

# The Philosophy Of Freedom

## by Rudolf Steiner

New More Readable Translation  
w/ topic headings  
by Tom Last

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### NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

During my 30 years of working with The Philosophy Of Freedom I would often refer to the numerous other English translations when I was having difficulty. I discovered that the book was not as difficult as I thought, the problem in most cases was the translation. I never found a single "best" translation, but in each case of confusing text one of them held the key to clarifying what Steiner was trying to say, sometimes saying it better than the original German. This led to the necessity of taking on the task of producing a new more readable translation built on the progress made by the previous translations. I wish to thank the previous translators who made this readable edition possible:

1916 Mr. and Mrs. R. F. A. Hoernle The Philosophy of Freedom  
1922 Mr. and Mrs. R. F. A. Hoernle The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1939 Dr. H. Poppelbaum The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1963 Rita Stebbing The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1964 Michael Wilson The Philosophy of Freedom  
1986 William Lindemann The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1988 Rita Stebbing The Philosophy of Freedom: A Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1992 Rita Stebbing The Philosophy of Freedom: A Philosophy of Spiritual Activity  
1995 Michael Lipson Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path, A Philosophy of Freedom  
2011 Graham B. Rickett The Philosophy of Freedom translation contained in Rudolf Steiner's 'Philosophie der Freiheit' as the Foundation of Logic of Beholding Thinking, Religion of the Thinking Will. Organon of the New Cultural Epoch. by G. A. Bondarev

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**note:** This was Chapter 1 in the original 1894 TPOF. It has since been moved to the back of the book in the revised editions.

## **0. THE GOAL OF KNOWLEDGE**

### **0.0 Cultivation Of Individuality**

[1] I believe I am right in pointing out one of the fundamental characteristics of our age when I say that, at the present day, all human interests tend to center in the cultivation of individuality.

#### **Shake Off Authority**

An energetic effort is being made to shake off every kind of authority.

#### **Individual Validation**

Nothing is accepted as valid, unless it springs from the roots of individuality.

#### **Courage**

Everything that hinders the individual from fully developing his powers is thrust aside.

#### **Leaderless Striving**

The saying "Each one of us must choose his hero in whose footsteps he toils up to Mount Olympus" no longer holds true for us.

#### **Select Own Ideals**

We allow no ideals to be forced upon us.

#### **Inner Worthiness**

We are convinced that in each of us, if only we probe deep enough into the very heart of our being, there dwells something noble, something worthy of development.

#### **Nonconformity**

We no longer believe there is a norm of human life to which we must all strive to conform.

#### **Unique Perfection**

We regard the perfection of the whole as depending on the unique perfection of each single individual.

#### **Unique Contribution**

We do not want to do what anyone else can do equally well. No, our contribution to the development of the world, however trifling, must be something that, by reason of the uniqueness of our nature, we alone can offer.

#### **Free Expression**

Never have artists been less concerned about rules and norms in art than today. Each one asserts the right to express in the creations of his art what is unique in him, just as there are playwrights who write in dialect rather than conform to the standard diction grammar demands

#### **Striving For Freedom**

[2] No better expression for these phenomena can be found than this, they result from the individual's striving for freedom, developed to its highest pitch.

#### **Independence**

We do not want to be dependent in any respect, and where dependence must be, we tolerate it only on condition it coincides with a vital interest of our individuality.

### **0.1 Path Of Inner Truth**

[3] Truth, too, will be sought in our age only in the depths of human nature. Of the following two well-known paths described by Schiller, it is the second that will today be found most useful:

*We both seek truth; you in outer life, I in the heart within.*

*Each of us are sure to find it.*

*The healthy eye can track the Creator in the outer world;*

*The healthy heart mirrors the world within.*

Truth that comes to us from the outside always brings with it uncertainty. We are only convinced by what appears to each of us inwardly as truth.

### **0.2 Empowered By Truth**

[4] Only truth can give us certainty in the development our individual powers. Whoever is tormented by doubts finds his powers weakened. If baffled by a world full of riddles he can find no goal for his creative activity.

### **0.3 Know Truth**

[5] We no longer want to believe; we want to know. Belief demands the acceptance of truths that we do not fully understand. What is not clearly understood goes against our individuality that wants to experience everything in the depths of its inner core. The only knowing that satisfies us is the kind that submits to no external norm, but springs from the inner life of the personality.

### **0.4 Advance In Knowledge**

[6] Nor do we want the kind of knowledge that has been encased in rigid academic rules, and stored away as valid for all time. Each of us claims the right to start from the facts we know, from our own direct experience, and from there advance to knowledge of the whole universe. We strive for certainty in knowledge, but each in his own way.

### **0.5 Need To Know**

[7] Nor should the teachings of science be presented in a way to imply that its acceptance is compulsory. None of us would give a scientific work a title like Fichte once did: "A Crystal Clear Report to the General Public on the Actual Nature of the Latest Philosophy, An Attempt to Compel the Reader to Understand." Today, no one should be compelled to understand. We expect neither acceptance or agreement from anyone who is not urged to a certain view by his own distinct individual need. We do not want to cram facts of knowledge into an immature person, or even a child. We try rather to develop the child's capacities in such a way that his understanding no longer depends on our compulsion, but on his own will to understand.

### **0.6 Apply Principles**

[8] I have no illusions as to the characteristics of the present time. I know how much a stereotypical attitude, lacking all individuality, is prevalent everywhere. Many flaunt a way of life that follows only the current cultural trends. But I also know that many of my contemporaries strive to conduct their lives in the direction of the principles I have suggested. To them I dedicate this book. It does not claim to offer the 'only possible' way to truth, but is meant to describe the path taken by one for whom truth is central.

### **0.7 Practice Pure Thinking**

[9] At first the reader is lead into abstract regions, where thought must draw sharp outlines to reach clearly defined positions. But the reader is also led from arid concepts into concrete life. I am fully convinced that to experience life in all its aspects, one must soar into the realm of concepts. Whoever is limited to the pleasures of the senses misses the sweetest joys of life.

The oriental sage requires his disciples to live a life of resignation and asceticism for years before he shares with them his knowledge. The West no longer demands pious exercises and ascetic practices to attain knowledge. It does require, however, a sincere willingness to prepare for science by withdrawing oneself awhile from the immediate impressions of life, and enter the realm of pure thought.

### **0.8 Knowing Organism**

[10] There are many regions of life. A specific field of science develops for each one. But life itself is a unity, and the more the sciences immerse themselves in separate fields, the more they move away from seeing the world as a living whole. It is essential to have a supreme science that seeks in the separate sciences the principles for leading man back to the fullness of life. The aim of the scientific specialist's research is to gain knowledge of the world and how it works The aim of this book is philosophical: science itself is to become a living whole. The various branches of science are preparatory stages on the way to the all-inclusive science intended here.

A similar relationship governs the arts. A composer works on the basis of the theory of composition. This theory is an accumulation of principles of what one needs to know in order to compose music. In composing, the rules of theory serve life, that is, theory serves actual reality.

In the same way philosophy is an art. All genuine philosophers have been artists in the conceptual realm. For them human Ideas become their artistic material and the methods of science their artistic technique. Abstract thinking takes on an individual life of its own. Ideas become powerful forces in life. We no longer merely know about things, but have made knowing into a real self-governing organism, ruled by its own laws. Our actual working consciousness has lifted itself above a mere passive reception of truths.

### **0.9 Science Of Freedom**

[11] The main theme of my book concerns these questions: How philosophy, as an art, relates to freedom; what freedom is; and whether we do, or can, participate in it. Scientific explanations are included because in the end they provide clarification about those questions that are, in my opinion, most important to people. These pages offer a 'Philosophy of Freedom.'

### **0.10 Full Potential**

[12] All science would be nothing but the satisfaction of idle curiosity if it did not raise the value of existence for the human personality. The true value of the sciences is seen only when we are shown the importance of their results for humanity. The ultimate aim of the individuality cannot be the cultivation of only a single capacity. Rather, it must be the development of all the potential that slumbers within us. Knowledge has value only by contributing to the all-around development of the whole of human nature.

### **0.11 Ideas Serve Goals**

[13] This book does not regard the relationship of science to life in such a way that the human being must bow down before the world of Ideas and devote his powers to its service. On the contrary, it shows that he should take possession of the world of Ideas to use them for his human goals. These extend beyond those of mere science.

### **0.12 Master Of Ideas**

[14] One must confront an Idea as master, or else become its slave.

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## **1. CONSCIOUS HUMAN ACTION**

### **1.0 Question Of Freedom**

[1] Is a human being free in thought and action, or compelled by the unyielding necessity of natural law? Few questions have been the focus of so much ingenuity. The Idea of freedom has many enthusiastic supporters and stubborn opponents. Moral zealots accuse anyone of being narrow-minded who can deny so obvious a fact as freedom. They are opposed by scientific thinkers who regard it as the height of ignorance for anyone to believe the uniformity of natural law to be suspended in the field of human action and thought. The same thing is as often called humanity's most precious possession as its worst illusion. Endless distinctions are used to explain how freedom can be compatible with determinism in nature. Man, after all, is a part of nature. No less effort has gone into explaining how this delusion could arise. The importance of the question of freedom for life, religion, conduct, and science is felt by anyone with any depth of character.

### **1.1 Freedom Of Indifferent Choice**

One sad sign of the superficiality of today's thought is David Friedrich Strauss's book (The New and the Old Belief). It intends to construct a "new faith" from the results of scientific research, yet has only this to say on the question of freedom:

"We are not concerned with the question of free will. The supposedly 'indifferent' freedom of choice has always been recognized as an empty illusion by every reputable philosophy. An indifferent choice is not a factor in determining the moral value of human conduct and character."

I do not consider the book important. I quote this passage because it expresses the only opinion our thinking contemporaries seem able to reach on this question. Everyone who has grown beyond elementary science is certain of one thing about freedom. It cannot consist in choosing, entirely at will, between two courses of action. There is always, so we are told, a specific reason why a person carries out one action from among several possibilities.

### **1.2 Freedom Of Choice**

[2] This seems obvious. Yet opponents of freedom still direct their main attacks against freedom of choice. Herbert Spencer, whose doctrines are growing in popularity, says,

"That everyone is at liberty to desire or not to desire, as he pleases, is the essential principle concealed in the dogma of free will. This freedom is refuted by the analysis of consciousness, as well as by the contents of the preceding chapter [on psychology]."

### **1.3 Free Necessity Of One's Nature**

Others begin from the same point when attacking the concept of free will. The essence of all the relevant arguments can be found as early as Spinoza. His clear and simple argument against the Idea of freedom has been repeated countless times. Though it is usually enclosed in complicated theoretical doctrines that make it difficult to recognize the simple line of thought, which is all that matters.

Spinoza writes in a letter of October or November 1674,

"I call free all that exists and acts out of the necessity of its nature. I call it unfree, if its existence and activity are determined in an exact and fixed way by something else. For example, God is free, even though he exists in a necessary way, because he exists solely out of the necessity of his own nature. Similarly, God knows himself and all other things freely, because it follows solely from the necessity of his nature to know all. I locate freedom, not in free decision, but in free necessity.

[3] "Let us come down to created things, which are all determined by external causes to exist and to act in a fixed and exact way. To see this more clearly, let us imagine a very simple case. A stone, for example, receives a certain momentum from the impact of an external cause. Of necessity, the stone continues to move after the impact. The continued motion of the stone is compelled, for it is due to the external impact, and not to the necessity of the stone's own nature. What applies here to the stone, applies to everything else, no matter how complex and many-sided. Everything is determined by external causes with the necessity to exist and to act in a fixed and exact way.

[4] "Now please assume the stone, while in motion, thinks and knows it is striving to the best of its ability to continue in motion. The stone is only conscious of its striving and by no means indifferent. It will be convinced it is free and continues in motion, not because of an external cause, but because it wills to do so. This is just the human freedom everyone claims to have. The reason it appears to be freedom is because human beings are conscious of their desires, but do not know the causes that determine those desires. Thus the child believes it freely desires milk, the angry boy freely demands revenge, and the coward flight. The drunken man believes he says things of his own free will that, when sober again, he will wish he had not said. Since this bias is inborn in everybody, it is difficult to free oneself from it. Experience teaches us often enough that people are least able to moderate their desires. When torn by conflicting passions they see the better and pursue the worse. Yet they still regard themselves as free, because they desire some things less intensely. And some desires can be easily inhibited by recalling a familiar memory that often preoccupies one's mind."

[5] Because this opinion is clearly and directly expressed, it is easy to detect the basic error. Of necessity, the stone continues to move after an impact. With the same necessity, a human being is supposed to carry out an action when driven by any reason. Because he is only conscious of his action, he looks upon himself as the free originator of it. However, he overlooks the causes driving him that he must obey unconditionally.

The error in this line of argument is easy to find. Spinoza, and all who think like him, overlook the fact that a human being is not just conscious of his action. He can also become conscious of the causes that guide his action. Anyone can see a child is not free when it desires milk, as is the drunk who says things he later regrets. Both know nothing of the causes working deep within their organism that exercise irresistible control over them. Is it right to group such actions together with those of a human being who is not only conscious of his actions, but also of the reasons that motivate him?

Are human actions really all of one kind? Should the deeds of a soldier on the battlefield, a scientist in the laboratory, or a diplomat involved in complex negotiations be ranked in the same scientific category as those of a child craving milk? It is true the best way of seeking the solution to a problem is where the conditions are simplest. But the inability to see distinctions causes endless confusion. There is a profound difference between knowing and not knowing why I act. This is an obvious truth. Yet the opponents of freedom never ask whether a motive of action known to me in full transparency, compels me in the same way an organic process causes a child to cry for milk.

#### **1.4 Conduct Of Character**

[6] Eduard von Hartmann, in his *Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness*, says that human willing depends on two main factors: motives and character. If we look at human beings as all alike, then their will appears determined from outside, by the situations they encounter. But people are different. A human being will adopt an idea as the motive of his conduct, only if his character is such that this idea arouses a desire in him to act. If we keep in mind people are different then their will appears determined from within and not from outside.

