "The Germans are better in both."
- [71] Header: "The Germans are weak in analytical realization; Leibniz."
- [72] Header: "Leibniz' merit and weakness."
- [73] Header: "Realization is parallel to theological exegesis."