Now, the human being believes he is free, independent of outside motivation, because he must first make the idea imposed on him from outside into a motive, according to his character. But according to Eduard von Hartmann, the truth is that he is not free,

"Even though we first adopt an idea as a motive, this is not done arbitrarily. An idea is turned into a motive according to the necessity of our characterological disposition. We are anything but free."

Here again, the difference between motives is ignored. There are motives I allow to influence me only after I have consciously made them my own, and others I follow without a clear knowledge of them.

#### **1.5 Conscious Motive**

[7] This leads straight to the standpoint from which the subject will be considered here. Should the question of free will be posed narrowly by itself, in a one-sided way? And if not, with what other question must it necessarily be linked?

[8] If there is a difference between a conscious and an unconscious motive of action, then the conscious motive will result in an action that must be judged differently from one that springs from blind urge. Our first question will concern this difference. The position we must take on freedom itself will depend on the result of this investigation.

[9] What does it mean to have knowledge of the motives of one's actions? Too little attention has been given to this question because we always split in two what is an inseparable whole: the human being. The doer is set apart from the knower, but the one that matters most is lost sight of —the knowing doer, the one who acts out of knowledge.

#### **1.6 Rational Decision**

[10] It is said that man is free when his reason rather than his animal cravings control his action. Or freedom means to determine one's life and action according to purpose and deliberate decision.

[11] Nothing is gained by assertions of this kind. For the real issue is whether reason, purpose, and decision exercise the same compulsion over a human being as his animal cravings. If, without my involvement, a rational decision occurs in me with the same necessity as hunger or thirst, then I must obey it. My freedom is an illusion.

#### **1.7 Ability To Do What One Wants**

[12] Another argument puts it this way: To be free is not the ability to determine what one wants, but

the ability to do what one wants. The poet-philosopher Robert Hamerling has given very clear-cut expression to this thought in his *Atomistik des Willens*:

“The human being can certainly do what he wants, but he cannot determine what he wants, because his volition is determined by motives! — He cannot determine what he wants? Let us look at these words more closely. Do they make any sense? Is free will to mean the ability to want something without reason, without a motive? But what else does wanting mean, other than having a reason for doing or striving for this rather than that? To want something without a reason, without a motive would mean to want it without wanting it. The concept of wanting is inseparably linked to the concept of motive. Without a determining motive volition is an empty ability: only through the motive does it become active and real. It is, therefore, correct to say the human will is not 'free' to the extent that its direction is always determined by the strongest motive. But it is absurd to contrast this 'unfreedom' with a possible 'freedom of will' that amounts to being able to want what one does not want.”

[13] Here again only motives in general are discussed, without taking into account the difference between conscious and unconscious motivations. If a motive affects me, and I am compelled to act because it proves to be the "strongest" from among other motives, then the thought of freedom ceases to have any meaning. Why should it matter to me whether I can do something or not, if I am forced by the motive to do it? The primary question is not whether I can or cannot do something once the motive has influenced me, but whether all motives work with inescapable necessity. If I am forced to will something, then I may be completely indifferent as to whether I can also do it. And if, because of my character and the circumstances prevailing in my environment, a motive is forced on me that I find unreasonable, then I would be glad if I am unable to do it.

[14] The question is not whether I can carry out a decision once made, but how the decision comes about within me.

### **1.8 Unconditioned Will**

[15] What distinguishes humans from all other living things is rational thinking. Activity we have in common with other creatures. Seeking analogies for human action in the animal kingdom does not help to clarify the concept of freedom. Modern science loves such analogies. When scientists succeed in finding among animals something similar to human behavior, they believe this has something to do with the most important question of the science of man. To what misunderstandings this view leads is seen, for example, in Paul Rée's book, *The Illusion of Free Will*. Rée says the following on the subject of freedom:

"It is easy to explain why it appears to us the movement of a stone is by necessity, while the will of the donkey is not. The causes that set the stone in motion are external and visible. But the causes that determine the donkey's acts of will are internal and invisible. Between us and the place where they occur is the donkey's skull... We cannot see the determining cause, and so believe it does not exist. The will, they tell us, is indeed the cause of the donkey's turning around, but is itself unconditioned; it is an absolute beginning."

Here too, human actions in which there is consciousness of the reasons is ignored. Rée explains: "between us and the place where they occur is the donkey's skull." As these words show it has not dawned on Rée that there are actions, not of the donkey but of the human being, where between us and the deed lies the motive that has become conscious. A few pages later Rée demonstrates the same blindness when he says: "We do not perceive the causes that determine our will and so believe it is not causally determined at all."

[16] But enough of examples proving many argue against freedom without knowing what freedom really is.

### **1.9 Known Reason**

[17] Obviously, an action cannot be free if the doer carries it out without knowing why. But what are we to say of the freedom of an action when the reasons are known? This leads us to the question: What is the origin of our thoughts and what does it mean to think? For without knowledge of the thinking

activity of the mind, it is impossible to form a concept of knowledge, of what it means to know something, including what it means to know the reason for an action. When we have a general understanding of what it means to think, it will be easy to see clearly the role thinking plays in human action. As Hegel rightly says,

"It is thinking that turns the soul, common to us and animals, into spirit."

And this is why it is thinking that gives to human action its characteristic stamp.

### **1.10 Force Of Heart**

[18] By no means should it be said that all our actions proceed only from the calm deliberations of our reason. I am not suggesting that only actions resulting from abstract judgment alone, are human in the highest sense. But the moment our conduct rises above the satisfying of purely animal desires, our motives are always shaped by thoughts. Love, compassion, and patriotism are driving forces for deeds that cannot be explained away with cold intellectual concepts. It is said that here the heart prevails. No doubt. But the heart does not create the motives of action. Motives are present prior to being received into the heart's domain. Compassion appears in my heart after the thought of a person who arouses compassion has appeared in my mind. The way to the heart is through the head.

### **1.11 Idolized Love**

Love is no exception. Whenever love is not merely the expression of the sexual drive, it depends on the thoughts we form of the beloved. The more idealistic these thoughts are, the more blissful is our love. Here, too, thought is the father of feeling.

### **1.12 See Good Qualities**

It is said that love makes us blind to the flaws of the loved one. But we can turn this around and say love opens our eyes to the good qualities of the loved one. Many pass by these good qualities without noticing them. One, however, sees them, and just because he does, love awakens in his heart. What he has done is form a perception-picture that includes the good qualities that others have ignored. Others do not experience love because they lack the perception-picture.

[19] From whatever point we approach this subject, one thing becomes more and more clear. An investigation into the origin of our thoughts must come before we can answer the question concerning the nature of human action. So I will turn to this next.

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## **2. THE FUNDAMENTAL DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE**

Two souls alas! reside within my breast,  
And each withdraws from and repels the other;  
One is bound to the world in hearty lust for love,  
With clutching organs clinging to the earth;  
The other soars, rising from the gloom,  
Ever wings its voyage to lofty regions of ancient heritage.  
(Goethe, Faust)

### **2.0 Separation Of Self And World**

[1] With these words Goethe expresses a characteristic deeply rooted in human nature. The human being is not organized into a self-contained unified whole. We always demand more than what the world itself offers. Nature gives us needs, among them are some left to our own activity to satisfy. Abundant are the gifts we have received, yet more abundant are our desires. We seem born to be dissatisfied. A special case of this dissatisfaction is our desire to know.

We look twice at a tree. The first time we see its branches at rest, the second time in motion. We are not satisfied with this observation. Why, we ask, does the tree appear first at rest and then in motion? Every



look at the natural world raises questions. Every phenomenon we meet is a new problem to be solved. Every experience is a riddle. We observe a creature similar to the mother animal emerging from the egg, and ask the reason for this similarity. We observe a living being grow and develop to a certain degree of perfection, and seek the underlying causes. Nowhere are we satisfied with what nature displays before our senses. We look everywhere for what we call an explanation of the facts.

[2] The something more we seek in things, exceeds what is given to us in immediate observation. What we add splits our entire existence into two parts. We become conscious of our opposition to the world. We place ourselves over against the world as an independent being. The universe appears to us as two opposing sides: Self and World.

[3] We erect this wall of separation between ourselves and the world as soon as consciousness lights up within us. But we never lose the feeling we belong to the world, that a bond connects us to it, and that we are beings whose place is not outside, but within the universe.

[4] This feeling makes us strive to bridge the opposition. And in the final analysis the entire spiritual striving of humankind consists in bridging this antithesis. The history of the spiritual life is a continuous quest for the unity between ourselves and the world. This aim is pursued equally by religion, art, and science. The religious believer is dissatisfied with the world of mere appearance. He seeks in the revelations granted him by God, the solution to the world problem which his Self sets before him. The artist seeks to embody into his material the Ideas of his Self, in order to reconcile the spirit that lives in him with the outer world. He, too, feels dissatisfied with the world of mere appearance and seeks to mold into it that something more which his Self, transcending mere appearance, contains. The thinker seeks the laws at work in the world of phenomena. He strives to penetrate with thinking what he learns by observing. Only when we have made the world-content into our thought-content, do we find again the unity from which we have separated ourselves. We will see later this goal can only be reached when the task of scientific research is understood on a deeper level than is usually the case.

The whole of what I have described here is found historically in the contrast between the one-world view, or Monism, and the two-world view, or Dualism. Dualism pays attention only to the separation between Self and World brought about by human consciousness. Its whole effort is a futile struggle to reconcile these two sides, which it calls Mind and Matter, Subject and Object, or Thought and Appearance. The Dualist feels there must be a bridge between the two worlds, but is incapable of finding it.

Monism pays attention only to the unity and tries either to deny or to gloss over the opposites, present though they are. Neither of these two points of view can satisfy us, for they do not do justice to the facts. The Dualist sees in Mind (Self) and Matter (World) two essentially different entities, and cannot therefore understand how they can interact with one another. How should Mind be aware of what goes on in Matter, seeing that the essential nature of Matter is quite alien to Mind? Or how in these circumstances should Mind act upon Matter, so as to translate its intentions into actions? The most absurd hypotheses have been propounded to answer these questions.

The position of the Monists, so far, has not been much better. They have tried three different solutions. Either they deny Mind and become Materialists; or they deny Matter in order to seek their salvation as Spiritualists. Or else they claim Mind and Matter are inseparably united even in the world's simplest entities, so it is not surprising to find these two forms of existence present in the human being, since after all, they are never found apart.

## **2.1 Materialism**

[5] Materialism can never provide a satisfactory explanation of the world. For every attempt at an explanation must begin by forming thoughts about the phenomena of the world. So Materialism starts with thoughts about Matter and material processes. In doing so, it already has two different kinds of facts before it: the material world and the thoughts about it. The Materialist tries to understand thought by regarding it as a purely material process. He believes thinking takes place in the brain in much the

same way digestion takes place in the animal organs. Just as he attributes mechanical, chemical, and organic processes to Matter, so he credits it in certain circumstances with the ability to think. He overlooks that all he has done is shift the problem to another place. The Materialist attributes the power of thinking to Matter, instead of to himself. And this brings him back to his starting point. How does Matter come to reflect upon its own nature? Why is it not perfectly content to be the way it is, and simply go on existing as it is? The Materialist has turned his attention away from the identifiable subject, from his own Self, and instead occupies himself with the nebulous and indeterminate nature of Matter. Here the same problem comes up again. The materialistic viewpoint cannot solve the problem, it can only shift it to another place.

## **2.2 Spiritualism**

[6] What of the Spiritualistic view? The Spiritualist denies Matter (the World) any independent existence and conceives it as merely a product of Mind (the Self). He considers the whole phenomenal world to be nothing more than a fabric woven by Mind out of itself. From all that it achieves by its own spiritual effort, the material world is never found. This conception of the world finds itself in difficulties as soon as it attempts to produce from Mind any single concrete phenomenon. It cannot do this either in knowledge or in action, as long as it regards its own nature as exclusively spiritual. It seems as if the Ego had to concede that the world would be a closed book to it, unless it could establish a non-spiritual relation to the world.

## **2.3 Realism**

If one would really know the external world, one must turn one's eye outwards and acquire experience. Without experience Mind can have no content. Similarly, when we carry out actions, we have to realize our intentions on the real, practical level with the help of material things and forces. In other words, we are dependent on the external world.

## **2.4 Idealism**

The most extreme Spiritualist or, better said, Idealist, is Johann Gottlieb Fichte. He attempts to derive the whole edifice of the world from the "Ego." What he has actually accomplished is a magnificent thought-picture of the world without any empirical content. As little as it is possible for the Materialist to do away with the Mind, just as little is it possible for the Idealist to do away with the external world.

## **2.5 Materialistic Idealism**

[7] A curious variant of Idealism is the theory of F. A. Lange presented in his widely read "History of Materialism." Lang accepts that the Materialists are right in declaring all phenomena in the world, including our thought, to be the product of purely material processes. Conversely, he also accepts that Matter and its processes are the product of thinking.

"The senses give us only sense-effects... the effects that things have on them, not true copies, and certainly not the things themselves. But among these mere effects we must include the senses themselves together with the brain and the molecular movements within it."

This would mean our thinking is produced by material processes, and material processes are produced by our thinking. When translated into concepts, Lange's philosophy is a conceptual paradox. This makes it an equivalent to the tale of the bold Baron Münchhausen, who holds himself up in the air by his own pigtail.

## **2.6 Indivisible Entity**

[8] The third form of Monism is the one that finds, even at the simplest level of existence (the atom) Matter and Mind already united. But nothing is gained by this either, for here again the question that actually originates in our consciousness is shifted to another place. How does the simple entity come to manifest itself in two different ways if it is an indivisible unity?

## **2.7 Contrast Self**

[9] Contrary to all these points of view is a fact that must be emphasized. It is in our own consciousness that we first encounter the basic and primal polarity. It is we, ourselves, who break away from the mother ground of Nature and contrast ourselves as "Self" in opposition to the "World." Goethe has

given classical expression to this in his essay "Nature", even though his way of speaking may sound at first completely unscientific. "Living in the midst of her (nature), yet are we strangers to her. Ceaselessly she speaks to us, yet betrays not her secrets." But Goethe also knows the other side: "Human beings are all within her, and she in each of them."

### **2.8 Feel Nature**

[10] It is true we have estranged ourselves from Nature, yet at the same time we feel we exist within Nature and belong to her. This feeling can only be due to the outer workings of nature living also in us.

### **2.9 Essence Within**

[11] We must find the way back to her. A simple reflection can show us the way. While it is true we have torn ourselves away from Nature, we retain something of her in our own being. We must seek out this essence of Nature in us, and then we will discover our connection with her once more. Dualism fails to do this. It considers the human mind a spiritual entity entirely foreign to Nature and attempts somehow to attach it on to Nature. No wonder it cannot find the connecting link. We can find nature outside us only if we first know her within us. What corresponds to nature within us will be our guide. This marks out our path of inquiry. We will not speculate about how Nature and Mind interact. Instead, we will probe into the depths of our own being, to find there the elements we retained in our flight from Nature.

### **2.10 Something More Than "I"**

[12] The investigation of our own being must bring us the solution to the problem. We must reach a point where we can say, "Here we are no longer merely 'I', here is something more than 'I'."

### **2.11 Description Of Experience**

[13] I expect some who have read this far will not find my presentation to be in accordance with "the present standing of scholarship." I can only reply that I have not been concerned with scholarship of any kind, but rather with simple descriptions of what we all experience in our own consciousness. The inclusion of a few statements about attempts to reconcile Mind and the World have been used only to clarify the actual facts. For this reason, I have not found it necessary to use terms such as 'Self', 'Mind', 'World', 'Nature' etc. in the precise way that is usual in Psychology and Philosophy.

### **2.12 Facts Without Interpretation**

Ordinary consciousness does not know the sharp distinctions of scholarship. So far my purpose has been solely to record the facts of how we experience everyday life. To object that the above discussions have not been scholarly would be like quarreling with the reciter of a poem for failing to accompany every line at once with aesthetic criticism. I am not concerned with how scholarship has interpreted consciousness, but with how we experience it from moment to moment.

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## **3. THINKING AS THE INSTRUMENT OF KNOWLEDGE**

### **3.0 Thinker Predicts**

[1] WHEN I observe how a billiard ball, when struck, transfers its motion to another ball, I remain completely without influence over the course of this observed event. The direction and velocity of the second ball is determined by the direction and velocity of the first. As long as I remain a mere spectator, I can say nothing about the motion of the second ball until after it has happened. The situation is different when I begin to reflect on the content of my observation. The purpose of my reflection is to establish the concepts of the event. I connect the concept of an elastic ball with other concepts of mechanics, and take into account the special circumstances of this event. I try, in other words, to add to the process that takes place without my participation, a second process that takes place in the conceptual realm. The conceptual process depends on me. This is shown by the fact that I can remain content with the observation, and not make the effort to search for concepts if I have no need of

them. But if the need is present, then I am not content until I have brought the concepts ball, elasticity, motion, impact, velocity, etc., into a certain connection with each other so they apply to the observed event. As certain as it is that the observed event takes place independently of me, it is just as certain that the conceptual process is dependent on my active involvement for it to take place.

[2] We will discuss later whether this thinking activity of mine really expresses my own independent being, or whether physiologists are right in saying I cannot think as I wish, but must think in the way determined by the thoughts and thought-connections that happen to be present in my mind at any given moment. (Theodor Ziehen, Principles of Physiological Psychology). At this point we only wish to establish the fact that we constantly feel compelled to seek for concepts and connections of concepts that relate in a specific way to the objects and events given independently of us. Whether this thinking activity is really ours, or whether we carry it out according to an unalterable necessity, is a question we will leave aside for now. That it initially appears to be our activity is undeniable. We know for certain the corresponding concepts are not given at the same time and together with the objects. That I am myself the active one in the conceptual process may an illusion, but to immediate observation it appears so. The question is: "What do we gain by finding a conceptual counterpart to an event?"

[3] There is a far reaching difference in the way the details of an event relate to one another before, and after, the discovery of the corresponding concepts. Mere observation can follow the parts of a given event as they occur, but their connection remains obscure without the help of concepts. I see the first billiard ball move toward the second in a certain direction and with a certain velocity. What will happen after the impact I cannot tell in advance. I must wait to see what will happen, and can still now only follow it with my eyes. Suppose someone, at the moment of impact, obstructs my view of the field where the event is taking place. As a mere spectator, I will know nothing of what happens next. The situation is very different if, before my view is obstructed, I have already discovered the concepts corresponding to the details of the event. In that case I can predict what will happen, even when I am no longer able to observe it. There is nothing in a merely observed object or event that reveals anything about its connection to other objects and events. This connection only becomes evident when observation is combined with thought.

[4] Observation and thinking are the two points of departure for all human spiritual striving, insofar as one is consciously striving. Everyday common sense as well as the most complicated scientific research, rest on these two fundamental pillars of our mind. Philosophers have started from various primal opposing sides such as Idea and Reality, Subject and Object, Appearance and Thing-in-itself, Ego and Non-Ego, Idea and Will, Concept and Matter, Force and Substance, the Conscious and the Unconscious. However, it is easy to show that the opposition between observation and thought must precede all others, as the most important antithesis for the human being.

[5] Whatever principle we wish to establish, we must either prove we have observed it somewhere, or we must express it in the form of clear thought that can be rethought by others. Every philosopher setting out to explain his fundamental principles must express them in conceptual form, and so use thought. By doing so he indirectly admits his philosophical activity already presumes thought, which is taken for granted. Nothing is being said yet about whether thought or something else is the main factor in the development of the world. But it is clear from the start that, without thought, philosophers can gain no knowledge of this development. Thought may only play a supporting role in the occurrence of world-events, but it surely plays a leading role in forming a view of these events.

[6] As for observation, we need it because of the nature of our organization. Our thought about a horse and the object "horse" are two things that appear to us separate from each another. The object is accessible to us only through observation. As little as we can formulate a concept of a horse by merely staring at it, just as little can we magically conjure up the object horse by merely thinking of it.

### **3.1 Exceptional State**

[7] In sequence of time, observation actually comes before thought. For even thought we must first learn to know by means of observation. It was essentially a description of an observation when, at the

beginning of this chapter, we showed how thought is kindled by an objective process (billiard event) and goes beyond what is given, transcending the event. It is through observation that we first become aware of whatever enters the circle of our experience. The content of our sensations, perceptions, opinions, our feelings, acts of will, dreams and imaginations, memory images, concepts and Ideas, illusions and hallucinations, are all given to us through observation.

[8] As an object of observation thought differs essentially from all other things. The observation of a table or a tree occurs as soon as these objects enter the horizon of my experience. Yet I do not, at the same time, observe my thought about these things. I observe the table, and I carry on a process of thought about the table, but I do not at the same moment observe this thought process. If I want to observe the table while at the same time observe my thoughts about it, I have to remain in a place outside any activity of my own.

While the observation of things and events, and thinking about them, is the everyday state that occupies my normal life, the observation of the thoughts themselves require entering an exceptional state. It is important to understand the exceptional state, because we are going to compare thought, as an object of observation, to all other observed things. We must be clear that when we observe thought we apply the same method we use to study all other world-content, but which in the ordinary course of that study is usually not applied to thought itself.

### **3.2 Active Thinking**

[9] Someone might object that what I have noted here about thinking is equally true of feeling and all other activities of the mind. For example, a feeling of pleasure is also kindled by the object and it is this object I observe, not the feeling of pleasure.

This objection does not hold, because a concept established by thinking is related to what is observed in a completely different way than a pleasure is. I am definitely aware that a concept of a thing is formed by my own activity, while pleasure just happens to me. Pleasure is aroused by an object in the same way as a change is caused in an object by a stone falling on it. To observation, a pleasure is given, in exactly the same way as the event that causes it. It is not the same with concepts. I can ask why an event arouses a feeling of pleasure in me. But I certainly cannot ask why an event calls up a certain set of concepts in me. The question would simply make no sense.

When I am reflecting about an event, I am not concerned with how it affects me. I learn nothing at all about myself by knowing the concepts corresponding to the observed change in a pane of glass caused by a stone thrown against it. But I learn a great deal about my personality when I know the feeling that an event arouses in me. If I say of an observed object, "This is a rose," I say nothing about myself. But if I say of the rose, "It gives me a feeling of pleasure," I characterize not only the rose, but also myself in my relationship to the rose.

### **3.3 Contemplate Object**

[10] There can be no question, then, that thought and feeling are not on the same level when compared as objects of observation. The same could easily be shown for all other activities of the human mind. Unlike thought, they belong in the same category as other observed objects and events. It is part of the unique nature of thinking that it is an activity directed solely on the observed object, and not on the personality who is engaged in the thinking. This is evident even in the way we express our thoughts about an object, in contrast to the way we express our feelings or acts of will. If I see an object and recognize it as a table, I do not normally say, "I am thinking of a table", but rather, "This is a table." Yet I could certainly say "I am pleased with the table." In the first case I am not interested in expressing my relationship with the table, but in the second case it is just this relationship that I am drawing attention to. If I say, "I am thinking of a table," I have already entered into the exceptional state described above. From this position something always present in our mental activity is observed, although normally it is not noticed.

[11] The unique nature of thought is that the thinker forgets thinking when actually doing it. What occupies his attention is not thought, but rather the object he is observing while he is thinking.

[12] The first thing we notice about thought is that it is the unobserved element in our normal mental life.

[13] The reason why we do not notice the thinking that goes on in our everyday mental life is none other than this: thinking is our own activity. What I do not originate appears as something 'objectively there' in my field of observation. I see myself before something that is not of my doing. I confront it. I must accept it before I begin my thinking-process. While I am reflecting on the object, I am absorbed in it, my attention is focused on it. To focus the attention on the object is, in fact, to contemplate it by thought. This is thinking contemplation. My attention is not directed toward my activity, but rather toward the object of this activity. In other words, when I think, I do not see the thinking I am producing. I only see the object I am thinking about, which I did not produce.

### **3.4 Contemplate Thought**

[14] I am in exactly the same position when I enter the exceptional state and think about my own thinking. I can never observe my present thinking. Only afterward can the past experience of my thought process be made into the object of fresh thinking.

If I want to watch about my present thinking, I would have to split myself into two persons: one to think, and the other to observe this thinking. This I cannot do. I can only accomplish it in two separate acts. The thinking to be observed is never the current one actively being produced, but another one. For this purpose, it makes no difference whether I observe my own earlier thoughts, or follow the thought process of another person or, as in the above example of the motion of billiard balls, set up an imagined thought process.

[15] There are two things that do not go together: productive activity and confronting this activity in contemplation. It is not possible to create and contemplate at the same time. This is recognized even in the First Book of Moses. In the first six days God is represented as creating the world, and only after the world is there is contemplation of it possible: "And God saw everything that he had made and, behold, it was very good." The same applies to our thinking. It must first be there before we can observe it.

### **3.5 Know Concept**

[16] There is a reason why it is impossible to observe the thought process while it is presently taking place. It is the same reason that makes it possible for us to know it more directly, and more intimately than any other process in the world.

It is just because we produce the thought process through our own creative activity, that we know the characteristic features of its course, and the details of how the process has taken place. What can be discovered only indirectly in all other fields of observation,— the factually corresponding context and the connection between the single objects—in the case of thought is known to us in an absolutely direct way.

Without going beyond the observed phenomena, I cannot know why thunder follows lightning. But I know immediately, from the content of the two concepts, why my thought connects the concept of thunder with the concept of lightning. The point being made here does not depend on whether I have the correct concepts of lightning and thunder. The connection between those concepts that I do have is clear to me, and is so through the concepts themselves.

### **3.6 Pure Thinking**

[17] This transparent clarity of the thought process is completely independent of our knowledge of the physiological basis of thought. I am speaking here of thought when we make our own mental activity the object of observation. For this purpose I am not concerned with how one physical process in my brain causes or influences another while I carry out a thought operation. What I observe in studying a thought process is not what process in my brain connects the concept lightning with the concept thunder. I observe my reason for bringing these two concepts into a certain relationship. Introspection shows that in linking thought with thought I am guided by the content of my thoughts. I am not guided by physical processes in the brain.

In a less materialistic age this remark would of course be entirely unnecessary. But today—when there are people who believe that once we know what matter is, we will know how matter thinks—it is necessary to point out that we can discuss thinking without entering the field of brain physiology. Most people find it difficult to grasp the concept of pure thinking. Anyone who counters the idea of thinking I have developed here with the assertion of Cabanis' that "the brain secretes thoughts as the liver does gall or the salivary ducts saliva . . .", simply does not know what I am talking about. Such a person is trying to find thought in the brain by the normal method of observation, in the same way we approach other objects in the world. But, as I have shown, thought cannot be found in this way because it eludes normal observation.

Whoever is unable to enter the exceptional state I have described cannot transcend Materialism and become conscious of what in all other mental activity remains unconscious. If someone lacks the willingness to look at thinking from this position, then one can no more discuss thought with him than one can discuss color with someone born blind. But he should certainly not imagine that we consider physiological processes to be thinking. He fails to explain thinking because he simply does not see it.

### **3.7 "I" Think**

[18] For everyone who has the ability to observe thought—and with the willingness, every normal person has this ability—this observation is the most important that can be made. What he observes is his own creation. He is not facing something that is, at first, unfamiliar to him. He faces his own activity. He knows how it comes about. He clearly sees into its conditions and relationships. He gains a secure point of reference from which he can seek, with a reasonable hope of success, the explanation for all other world phenomena.

[19] The feeling of having found such a firm foundation caused the founder of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes, to base the whole of human knowledge on the principle, "I think, therefore I am." All other things, all other events, are there independent of me. I do not know whether they are truth, or illusion, or dream. There is only one thing I know with absolute certainty, for I myself bring it to its sure and undisputed existence: my thinking. Perhaps it has another ultimate source. Perhaps it comes from God or from somewhere else, I cannot be sure. I am sure of one thing, it exists because I produced it myself. Descartes had no justification for giving his principle any other meaning than this. All he had a right to assert was that it is only in thinking that I grasp myself, standing within the world-whole, in the activity that is the most my own.

What the added words "therefore I am" is intended to mean has often been debated. It only makes sense on one condition. The simplest statement I can make about a thing is that it is, that it exists. What kind of existence it has cannot be more closely defined at first sight, in the first moment it appears within the range of my experience. Each object must first be studied in its relationship to other things, before we can determine the way it exists. An experienced event may be a series of perceptions, but it could also be a dream, a hallucination, and so on. Within only a brief moment, I am unable to say in what way it exists. I cannot read the kind of existence from the event itself, but I can learn this when I consider the event in relation to other things. But even then, I learn nothing more than how it relates to these other things.

My search reaches firm ground only when I find an object, from which I can derive the reason of its existence from the object itself. This I am, as a thinker; for I give to my existence the defining, self-supporting content of my thinking activity. From here I can go on to ask: "Do other things exist in the same, or in some other way?"

### **3.8 Realm Of Thought**

[20] When we make thought an object of observation, we add something to the rest of the world's observed content that normally escapes our notice. But we do not change the method of observation, which is the same as we use for other things. We increase the number of observed objects, but not the number of methods.

A process is overlooked when we observe other things. This process mingles with world-events and intermixes with the observation process itself. Something is present that is different than every other kind of process, and is not taken into account. But when I observe my thinking, there ceases to be an unnoticed element present. For what hovers in the background is, again, nothing but thought. The observed object is qualitatively the same as the activity directed upon it. This is another special characteristic of thought. When we observe thought, we are not compelled to do so with the help of something qualitatively different. We remain within the same element; the realm of thought.

[21] When I weave a web of thoughts around an object given independently of me, I go beyond my observation. Then the question becomes: What right do I have to do this? Why don't I just passively let the object make its impression on me? How is it possible for my thought to be related to the object? These are questions everyone who reflects on his own thought must ask. All these questions vanish when we think about thinking itself. We then add nothing unfamiliar to our thought, and so there is no need to justify such an addition.

### **3.9 Create Thought**

[22] Schelling says: "To know Nature is to create Nature." Anyone who takes these words of the daring Nature philosopher literally, must renounce forever all hope of gaining knowledge of Nature because, after all, Nature already exists. To re-create it over again, one must know the principles according to how it originated. From the Nature that already exists, one would have to copy the conditions of existence, and apply them to the Nature one wished to re-create. But this copying, which has to precede the re-creating, is to already have a knowledge of Nature, and remains this even if no re-creation follows. To create a Nature different from what already exists, one would have to create it without applying prior knowledge of existing Nature.

[23] What is impossible with Nature—creation prior to knowledge—we achieve in the act of thinking. If we wait to think until we already know it, we would never think at all. We must resolutely dive straight into thinking and only afterward, by introspective analysis, gain knowledge of what we have done. We ourselves first create thought, which we then make the object of observation. All other objects are there without any activity on our part.

[24] Someone could easily counter my contention that we must think before we can observe thought, with the claim of an equally valid contention, "We must digest before we can observe the process of digestion." A similar objection was made by Pascal to Descartes, claiming one could just as well say, "I walk, therefore I am." Certainly I must also go straight into digesting and not wait until I have studied the physiological process of digestion. But this could only be compared with the analysis of thought if, after digesting, I did not analyze it by thinking, but were to eat and digest it. There is good reason for the fact that digestion cannot become the object of digestion, but thought can very well become the object of thinking.

[25] There is then no doubt, that in thinking we consider world-events from a point that requires our presence if anything is to happen. And this is exactly what is important. The reason why things seem so puzzling is because I am so uninvolved in their coming about. I simply find them before me. But with thought I know how it is brought about. This is why there can be no more fundamental starting-point for the study of any world-event than thinking.

### **3.10 Self-Supporting Thought**

[26] Here I will mention a widespread error concerning thinking. It is often said that, "We never experience thought as it truly is, in its real nature. Thought connects our observations with one another, and weaves them together with a network of concepts." But they say, "These thoughts are not at all the same as what our analysis later extracts from the objects we observe, and make into the object of study. What we first unconsciously weave into things", so we are told, "is something entirely different from what we then consciously draw back out."

[27] Those who hold this view do not realize it is impossible to escape from thought. I cannot get outside thought when I want to contemplate it. If one makes a distinction between thought before and



after becoming conscious of it, one should not forget this distinction is purely external and irrelevant to our discussion. I do not in any way alter a thing by thinking about it. I can imagine that a being with different sense organs and a differently functioning intelligence would have a very different idea of a horse than mine. But I cannot imagine that my own thought becomes something else because I observe it. I myself observe what I myself produce. We are not discussing how my thought appears to an intelligence other than mine, but how it appears to me. In any case, the idea another mind forms of my thought cannot be truer than the one I form myself. If the thinking is not my own, but instead the activity of a different being, my idea of this being's thought will occur in a certain way. But I could not know the real nature of what another being's thought was like in itself.

[28] I can see no reason why I should consider my thought from any other point of view than my own. I contemplate the rest of the world by means of thought. Why should I make an exception for the contemplation of my thought?

[29] With this, I think I have sufficiently justified making thought the starting-point in my approach to understanding the world. When Archimedes invented the lever, he thought he could use it to lift the whole cosmos out of its hinges, if he could only find a secure point of support to set his instrument. He needed something that was self-supporting, not dependent on anything else. In thought we have a principle of self-subsistence, it is composed by means of itself. From this principle let us attempt to understand the world. Thought can be grasped by thought. The only question is whether we can grasp anything else by means of thought.

### **3.11 Examination Of Thinking**

[30] So far I have spoken of thought without considering what conveys it; human consciousness. Most of today's philosophers would object that there must be consciousness before there can be thought. According to them, "We should start from consciousness rather than thought. There would be no thought without consciousness." To this I would reply that to understand the relationship between thought and consciousness, I must think about it. This requires I start with thought.

In response one can say, "When the philosopher wishes to understand consciousness, he makes use of thought, and to that extent thought comes first. But in the normal course of life thought arises within consciousness, so consciousness does precede thought." If this answer were given to the creator of the world, when it was about to create thought, then it would no doubt be entirely justified. Of course thought cannot arise before there is consciousness. For the philosopher, however, it is not a question of creating the world, but of understanding it. He is in search of the starting-point, not for creating, but for understanding the world.

I find it odd that a philosopher is criticized for being concerned first and foremost with the correctness of his principles. They expect him to turn immediately to the objects he wishes to understand. The world-creator, before everything else, had to know how to find a vehicle for thought. But the philosopher has to find a secure foundation for understanding what already exists. What good does it do to start with consciousness and subject it to our thinking, without first knowing whether thoughtful contemplation can offer insight into things?

[31] We must first examine thinking in a completely impartial way, without reference to a thinking subject or a thought object. For in subject and object we already have concepts formed by thinking. There is no denying that thinking must be understood before anything else can be understood. Anyone who denies this overlooks the fact that he, as a human being, does not belong to the beginning of creation, but to its end. To explain the world by means of concepts, we cannot start from the earliest elements of existence. We must begin with the nearest element given to us, what is most intimately ours. We cannot, with a leap, take ourselves back to the beginning of the world, and begin our analysis there. Instead, we must start from the present moment and see whether we can advance from the later to the earlier.

As long as Geology spoke of catastrophe fables to explain the present condition of the earth, it groped in darkness. Only when it began to investigate those processes that are still active in the earth today,

and from these reason backward to draw conclusions about the past, did it gain secure ground. Likewise, Philosophy will get nowhere as long as it is based on all kinds of principles such as atom, motion, matter, will, the unconscious, and so on. It will remain suspended in the air. The philosopher can reach his goal only when he takes the last thing in time as the first in theory. His starting-point must be what comes into existence last. And the absolutely last thing produced in the world-process is thought.

### **3.12 Rightness Of Thought**

[32] There are people who say we cannot know for certain whether our thought is right or wrong. So our starting-point remains a doubtful one. This is as sensible as saying it is doubtful whether a tree in itself is right or wrong. Thought is a fact and it is meaningless to speak of a fact as being right or wrong.

At most I can have doubts about whether thought is rightly applied. In the same way I can have doubts whether a certain tree will provide the right wood suitable for the intended purpose of a tool being made. It is the task of this book to show how far the application of thought to the world is a right application or a wrong one.

I can understand someone doubting whether we can know the world by means of thought. But I find it incomprehensible how anyone can doubt the rightness of thought, when it is considered by itself.

### **Addition (1918)**

[1] The preceding discussion points to the importance of the significant difference between thinking and all other activities of mind. This difference reveals itself to unprejudiced observation. Anyone who does not strive to see the facts without preconception, will be tempted to raise objections. Such as: "When I think about a rose this only expresses a relationship between my 'I' and the rose. It is the same when I feel the beauty of the rose. A relationship exists between 'I' and object in thinking precisely as a relationship exists between 'I' and object in feeling or perceiving."

This objection fails to take into account that only in the activity of thinking does the 'I', or Ego, know itself to be completely the one that is active. The Ego stands within the activity of thinking right into all its branches and ramifications. With no other activity is this so completely the case. For example, when pleasure is felt it is easy for a careful observer to distinguish to what extent the Ego knows itself to be active, and to what extent it is passive. This observation of feeling shows that the Ego is passive. The feeling merely happens to the Ego. And this applies to all other activities of the mind. But we must not confuse "having thought-images" with working out ideas by means of thinking. Thought-images can arise in the mind in a dreamy way, or as vague intuitions. This is not thinking.

"True," someone might say, "but if this is what you mean by thinking, then thinking contains willing. And in that case we are dealing not only with thinking, but also the will to think." This, however, would simply justify us in saying: Genuine thinking must always be willed. This fact is taken for granted in our previous characterization of thinking. Though the true nature of thinking requires that it always be willed, there is a more important point. The point here is that everything willed appears before the Ego, as it takes place, as an activity completely its own and under its own supervision. Precisely because this is the essential nature of thinking as defined here, it shows itself to the observer as willed through and through. To make an objective appraisal of thinking requires one to master all the relevant facts. Then one will recognize that this mental activity has the unique character as described.

[2] A person highly valued as a thinker by the author of this book has raised an objection. He said one cannot speak of thinking as I have done here, because what we believe we observe as active thinking is only an appearance. In reality, one only observes the results of an unconscious activity underlying thinking. Only because this unconscious activity is not observed, does the illusion arise that the thinking we observe exists independently. In the same way, a rapid succession of electric sparks deceives us into believing we see motion.

This objection is also based on an inexact view of the facts. It overlooks that it is the Ego itself that, standing within thinking, observes its own activity. To be deceived, as we are by the rapid succession of electric sparks, the Ego would have to be outside thinking. Now we could say instead: "Anyone who makes such a comparison willfully deceives himself. It is like someone claiming that a light perceived to be in motion is lit by an unknown hand at every point where it appears." —No, the plain facts are there if one looks. Thinking is an activity produced within the Ego and clearly supervised by the Ego. In order to invent a hypothetical activity as the basis of thinking, one must first blind himself to these facts.

If he does not willfully blind himself, he must recognize that all these "hypothetical additions" to thinking lead him away from its real nature. Unprejudiced observation shows that only what is found within thinking can be regarded as belonging to it. It is impossible to discover the cause of thinking by going outside the realm of thought.

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## 4. THE WORLD AS PERCEPTION

### 4.0 Thinking Reacts To Observation

[1] Concepts and Ideas are formed by thinking. What a concept is cannot be expressed in words. Words can only draw our attention to the fact we have concepts. When someone sees a tree, his thinking reacts to his observation. An ideal element is added to the object, and the observer regards the object and Ideal complement as belonging together. When the object disappears from his field of observation, only the Ideal counterpart remains. This is the concept of the object.

The wider the range of our experience, the larger the number of our concepts. Concepts are never found in isolation. They combine to form an ordered and systematic whole. For example, the concept "organism" links up with others such as "development according to law" and "growth." Other concepts, formed from single objects, merge together into a unity. All concepts I form of particular lions merge in the universal concept "lion." In this way, all the single concepts unite to form an enclosed, conceptual system in which each has its special place. Ideas are not qualitatively different from concepts. They are filled with more content, are more complex and more comprehensive concepts.

I must emphasize here that my starting-point is thinking, not concepts and Ideas, which must first be gained by thinking. Thinking precedes concepts and Ideas. Consequently, what I have said about the nature of thought, that it is self-supporting and determined by nothing but itself, cannot simply be transferred and applied to concepts. (I make special mention of this here, as this is where I differ with Hegel, who regards the concept as the primary and original element.)

[2] Concepts cannot be drawn from observation. This is evident from the fact the growing human being only slowly and gradually builds up the concepts that correspond to the objects in his environment. Concepts are added to observation.

### 4.1 Generalize Phenomena

[3] A popular contemporary philosopher, Herbert Spencer, describes the mental process that takes place in response to observation as follows:

[4] "While wandering through fields in September you hear a rustle a few steps ahead, and see the grass moving by the side of the ditch. You will probably approach the spot to learn what caused the noise and the movement. As you approach, a partridge flutters in the ditch. Seeing this, your curiosity is satisfied; you have what we call an explanation of the phenomena.

The explanation, please notice, amounts to this: Throughout life you have learned through countless experiences that a disturbance among small stationary bodies, is accompanied by the movement of other bodies among them. Because of having generalized the relationship between disturbances and

movements, you consider this particular disturbance explained as soon as you find it to be an example of just such a relationship" (First Principles, Part I, par. 23).

A closer analysis leads to a very different description from what Spencer gives. When I hear a noise the first thing I do is search for the concept that fits this observation. Only when I have this concept am I led beyond the noise itself. Whoever does not reflect on the event simply hears the noise and is content to leave it at that. But my thought makes it clear to me that a sound must be the effect of something. Only when I connect the concept of effect with the perception of the noise am I inclined to go beyond the single observation and look for its cause. The concept "effect" calls up the concept "cause." My next step is to look for the object that acts as the cause, which I find to be a partridge. But I can never gain the concepts "cause" and "effect" by mere observation, no matter how many cases I observe. Observation calls up thought, and thought shows me how to link separate experiences together.

[5] If one demands a "strictly objective science" that draws its content from observation alone, then one must also demand that it renounce all thinking. Because thought, by its very nature, goes beyond what is observed.

#### **4.2 Thinking Reference**

[6] We must now pass from thought to the being who thinks. For it is through the thinker that thought is combined with observation. Human consciousness is the place where concept and observation meet, and are connected to each other. This is, in fact, what characterizes human consciousness. It mediates between thought and observation.

In observation the object appears as given, in thought the mind experiences itself as active. It regards the thing as the object and itself as the thinking subject. When thought is directed to the observed world we have consciousness of objects; when thought is directed to itself we have self-consciousness.

Human consciousness must of necessity be also self-consciousness, because it is a thinking consciousness. For when thought contemplates its own activity, the subject makes its own essential nature an object of study. Subject and object are here one and the same.

[7] It is important to note here that it is only by means of thinking that I am able to define myself as subject and contrast myself with objects. For this reason, thinking should never be regarded as a merely subjective activity. Thinking is above the distinction of subject and object. It produces these two concepts just as it produces all others. When I, as thinking subject, refer a concept to an object, we must not regard this referring as a purely subjective activity. It is not the subject, but thinking, that makes the reference.

The subject does not think because it is a subject; rather, it appears to itself as subject because it can think. The activity of thinking consciousness, exercised by a human being as a thinker, is therefore not merely subjective. In fact, it is an activity that is neither subjective nor objective; it transcends both concepts. I should never say that I, as an individual subject, think. The truth is that I, as subject, exist only by the grace of thought. Thought takes me out beyond my self and relates me in unity with the objects. But it also separates me from the objects by setting me over against them, to face them as subject.

[8] The basis for the dual nature of the human being is that he thinks. His thought encompasses himself along with the rest of the world. But also, by means of thought, he defines himself as an individual who confronts the world.

#### **4.3 Connect Objects**

[9] Next, we must ask ourselves: How does the other element—which we have so far simply called the 'observed object'—enter our consciousness where it comes into contact with thought?

[10] To answer this question, we must remove from our field of observation all thought that has already been brought into it. For at any moment the content of our consciousness is always pervaded with concepts in a variety of ways.

[11] Let us imagine a being with fully developed human intelligence originates out of nothing and has the world in front of him. All this being would be aware of, before its thought became active, is the pure content of observation. The world would appear to this being as a chaotic aggregate of disconnected sense-data: colors, sounds, touch, warmth, taste and smell; followed by feelings of pleasure and pain. This aggregate is the content of pure, thought-free observation.

Facing it stands thought, ready to begin its activity as soon as it can find a point of engagement. Experience shows that it soon does. Thought is able to draw connecting threads from one sense-datum to another. It unites specific concepts with these elements, and in this way establishes a relationship between them. We have already seen how a noise we encounter is brought into relationship with another observation by characterizing the first as an effect of the second.

[12] We will not be tempted to believe these relationships established by thought only have subjective validity, if we recall that in no circumstance can the activity of thought be considered merely subjective.

#### **4.4 World-Picture Corrections**

[13] Our next task is to discover, by thoughtful reflection, how the immediately given sense-data—the pure, relationless aggregate of sensory objects—is related to our conscious subject.

[14] Because of the various ways of using words, it seems necessary for me to come to an agreement with the reader on the meaning of a word that I will use from now on. The word is percept. I will use the word “percept” to refer to “the immediate objects of sensation” mentioned above, insofar as the conscious subject becomes aware of them through observation. It is the observed object, not the process of observing, that I call “percept.”

[15] I do not choose the term “sensation,” because sensation has a specific meaning in Physiology narrower than my concept of “percept.” I can call an inner feeling a percept, but not a sensation in the physiological use of the term. When I become aware of a feeling it becomes a percept for me, and I can then gain knowledge of it. And the way we gain knowledge of our thought processes, through observation, is to first notice thought. Then thought too, may be called a percept.

[16] The unreflective, naive person regards his percepts, as they first appear, to have an existence completely independent of him. When he sees a tree, he believes right away that it is standing there on the spot where his look is directed having the shape, color and details just as he sees it. From this naive standpoint, if a person sees the sun appear in the morning as a disc on the horizon, and then follows the course of this disc, he believes the phenomenon exists and occurs just as he observes it. He clings to this belief until further perceptions contradict the earlier ones. A child, with no experience of distance, reaches for the moon, and does not correct its first impression until it conflicts with later ones.

Every widening of the circle of my perceptions makes me correct my picture of the world. We see this in everyday life, as well as in the intellectual development of humanity. The picture which the ancients made of the relation of the earth to the sun and other celestial bodies, had to be changed by Copernicus, because the ancient picture did not agree with new, previously unknown perceptions. A man who had been born blind said, after an operation performed by Dr Franz, that the picture he had formed of the size of objects before his operation was a very different one. It was formed on the basis of a blind man’s perceptions of touch. He had to correct his touch percepts with his new visual percepts.

#### **4.5 Observation Corrections**

[17] Why are we forced to make continual corrections to our observations?

[18] A simple reflection provides the answer to this question. If I stand at one end of a tree-lined avenue, the trees at the far end appear smaller and closer together than those where I am standing. My perception-picture changes when I change my place of observation. Therefore, the way things appear to me is determined by a factor that has to do, not with the object, but with myself as the observer. It is all the same to the avenue where I stand. But the picture I have of it depends to a great extent on my standpoint. In the same way, it makes no difference to the sun and solar system that human beings

happen to observe them from the earth. But the perception-picture human beings have of the sun and solar system is determined by their living on the earth.

This dependence of the perception-picture on our place of observation is the easiest to understand. It becomes more difficult when we learn how our perceptual world is dependent on our bodily and mental organization. The physicist teaches us that in the space where we hear a sound, there are vibrations of the air. And in the body where the sound is emitted there are vibrations of its parts. But we only perceive these vibrations as sound if we have normally constructed ears. Without them the whole world would remain forever silent.

The physiologist teaches us there are people who perceive nothing of the wonderful display of colors surrounding us. Their perception-picture only has shades of light and dark. Others fail to perceive just one particular color, such as red. Their picture of the world lacks this color hue, and is different from the average person. I would like to call the dependency of my perception-picture on my place of observation "mathematical," and its dependency on my organization "qualitative." The first determines the relative sizes of my percepts and distances between them, the second their quality. The fact that a red surface appears to me red—this qualitative determination—depends on the structure of my eye.

#### **4.6 Subjective Perception-Picture**

[19] My perception-pictures, then, are at first subjective. The recognition of the subjective character of our percepts can easily lead us to doubt whether anything objective underlies them at all. We know that a percept, for example the color red or a certain musical tone, is only possible thanks to a specific structure of our organism. From this we can easily be led to believe that the percept, apart from our subjective organization, ceases to be. If not for our act of perceiving it as an object, it has no existence at all.

This view found its classic expression in George Berkeley, who was convinced that when we realize how significant the human subject is for the percept, we can no longer believe in a world that exists apart from a conscious mind. He says:

"Some truths are so near and so obvious to the mind man need only open his eyes to see them. One such truth is this important one: The whole choir of heaven and all things of the earth—in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world—have no subsistence outside the mind. Their sole existence is being perceived or known. Consequently, as long as they are not actually perceived by me, or exist in my mind or in that of some other created spirit, they either have no existence or subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit." (Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I, Section 6.)

From this point of view, nothing remains of the percept if we consider it apart from being perceived. There is no color when none is seen, no sound when none is heard. Outside the act of perception, categories such as extension, form, and motion exist just as little as color and sound. Nowhere do we see extension and form alone. They are always bound up with color or other qualitative elements unquestionably dependent on our subjectivity. If these disappear when we cease to perceive them, then extension and form, which are bound up with them, must disappear also.

[20] The objection can be made that, even if figure, color, sound, and so forth do not exist outside the act of perception, there must still be something else there. Something must exist independently of our consciousness and be similar to our conscious perception-pictures. The Berkeleyan response would be to say: A color can only resemble a color and a figure can only resemble a figure. Our percepts can only resemble our percepts, and nothing else.

Even what we call an object is nothing but a collection of percepts connected in a certain way. If I strip a table of its figure, extension, color, etc.—in other words everything that is only my percept—then nothing is left. Carried to its logical conclusion, this view leads to the assertion: The objects of my perception are there through me, and only insofar and as long as I am perceiving them. They disappear with the perceiving and have no meaning without it. Other than my percepts, I know of no objects and cannot know of any.

[21] To the claim that we can know only our percepts, no objection is made as long as it is only meant as a general fact that the percept is partly determined by the organization of the perceiving subject. It would be very different if we were able to determine the exact role our perceiving plays in bringing about a percept. We would then know what happens to the percept during the act of perception. And we could also determine what properties it has before it is perceived.

#### **4.7 Retain Memory-Idea**

[22] This leads us to turn our attention from the perceived object to the perceiving subject. I do not only perceive other things; I also perceive myself.

Self-perception first reveals that I am the enduring element in a continuous coming and going of perception-pictures. The awareness of myself can come up in my consciousness at any time, while I am having other perceptions. However, when I am absorbed in the perception of a given object I am, for the moment, aware only of this object. The awareness of myself can be added to this. I am then not only conscious of the object, but also of my own personality, standing over against the object and observing it. I not only see a tree; I know it is I seeing it.

I also know something goes on in me while I am observing the tree. When the tree disappears from my field of vision, an after-effect of this process remains: a picture of the tree. This picture has become associated with my Self during my observation. My Self has become enriched; a new element has been added to its content. I call this element my idea (*Vorstellung*) of the tree.

I would never be in a position to speak of ideas if I did not experience them by being aware of my Self. Percepts would come and go; I would simply let them pass by. It is only because I perceive my Self that I notice that with each perception the content of my Self, too, is changed. By noticing the connection between the observation of the object and the changes that occur in me, I then speak of having an idea.

#### **4.8 Unknowable Thing-In-itself**

[23] I perceive ideas in my Self in the same way I perceive colors, sounds, etc. in other objects. From this point of view, I can now make the further distinction of calling these other objects that confront me the outer world, while the content of my Self-observation I call my inner world.

The failure to recognize the relationship between idea and object has led to the greatest misunderstandings in modern philosophy. The perception of a change in me, the modification my Self undergoes, is thrust into the foreground, while the object causing this modification is completely lost sight of. As a consequence it is said: We do not perceive the objects, but only our ideas. I know nothing, so it is claimed, of the object of my observation; the table itself. I know only of the change that is going on within me while I am perceiving the table.

This view should not be confused with the Berkeleyan view mentioned previously. Berkeley upholds the subjective nature of my perceptual content, but he does not say I can know only my own ideas. He limits my knowledge to my ideas because, in his view, there are no objects other than ideas. What I see as a table no longer exists, according to Berkeley, when I cease to look at it. This is why for Berkeley my percepts are created directly by the power of God. I see a table because God calls forth this percept in me. For Berkeley nothing is real except God and human spirits. What we call the "world" is present only within spirits. What the naive person calls the outer world, or physical nature, does not exist according to Berkeley.

Berkeley's view stands in contrast to the currently prevailing Kantian view. This also limits our knowledge of the world to our ideas. But it does not do so because of a conviction that nothing other than ideas exist. Rather, the Kantian view believes we are organized in a way that we can learn only of the changes undergone by our own Self, not the things-in-themselves that cause them. This view draws a conclusion on the fact I can know only my ideas. According to the Kantian view, the reason we know only our ideas is not that no reality exists independent of these ideas. It is because the human subject cannot receive such a reality into itself directly. The mind can only through "the medium of its subjective thoughts imagine it, think it, cognize it, or perhaps fail to cognize it" (O. Liebmann, *Analysis*

of Reality, p. 28). Kantians believe their view expresses something absolutely certain, something immediately evident without any need of proof.

“The first fundamental principle the philosopher must clearly grasp is the recognition that our knowledge does not initially go beyond our ideas. Our ideas are the only things we experience directly and learn to know directly. The fact that we experience ideas directly means not even the most radical doubt can rob us of our knowledge of them. On the other hand, all knowledge that does go beyond my ideas—taking ideas here in the widest sense to include all psychical processes—is open to doubt. At the very beginning of all philosophy, it is necessary to state explicitly that all knowledge that goes beyond ideas is open to doubt.”

#### **4.9 My Organization Forms Perception (external object lost)**

Volkelt's book on Immanuel Kant's Theory of Knowledge begins with the statement given above. What is presented here as if it were an immediate and obvious truth, is really the result of the following thought process. "Naive common sense believes that things, just as we perceive them, also exist outside our minds. Physics, physiology and psychology, however, teach us that for perception to take place our organization is necessary. Consequently, we cannot know anything about external objects other than what our organization transmits to us. What we perceive as objects are modifications that occur in our organization, not the things themselves." This line of reasoning has been characterized by Eduard von Hartmann as leading inevitably to the conviction that we can have direct knowledge only of our ideas (see Hartmann's "Basic Problem of Theory of Knowledge", p.16-40).

##### Physics

Because outside our organism we find vibrations of physical bodies and of the air perceived by us as sound. This view reasons that what we call sound is nothing more than a subjective reaction of our organism to these motions in the external world. In the same way color and warmth are only modifications of our organism. Our percepts of warmth and color are the effects of processes in the external world. These external processes are entirely different from what we experience as warmth and color. When these processes stimulate the nerves in my skin, I perceive warmth. When they stimulate the optic nerve, I perceive light and color. Light, color, and warmth, then, are the way the nerves of my sense organs react to outside stimuli. Even the sense of touch does not transmit to me the objects of the outer world, but only conditions in myself.

The physicist thinks of bodies as consisting of infinitely small parts called molecules. These molecules are not in direct contact with each other, but have certain distances separating them. Between them is empty space. Across this space they act on each other by forces of attraction and repulsion. When I place my hand on an object, the molecules of my hand never touch the molecules of the object. There always remains a certain distance between object and hand. What I feel as the resistance of the object, is nothing other than the effect of the force of repulsion its molecules exert on my hand. I remain completely external to the object. All I perceive is its effect on my organism.

[24] An extension of this idea is the Specific Nerve Energies theory, proposed by J. Müller (1801-1858). According to this theory, each sense-organ has the peculiar quality of reacting to all external stimuli in only one specific way. Stimulation of the optic nerve results in perception of light. It does not matter whether the nerve stimulation is due to what we call light, or to mechanical pressure, or to an electric current. Conversely, the same external stimulus applied to different senses evokes different sensations. This seems to indicate that our sense-organs can transmit only what occurs within them, and transmit nothing from the outer world. The senses determine the percepts, each according to its own nature.

##### Physiology

[25] Physiology further shows there can be no direct knowledge even of the effects objects have within our sense-organs. When the physiologist follows the processes that take place in the body, he finds the effects of external motion already transformed within the sense organs in a variety of ways. We see this most clearly in the eye and the ear. Both are very complicated organs that alter the external stimulus



considerably, before conveying it to the corresponding nerve. From the peripheral nerve-ending, the already changed stimulus is transmitted further to the brain, and here the central organ is stimulated. From this, it is concluded that the external process undergoes a series of transformations before it enters consciousness.

What finally takes place in the brain is connected to the external stimuli by so many intermediate processes, any similarity between the two is out of the question. What the brain finally transmits to the human psyche is neither external processes, nor processes in the sense-organs, but only processes inside the brain. Yet even these are not perceived directly by our inner being. What we finally have in consciousness are not brain-processes at all, but sensations. My sensation of red has absolutely no similarity to the process taking place in the brain when I sense red. The redness that occurs in the mind is an effect, and the brain process is its cause. This is why Hartmann says (*The Basic Problem of Epistemology*), "What the subject perceives are always only modifications of his own psychical states and nothing else."

#### Psychology

When I have sensations, however, they are still far from being grouped into what I perceive as "things." After all, only single sensations can be transmitted to me by the brain. Sensations of "hard" and "soft" are transmitted to me by the sense of touch; color and light by the sense of sight. Yet all these are found united in one object. This unification, then, can only be brought about by our psychical nature. The psyche constructs things out of the various sensations transmitted to it by the brain. My brain conveys to me the single sensations of sight, touch and hearing by entirely different pathways. The psyche then combines the sensations to form the idea "trumpet." This final stage of the process (the idea of the trumpet) is the very first thing to enter my consciousness. In this result nothing can any longer be found of what exists outside me and made the original impression on my senses. The external object has been completely lost on the way to the brain and through the brain to the human psyche.

#### **4.10 World Is Projection Of Psyche**

[26] It would be hard to find in the history of human intellectual life an edifice of thought built up with greater ingenuity, and yet, on closer analysis, collapses into nothing. Let us look more closely at the way it has been constructed. The theory begins with what is given in naive consciousness, the thing as perceived. Then it shows that none of the qualities found in it would exist for us if we had no sense organs. No eye—no color. So color is not yet present in what affects the eye. The color first arises through the interaction of the eye with the object. The object, then, is colorless. But the color is not present in the eye either. In the eye there is a chemical or physical process that is conducted by the nerve to the brain, where it sets off another process. The process in the brain is not yet the color. The color is produced in our psychical nature by the brain process. But even here I am still not conscious of it. It is first projected outwards by our psyche onto a spatial body in the external world. Here, finally, I see the color, as a quality of this body.

We have come full circle. We have become conscious of a colored object. That comes first. Now the thought-operation begins. If I had no eyes, the object would be colorless for me. So I cannot attribute the color to the object. I go looking for it. I look for it in the eye,—in vain; in the nerve,—also in vain; in the brain,—again in vain.

Finally, I look for it in the psyche. Here I find it, but unconnected with the spatial body. I only find the colored object again—there, at the place where I started. The circle is closed. The theory leads me to believe that what the naive person thinks is existing outside him in space, is really a creation of my own psyche.

#### **4.11 Web Of Ideas**

[27] As long as one stops here, everything seems to fit perfectly. But we must go over it again from the beginning. Up to now I have been dealing with an object—the external percept. As a naive person, I had an entirely false view of it. I thought the percept, just as I perceive it, had objective existence.

Now I realize it disappears as I represent it to myself in the act of perceiving. The external percept is no more than a modification of my mental condition.

Do I still have the right to take it as a starting point for my reflections? Can I say it has an effect on my psyche? Previously I believed the table had an effect on me, and brought about an idea of itself in me. From now on I must treat the table as itself an idea. But then to be logically consistent, my sense organs and the processes going on in them must also be only subjective manifestations. I have no right to speak of a real eye, only of my idea of the eye. The same would apply to the nerve paths and the brain process. And even to the process that occurs within the psyche itself, by which things are supposedly constructed out of the chaos of various sensations.

If I go through each step of the act of cognition once again, assuming the correctness of the first circular line of thought, the cognitive act described reveals itself as a web of ideas that, as such, cannot possibly act on each other. I cannot say: My idea of the object acts on my idea of the eye, and the result of this interaction is my idea of color. But I do not need to. For as soon as it is clear to me that my sense organs and their activity, and my nerve and psychic processes, are also known to me only through perception, then the full impossibility of the described line of thought reveals itself. It is true to say: For me there is no percept without the corresponding sense organ. But it is just as true to say: There is no sense-organ without a percept of it.

From the percept of a table I can pass to the eye that sees it, to the nerves of the hand that touch it. But what takes place within these I can learn, once again, only through perception. Then I soon notice there is no trace of similarity between the process taking place in the eye and what I perceive as color. I cannot deny my color percept just because I can point out the process taking place in the eye during this perception. Nor can I find the color in the nerve and brain-processes. All I do is connect new percepts located within my organism to the first percept, which the naive person locates outside his organism. I simply pass from one percept to the next.

[28] In addition, there is a gap in the whole chain of reasoning. I can follow the processes in my organism up to those in my brain. My assumptions, though, become more and more hypothetical the closer I come to the central processes in the brain. The method of external observation ends with the process in the brain. More precisely, it ends with what I would observe if I examine the brain using the instruments and methods of Physics and Chemistry. The method of internal observation, or introspection, begins with the sensations, and continues up to the construction of things out of the material of sensation. At the point of transition from brain process to sensation, there is a break in the method of observation.

[29] The way of thinking just described, known as Critical Idealism, stands in contrast to the position of naive common sense, known as Naive Realism. The Critical Idealist makes the error of characterizing one kind of percept as an idea, while accepting the other kind in exactly the same way as the Naive Realist, whom he claims to have refuted. He sets out to prove that our percepts are representational ideas, while naively accepting the percepts belonging to his own body as objectively valid facts. What is more, he fails to see he is confusing two fields of observation, between which he can find no connecting link.

#### **4.12 Real Senses**

[30] Critical idealism can only refute Naive Realism if it accepts, in naive-realistic fashion, that one's own organism has objective existence. As soon as the Idealist realizes the percepts of his own organism are exactly the same kind as those Naive Realism assumes to have objective existence, he can no longer use those percepts as a secure foundation for his theory. He would, to be consistent, have to regard his own organism also as a mere complex of ideas. But this removes the possibility of thinking that the content of the perceived world is a product of our mental organization. One would have to accept that the idea "color" was only a modification of the idea "eye." So-called Critical Idealism cannot be proved without borrowing the assumptions of Naive Realism. The apparent refutation of Naive Realism is achieved only by uncritically accepting its basic assumptions as valid in another area.

[31] This much, then, is certain: Investigation of the field of perception cannot prove the correctness of Critical Idealism, and, consequently, cannot strip percepts of their objective character.

[32] But even less can the principle, "The perceived world is my idea" be claimed as obvious in need of no proof. Schopenhauer begins his main work, *The World as Will and Idea*, with the words:

"The world is my idea—this truth applies to every living and cognizing being, although the human being alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. And when he really does this, he will have attained to philosophical self-knowledge. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he knows no sun and no earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, and a hand that feels the earth. The world around him is present only as an idea. It is there only in relation to something else, to the one who depicts it, namely, himself. If ever a truth could be declared a priori, it is this one; for it expresses the most general form of all possible and thinkable experience. A form that is more universal than all others, than time, space, or causality, for all these presuppose it ..." (*The World as Will and Idea*, Book I, par. I.)

This whole theory, based on the principle "The world is my idea" collapses in the face of the fact, noted above, that the eye and hand are percepts just as much as the sun and the earth. In Schopenhauer's terms, and using his style of expression, one could respond: My eye that sees the sun, and my hand that feels the earth, are my ideas just like the sun and the earth. Put in this way, it is immediately clear Schopenhauer's proposition cancels itself out. For only my real eye and my real hand could have the ideas of sun and earth as their modifications—my ideas "eye" and "hand" could not. Yet it is only in terms of these ideas that Critical Idealism is entitled to speak.

[33] Critical Idealism is completely unable to gain insight into the relationship between percepts and ideas. It cannot begin to make the distinction we indicated earlier, between what happens to the percept during the act of perception, and what must already be present in it before it is perceived. To do this, we must find another way to approach this question.

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## 5. KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

### 5.0 Independent Existence Of Things

[1] The preceding discussion has shown that it cannot be proven that our percepts are ideas by examining the content of our observation. This proof is supposedly established by the following argument: "If the perceptual process takes place according to naive-realistic assumptions about our psychological and physiological constitution, then we are not dealing with things-in-themselves, but only with our ideas of things." However, if Naive Realism, when consistently thought through, leads to results that directly contradict its assumptions, then these assumptions must be discarded as an unsuitable basis of a world-view. It is certainly inadmissible to reject the assumptions and yet accept as valid what results from them. The Critical Idealist does this when he uses the line of argument above as the basis for his claim "the world is my idea." (Eduard von Hartmann gives a detailed account of this line of argument in *The Fundamental Problems of Epistemology*.)

[2] The truth of Critical Idealism is one thing, the persuasiveness of its proof is another. How things stand with respect to the correctness or otherwise of Critical Idealism, will become clear in the course of our discussion. But the power of its proof to convince is zero. If one builds a house and the ground floor collapses while the first floor is being built, then the first floor collapses with it. Naive Realism is related to Critical Idealism as ground floor is to first floor.

[3] For one who believes the whole perceived world is only an imagined one, an ideal world called up in the mind by unknown things, the problem of cognition will not be concerned with the ideas that exist only in the psyche. Instead, it will focus on the unknown things that lie beyond the reach of his consciousness and exist independent of him. He asks: "How much can we learn about things indirectly,

since they are not accessible to our direct observation?" From this standpoint he is not concerned with the connection of his conscious perceptions, since in his view they disappear as soon as he turns his senses away from them. He is concerned with their causes, which are no longer accessible to consciousness and exist independently of him.

Looked at from this point of view, our consciousness acts like a mirror whose images of specific things disappear the moment its reflecting surface is not turned towards them. If we do not see the things themselves but only their reflections, then we must learn about them indirectly by drawing conclusions from the behavior of their reflections. This is the standpoint of natural science. It uses percepts only as a means to obtain information about the material processes standing behind them. For it, only material processes truly exist. If the philosopher, as Critical Idealist, admits real existence at all, then his sole aim is to gain knowledge of this real existence indirectly by means of ideas. His interest skips over the subjective world of ideas and instead is focused on what causes him to have these ideas.

[4] The critical idealist can go so far as to say: "I am enclosed within my world of ideas and cannot escape from it. If I think there is something behind my ideas, this thought, too, is nothing more than an idea." An Idealist of this type will either deny the thing-in-itself entirely, or at least say it has no significance for human minds. Since we can know nothing about it, it is as good as non-existent.

[5] To this type of Critical Idealist, the whole world appears as a disordered dream. Any attempt to gain knowledge of it would be simply meaningless. For him there can be only two kinds of people: (1) biased ones who take their own dream fabrications as reality, and (2) wise ones who see through the nothingness of this dream world, and gradually lose all desire to trouble themselves with it.

From this vantage point, even one's own personality can become a mere dream phantom. Just as during sleep there appears among my dream-images an image of myself, so in waking consciousness the idea of my own Self is added to the idea of the external world. I then have in mind not my real Self, but only my idea of my Self. Whoever denies the existence of real things, or the possibility of knowing anything about them, must also deny the existence, or at least the knowledge, of his own personality.

This leads the Critical Idealist to the declaration, "All reality is transformed into a wonderful dream, without a life that is dreamed about or a mind that is having the dream—into a dream that is held together within a dream of itself." (Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*.)

[6] For the person who believes our immediate experience of life is nothing but a dream, it does not matter whether he assumes nothing exists behind this dream, or whether he relates his ideas to actual things. In either case, life itself must lose all scientific interest for him. Science is meaningless to those who believe that the universe accessible to us is limited to a dream. However, for those who believe themselves able to reason from ideas to things, the task of science will be to inquire into the nature of these "things-in-themselves."

The first of these theories of the world may be called Absolute Illusionism. The second is called Transcendental Realism\* by its most consistent advocate, Eduard von Hartmann.

[7] These two views have this in common with Naive Realism; they all seek to establish a foothold in the world by investigating percepts. But nowhere in this realm can they find a firm base.

\* [Note by Rudolf Steiner: In the context of this world-view, knowledge is called "transcendental" because it is believed that nothing can be asserted directly about the things-in-themselves. One must make indirect inferences from the subjective, which is known, to the unknown, which lies beyond the subjective (the transcendent). According to this view, the thing-in-itself exists beyond the realm of what is immediately accessible to our cognition; in other words, it is transcendent. However, our world can be related transcendently to what is transcendent. Hartmann's theory is called Realism because it proceeds from the subjective, the mental, to the transcendent, the real.]

### **5.1 Awakened State Of Thinking**

[8] One of the most important questions for the adherent of Transcendental Realism must be: "How does the Ego produce the world of ideas out of itself?" A world given to us as ideas that will disappear as soon as we close our senses to the external world, can still kindle a serious striving for knowledge by

providing the means for investigating indirectly the world of the self-existing Self. If the things of our experience were "ideas," then everyday life would be like a dream, and knowledge of the true situation would be like waking. Our dream-images, too, interest us only as long as we are dreaming, and so do not recognize them as dreams. But the moment we wake up, we no longer ask about the connections between our dream-images. Instead, we ask about the physical, physiological, and psychological processes that caused them.

In the same way, a philosopher who considers the world to be merely a picture in his mind, is not interested in how the details are interconnected. If he admits the existence of a real Ego at all, his question will not be how one of his ideas is related to another. Rather, he will ask what takes place in the psyche—that exists independently of his consciousness—when a certain flow of ideas passes through his consciousness. If I dream I am drinking wine that causes burning in my throat, and then wake up coughing (Weygandt, *How Dreams Arise*, 1893), the moment I wake up the dream sequence ceases to interest me. My attention is now directed only to the physiological and psychological processes through which the sore throat expresses itself symbolically in the dream.

Similarly, once the philosopher is convinced that the world given him consists of nothing but ideas, he will turn his interest from this world to the real psyche that exists behind it. The situation is far worse, to be sure, for the Illusionist who denies the existence of an Ego behind the "ideas," or at least regards this Ego to be unknowable.

We might very easily be led to such a view by observing that, in contrast to the dreaming state, there is the waking state. The waking state enables us to see through the dreams and relate them to real events. But there is no state that stands in a similar relationship to waking consciousness. Those who take this view fail to see that there is, in fact, something that relates to mere perceiving, in the same way our waking experience relates to dreaming. This something is—thinking.

## **5.2 True Judgment**

[9] The naive person cannot be accused of failure to see this. He accepts life as it is, and considers things to be real in the form they present themselves to him in experience. However, the first step to go beyond this standpoint can only be to ask: "How does thought relate to perception?" It makes no difference whether or not the percept that is given to me continues to exist in the same form before and after my depiction of it. If I wish to say anything about it, I can do so only with the help of thinking. If I say "the world is my idea" I have expressed the result of a thought process. If my thought does not apply to the world, then my result is false. Between a percept and every kind of judgment about it there intervenes thinking.

## **5.3 World Caused Thought**

[10] The reason why thought is generally overlooked during the contemplation of things has already been given (see Chapter 3). It is because we direct our full attention to the object we are thinking about, and not at the same time to our thinking itself. For this reason the naive mind treats thought as something that has nothing to do with things. Thinking stands completely apart from things and makes its theories about them. The picture that the thinker makes of the phenomena of the world is not considered as something integral to the things, but as something that exists only in the human head. For the naive, the world is complete without this picture. The world with all its substances and forces is supposed to be fixed and finished; and the human being makes himself a picture of this finished world. Those who think like this should be asked: "By what right do you declare the world to be complete without thought? Does not the world cause thoughts in human minds with the same necessity as it causes blossoms on plants? Plant a seed in the soil. It puts forth root and stem. It unfolds into leaves and blossoms. Place the plant before you. It connects itself to a specific concept in your mind. Why does this concept belong any less to the whole plant than leaf and blossom?"

You reply: "The leaves and blossoms are there without a perceiving subject, while the concept only appears if a human being stands before the plant." Quite true. But blossoms and leaves, too, only appear on the plant if there is soil in which the seed can be planted, and light and air in which leaves

and blossoms can unfold. In just the same way the concept of a plant only arises when a thinking being approaches the plant.

#### **5.4 Process Of Becoming**

[11] It is entirely arbitrary to regard the sum of what we experience of a thing through perception alone, as a totality, a complete whole, while regarding what results from thoughtful contemplation as something incidental, that has nothing to do with the thing itself. If I am given a rosebud today, the picture that is there for my perception is finished, complete, but only for the present moment. If I put the bud in water, tomorrow I will get a very different picture of the object. And if I watch the rosebud without interruption, I will see today's state gradually change into tomorrow's through countless intermediate stages. The picture presented to me at any one moment is only a chance section taken from an object that is in a continuous process of growth. If I do not put the bud in water, a whole series of states lying within it as potential will not develop. Or I may be prevented tomorrow from observing the blossom further, and will then have an incomplete picture of it.

[12] To declare the appearance of a thing revealed at a chance moment; "this is the thing" would be an unscientific and arbitrary judgment that clings to external features.

#### **5.5 Inseparable Concept**

[13] Neither is it justifiable to declare the sum of a thing's perceptual appearances to be its full reality. It is conceivable that a mind could receive the concept at the same time as, and inseparably connected with the percept. It would never occur to such a mind that the concept did not belong to the object. It would attribute to the concept an existence indivisibly bound up with the object.

[14] Let me make myself clearer with an example. If I throw a stone horizontally through the air, I see it at different points, one after the other. I connect these points to form a line. In mathematics I learn to know various kinds of lines, one of them is the parabola. I know the parabola to be a line produced when a point moves according to a certain well-defined law. If I analyze the conditions under which the thrown stone moves, I find that the line of its flight is identical with the line I know as a parabola. The fact that the stone moves in a parabola is a consequence of the conditions given and follows necessarily from them. The form of the parabola belongs to the whole of the phenomenon, just as much as any of its other features.

The hypothetical mind described above, which does not have to take the roundabout route of thinking, would be given more than a sequence of visual impressions at different locations. At the outset it would also be given the parabolic form of the line of flight, inseparably united with the phenomenon. For us, the parabolic trajectory can only be added by thinking about the phenomenon.

[15] It is not due to the objects that they appear to us at first without their corresponding concepts, but to our mental organization. In the comprehension of an object or event, our whole being functions in such a way that the elements making up the reality of every real thing come to us from two sides—from perception and from thought.

[16] How I am organized to comprehend things has nothing to do with the nature of the things themselves. The divide between perception and thought only exists from the moment I, the observer, confront the objects. Which elements belong to the object, and which do not, cannot depend at all on the way I obtain my knowledge of these elements.

#### **5.6 Isolate Concept**

[17] Man is a limited being. First of all, he is a thing among other things. His existence is in space and time. Because of this, only a limited part of the whole universe can ever be given to him. But this limited part is linked in all directions with other things, both in time and in space. If our existence were so united with things that every world event was at the same time our event, there would be no distinction between us and the things. But then, too, there would be no individual things for us. Everything that happens would pass continuously one into the other. The cosmos would be a unity, a whole complete in itself. The stream of events would not be interrupted at any point.

Due to our limitations things appear to us as separate objects, when in fact they are not separate at all. For example, the individual quality of red never exists in isolation. It is surrounded on all sides by other qualities to which it belongs, and without which it could not exist. For us, however, it is necessary to isolate certain sections of the world, and to consider them on their own. Our eye can grasp only single colors one by one out of a multicolored whole. Our mind can grasp only single concepts out of an interconnected conceptual system. This separating-off is a subjective act. It is due to the fact that we are not identical with the world-process, but are individual things among other things.

### **5.7 Self-Definition**

[18] The important question now is to define the relation of ourselves, as things, to all other things. This defining must be distinguished from merely becoming aware of our self. For self-awareness is based on perception, just like our awareness of any other thing. The perception of myself shows me a number of qualities that I bring together into the whole of my personality. In the same way I bring together the qualities yellow, metallic shine, hard, etc. into the unity "gold." Self-perception does not take me beyond the region of what belongs to my self. So self-perception must be distinguished from self-definition by means of thinking.

Just as, by means of thinking, I integrate a single perception of the external world into the context of the world whole, so do I also, by thinking, integrate the perceptions I have of my self into the order of the world-process. Self-perception confines me within certain limits, but my thought is not concerned with these limits. In this sense I am a two-sided being. I am enclosed within the sphere that I perceive as my own personality, but I am also the possessor of an activity that defines my finite existence from a higher sphere.

Thought is not individual like our sensing and feeling. It is universal. Thought receives an individual stamp in each separate person only because it becomes related to his individual feeling and sensing. Due to these particular colorings of the universal thought, people differ from each other. There is only one single concept of "triangle." It does not matter for the content of this concept whether it is grasped in A's consciousness or in B's. But the content of this concept will be taken hold of by each of the two minds in its own individual way.

### **5.8 Universal Concept**

[19] This thought is opposed by a common preconceived opinion that is difficult to overcome. This prejudice prevents one from recognizing that the concept of a triangle that my mind grasps is the same as the concept that my neighbor's mind grasps. The naive person believes himself to be the creator of his concepts. He consequently believes that everyone has their own concepts. It is a basic requirement of philosophical thought to overcome this prejudice. The one single concept of "triangle" does not become many concepts of "triangle" because it is thought by many minds. Rather, the thought of many becomes a single whole.

[20] In thought, we have the element that integrates our particular individuality into a unity with the whole of the cosmos. When we sense and feel (perceive) we are isolated individuals; when we think, we are the All-One Being that pervades everything. This is the deeper meaning of our two-sided nature. We become conscious of a purely absolute principle revealing itself within us, a principle that is universal. However, we experience it, not as it streams from the center of the world, but only at a point on the periphery. Were we to know it at its source, we would understand the whole riddle of the universe the moment we became conscious. But we stand at a point on the periphery and find our own existence confined within certain limits. So we must learn about the region that lies beyond our own being with the help of thought. Thought is the universal cosmic principle manifesting itself in our minds.

[21] The desire for knowledge arises because the thought in us, reaches out beyond our separate existence and relates itself to the universal world-order. Beings without thought do not have this desire to strive for knowledge. Whenever they encounter other things, they have no questions. These other things remain external to such beings. In the case of thinking beings, the concept leaps up in response

to the external thing. The concept is the part of a thing that we receive, not from outside, but from within ourselves. To match up, to unite the two elements, inner and outer, gives us knowledge.

[22] The percept, then, is not something finished and complete. It is one side of the total reality. The other side is the concept. The act of cognition is the synthesis of percept and concept. Only the percept and concept together make up the whole thing.

### **5.9 Conceptual Unity**

[23] The preceding discussion shows conclusively that it is futile to seek for any common element in the separate things of the world, other than the ideal content provided by thinking. All attempts to find world-unity must fail, other than this coherent ideal content which we gain by the conceptual analysis of what we perceive.

Neither a personal God, nor force, nor matter, nor the blind, idealess will (Schopenhauer), can be accepted by us as the universal world-unity. All these principles belong only to a limited field of our observation. Personality we perceive only in ourselves, force and matter only in external things. As for the will, it can only be seen as the active expression of our own limited personality. Schopenhauer wants to avoid making "abstract" thought the bearer of world-unity, and seeks instead what appears to him as something immediately real. This philosopher believes we misjudge the world as long as we regard it as an "external" world:

"In fact, the sought-after meaning of the world, which is merely my idea, or the transition from mere idea in the mind of the cognizing subject to whatever else it may be besides this, would never be found if the investigator himself were no more than a purely cognizing subject (an angel's head with wings but no body). But he is rooted in that world. He finds himself in it as an individual. That is to say, his knowledge, which supports and determines the whole world as idea, is after all given entirely through the medium of a body, whose affections, as shown, are the starting point for the understanding of the world. For the purely cognizing subject, this body is an idea like every other idea, an object among objects. The movements and actions of his own body are known to him in the same way as the changes of all other observable objects. They would be just as strange and incomprehensible to him if their meaning were not made clear to him in an entirely different way....

To the cognizing subject, who becomes an individual only through his identity with the body, this body is given in two very distinct ways. First it is given as an idea for intelligent consideration, as an object among objects and subject to the same laws of these objects. Second, and at the same time, it is given in an entirely different way, as that element known directly by everyone and is described by the term 'will'. Every true act of will is at once and without exception also a movement of the body. He cannot will an action without at the same time perceiving it as a movement of his body. The act of will and the action of the body are not two different, objectively known things linked by the tie of causality. Their relationship is not one of cause and effect. They are one and the same thing, but are given in two entirely different ways—once directly and once in perception for the intelligence to understand it."

(The World as Will and Idea)

With this analysis, Schopenhauer considers himself justified to see in the body the "objectivity" of the will. He is convinced that in the actions of the body he has a direct experience of reality, the thing-in-itself in the concrete. Against this analysis, we must point out that the actions of our body only come to our awareness through self-observation. The percepts we obtain of ourselves have no advantage over other percepts. If we wish to know their real nature, we can do so only by means of thought, by organizing them into the ideal system of our concepts and ideas.

### **5.10 Corresponding Intuition**

[24] Rooted very deeply in the naive mind is the opinion that thinking is abstract, without any concrete content. At best, we are told, it supplies a "conceptual" counterpart of a unified world, but never the unity itself. Whoever believes this has never clearly recognized what a percept without its concept really is. Let us take a look at this world of perception by itself. It appears as a mere juxtaposition of elements in space and a sequence of changing elements in time, an aggregate of unconnected details.



None of these things that come and go on the perceptual stage appears to have any connection with any other. Here, the world is a multiplicity of objects of equal value. None plays a more important part in the machinery of the world than any other.

If we are to recognize that this or that fact has greater significance than another, we must consult our thought. As long as we do not think, a rudimentary organ of an animal that has no significance for its survival, appears equal in value to the most important part of its body. The meaning of single facts, both in themselves and in their relation to other parts of the world, only becomes apparent when thought weaves its threads from one thing to another. This activity of thinking is filled with content. For it is only through a very specific, concrete content that I can know why a snail is at a lower level of development than a lion. Sight alone, the perception, provides me with no content that could inform me as to the degree of perfection of the organism.

[25] Thinking contributes this content to the percept from the world of concepts and ideas. In contrast to the content of perception given to us from outside, the content of thought appears within our minds. The form in which thought first appears in consciousness we will call "intuition." Intuition is to thoughts what observation is to percepts. Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge. Anything we observe in the world remains unintelligible to us, until the corresponding intuition arises within us which adds that part of reality missing in the percept. Full reality remains closed off to anyone who lacks the ability to find the relevant intuitions corresponding to things. Just as the color-blind sees only differences of brightness without color qualities, so the mind that lacks intuition sees only disconnected perceptual fragments.

[26] To explain a thing and make it understandable, means nothing other than to place it into the context from which it has been torn due to the nature of our organization, as already described. Nothing exists in isolation from the world-whole. All separateness has only subjective relevance for minds organized like ours. For us, the world-whole splits into above and below, before and after, cause and effect, object and idea, matter and force, object and subject and so forth. What appears to us in observation as separate details, become linked, item by item, through the coherent, unified system of our intuitions. By means of thought we fit together again into one whole all that perception has separated.

[27] The puzzling nature of an object is due to the separateness of its existence. However, this separation is brought about by us and can, within the conceptual world, be dispelled and returned to unity again.

### **5.11 Conceptual Connection**

[28] Only through thinking and perceiving are things given to us directly. The question now arises: "Viewed in the light of our discussion, what is the significance of the percept?" We have learned that Critical Idealism's proof of the subjective nature of percepts, collapses. But the fact that the proof is incorrect does not necessarily mean the theory itself is incorrect. Critical Idealism's proof does not take its start from the absolute nature of thought. Rather, it is based on the fact that Naive Realism, when followed to its logical conclusion, contradicts itself. But how does the matter stand when the absoluteness of thought is recognized?

[29] Let us suppose a certain percept—red, for example—appears in my consciousness. Further investigation will show this percept to be connected to other percepts, such as a specific shape, and to certain percepts of temperature and touch. I call this combination of percepts "an object in the sense-perceptible world." I can go on to ask: "What else is found in this section of space?" There I discover mechanical, chemical and other processes. I go further and study the processes that take place on the way from the object to my sense-organs. There I find processes of motion in an elastic medium that by their nature have nothing in common with the original percepts. I get the same result when I investigate the connections between the sense-organs and the brain. In each of these inquiries I gather new percepts, but the connecting thread that weaves through all these percepts dispersed in space and time, and binds them into one whole—is thought.

The vibrations in the air that transmit sound are given to me as percepts in just the same way as the sound itself. Thought alone links all these percepts to each other, and shows them in their mutual relationships. We cannot speak of the existence of anything beyond what is directly perceived, except what is recognized as the conceptual connections between percepts. These connections are discovered by thinking. Therefore, the relationship between the objects we perceive and ourselves as perceiving subject that goes beyond what is merely perceived—is purely ideal, that is, it is expressed only by means of concepts.

Only if it were possible to perceive how the object affects the perceiving subject, or—conversely—only if I could watch the construction of the percept by the subject, could we speak like physiology and the critical idealism based on it. Their view confuses a conceptual relationship (between object and subject) with a process we could speak of only if it were possible to perceive it. The proposition, "no color without a color-sensing eye" cannot be taken to mean that the eye produces the color, but only that a conceptual connection, knowable by thinking, exists between the percept "color" and the percept "eye." Empirical science will have to determine, through research, how the properties of the eye and those of color relate to each other; how the organ of sight transmits the perception of colors, etc. I can track how one percept follows another and how they are related in space. I can then express this in conceptual terms. But I cannot perceive how a percept originates out of the non-perceptible. All attempts to find anything other than conceptual relationships between percepts must necessarily fail.

### **5.12 Objective Percept**

[30] What, then, is a percept? Asked in this general way, the question is absurd. A percept always appears as a very specific, concrete content. This content is directly given and is completely contained in what is given. All that can be asked about this given content, is: "What is it apart from perception—that is, what is it for thought?" The question concerning the "what" of a percept can only refer to the conceptual intuition that corresponds to it.

Viewed from this perspective, the problem of the subjectivity of perception put forward by Critical Idealists, cannot be raised at all. Only what is perceived as belonging to the subject can be termed "subjective." To establish the connection between what belongs to the subject and what belongs to the object is not the task of any process that is "real" in the naive sense, that is, a process that can be perceived taking place. It is the task of thinking.

For us, then, something is "objective" when it is seen to be located outside myself as perceiving subject. The percept of myself as subject remains perceptible to me after the table now standing before me has disappeared from my field of observation. The observation of the table has caused a change in me that persists like myself. I preserve an image of the table which now forms part of my Self. I retain a lasting ability to reproduce an image of the table again, later. Psychology calls this image a "memory-idea."

It is the only thing that can properly be called my idea of the table. For it is the perceptible change in me caused by the table when it was in my field of vision. It does not mean a change in some "Ego-in-itself" standing behind the perceived subject, but rather a change in the perceptible subject itself. The idea is, then, a subjective percept, in contrast to the objective percept that occurs when the object is present in the field of one's vision. Falsely identifying the subjective percept as the objective percept leads to the misunderstanding of Idealism that "the world is my idea."

[31] Our next task will be to define the concept of "idea" in detail. What we have said about it so far is not its concept. We have only described where in the perceptual field ideas are to be found. The exact concept of "idea" will also make it possible for us to obtain a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between the inner idea and outer object. This will take us across the boundary, where the relationship between the human subject and the object in the world is brought down from the purely conceptual field of knowledge into concrete, individual life. Once we know what to make of the world, it will be an easy task to orient ourselves within it. We can act with our full strength and conviction only when we understand the things to which we direct our activity.

## 1918 Addition

[1] The view I have outlined here can be regarded as one to which a person is naturally driven as soon as he begins to reflect on his relationship to the world. He then finds himself entangled in a thought-structure that unravels as fast as he builds it up. Merely to refute it theoretically is not enough.

We have to live through it in inner experience, so that insight into the aberration this way of thinking leads can enable us to find the way out. It must appear in any discussion of the relationship between man and the world. Not because we want to refute others whom we believe have an incorrect view of this relationship, but because it is necessary to understand the confusion every first reflection about this relationship is likely to lead. One needs to learn by experience how to refute oneself with regard to these first reflections. This is the point of view from which the preceding chapter was meant to be seen.

[2] Anyone who wishes to work out a way of looking at the relationship of man to the world, becomes aware of the fact that he creates this relationship, at least in part, by forming ideas about the things and events in the world. This draws his attention away from what is out there in the world, and directs it to his inner world, to his life of ideas. He begins to say to himself: "I cannot relate to a thing or an event unless an idea occurs in me." Once this fact has been noticed, it is only one step to the opinion, "All I experience are my ideas. I know of a world outside me only to the extent it is an idea within me." And with this, man abandons the naive attitude toward reality, which he assumes before he begins to think about his relationship to the world.

From the naive standpoint he believes that he is dealing with real things. Inner reflection drives him away from this view. Then he no longer sees the reality naive consciousness claims is there spread out before us. Inner reflection reveals to him the ideas that insert themselves between his own being and a supposedly real world believed in by naive consciousness. Because of the intervening ideas we can no longer see the real world. He assumes he is blind to this reality. So the thought arises of a "thing-in-itself" that cannot be reached by our cognition.

There is no escape from this kind of thought as long as we continue to focus solely on the interaction man has with the world through the stream of his ideas. Yet we cannot remain at the naive standpoint if we do not wish to close our minds, artificially, to the desire for knowledge. The very existence of this desire for knowledge about man's relationship to the world shows that the naive standpoint must be abandoned. If the naive standpoint gave us anything that we could recognize as truth, we would not feel this desire for knowledge.

Yet we do not arrive at something else which could be regarded as truth by merely abandoning the naive standpoint, as long as we retain—without realizing it—the way of thinking it imposes. We fall victim to this kind of error if we think: "I only experience my ideas, and while I am firmly persuaded that I am dealing with reality, all that I am actually conscious of are my ideas of reality. I must therefore assume that genuine reality, the things-in-themselves, exist only outside the range of my consciousness. I know nothing of them directly, but they somehow come into contact with me and influence me to make a world of ideas arise in me." Whoever thinks in this way is simply adding another imagined world, in thought, to the world already spread out before him. But in regard to this imagined world, he would really have to start his whole thought activity all over again. For, in relation to his own being, the unknown thing-in-itself is thought of in exactly the same way as the known world of the naive view.

There is only one way of escaping the confusion one falls into when critically assessing this naive standpoint. This is to notice that at the very core of everything we can perceptually experience, be it in the mind or outside in the world, there is something that can prevent the fate of an idea inserting itself between the observer and the thing observed. And this something is thinking. With regard to thinking, we can remain at the Naive Realistic standpoint of reality. If we fail to do so, it is simply because we have learned that for everything else we must abandon this standpoint. We overlook that what we have found to be true for everything else, does not apply to thinking. When we realize this, we open the way

to the further insight that in thinking and through thinking, man comes to know the very thing to which he apparently blinded himself by inserting the stream of his ideas between the world and himself. A critic highly esteemed by the author of this book has objected that this discussion of thinking remains at the level of a Naive Realism of thinking, such as would be the case if the real world and the imagined world were held to be one and the same. However, the author believes he has shown in this discussion that an unprejudiced study of thinking, inevitably leads to the recognition that applying Naive Realism to thinking is valid. And that Naive Realism, which is otherwise not valid, is overcome through knowledge of the true nature of thinking.

[top](#)

## 6. HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY

### 6.0 Ideas That Correspond To World

[1] Philosophers have found the main difficulty in explaining ideas is the fact that we are not identical with the external objects, yet our ideas must have a form that corresponds to them. But on closer inspection it turns out this difficulty does not really exist. We certainly are not identical with the external things, but we belong with them to one and the same world. That section of the world that I perceive to be myself as subject, is penetrated by the stream of the universal world process. With regard to my perception, I am at first confined within the boundary limits of my skin. But all that is contained within that boundary is part of the cosmos as a whole. Therefore, in order for a relationship to exist between my organism and an object outside me, it is not necessary for something from the object to slide into me, or make an imprint on my mind like a signet ring in wax.

The question, "How do I learn about the tree standing ten feet away from me?" is misleading. It springs from the view that the boundaries of my body are absolute barriers, through which information about external things filters into me. The forces at work inside my body are the same as those existing outside it. Therefore, I really am identical with the objects; not I as a percept of myself, but I in the sense that I am a part within the universal world process. The percept of the tree exists within the same whole as my Self. The universal world process produces equally the percept of the tree over there, and the percept of my Self here.

If I were a world-creator rather than world-knower, object and subject (percept and self) would come into existence in one act, since they are mutually conditioning elements. As world-knower, I can discover the common element in both—as two sides of one existence that belong together—only through thinking which relates them to each other by means of concepts.

### 6.1 Perception Of Motion

[2] The most difficult to drive from the field is the so-called physiological evidence of the subjectivity of our percepts. If I exert pressure on the skin of my body, I perceive it as a pressure sensation. If the same pressure is applied to the eye it will be sensed as light, and as sound if applied to the ear. An electric shock is perceived by the eye as light, by the ear as sound, by the nerves in the skin as touch, and by the nose as the smell of phosphorus. What follows from these facts? Only this: I experience an electric shock (or pressure) and then a sensation of light, or a sound, or a certain smell, and so forth. If there were no eye, there would be no percept of light accompanying the percept of a mechanical disturbance in the environment; without an ear, no percept of sound, and so on. But what right have we to say that without sense-organs the whole event would not be there?

There are those who conclude from the fact that an electrical occurrence causes a sensation of light in the eye, that what we sense as light is only a mechanical process of motion outside our organism. They forget that they are only passing from one percept to another and not at all to something outside the range of perception.

Just as we can say the eye perceives a mechanical process of motion in its environment as light, we can also say that a systematic change in an object is perceived by us as a process of motion. If I draw twelve pictures of a horse all the way around a rotatable disk, reproducing exactly the successive positions of the horse's body when it is galloping, then by rotating the disc I can produce the illusion of movement. I only need to look through an opening in a way that I see the successive positions of the horse at the right intervals. What I see is not twelve separate pictures of a horse, but the image of a single galloping horse.

[3] The physiological facts mentioned above add nothing to clarify the relationship between percept and idea. We must find another way to approach this relationship.

### **6.2 Intuitive Idea**

[4] The moment a percept appears in my field of observation, thought becomes active in me. A member of my thought-system, a specific intuition, a concept, unites with the percept. Then, when the percept disappears from my field of vision, what remains? My intuition remains, with its relationship to the specific percept that formed in the moment of perception. How vividly I can then later recall this reference to mind again, depends on how my mental and physical organism is functioning. An idea is nothing but an intuition related to a specific percept. It is a concept once linked to a certain percept, and retains this reference to the percept.

My concept of a lion is not built up out of my percepts of lions. But my idea of a lion is very much formed according to a percept. I can teach the concept of a lion to someone who has never seen a lion, but I cannot give him a vivid idea of a lion without a percept of his own.

### **6.3 Representation Of Reality**

[5] An idea, then, is an individualized concept. And now we can understand how objects in the real world can be represented to us by ideas. The complete reality of a thing is revealed to us in the moment of observation out of the fitting together of concept and percept. By means of a percept, the concept acquires an individualized form, a relationship to this specific percept. In this individualized form, whose characteristic feature is its reference to the percept, it continues to exist in us as the idea of the thing.

If we encounter a second thing and the same concept combines with it, we recognize the second thing as belonging to the same kind as the first thing. If we encounter the same thing again a second time, we find in our conceptual system not only a corresponding concept, but also the individualized concept. This individualized concept refers to a characteristic of this particular object, and as a consequence, we recognize the object again.

[6] The idea, then, stands between the percept and the concept. It is the particularized concept that points to the percept.

### **6.4 Acquire Experience**

[7] The sum of all the things I can form ideas of, I can call my "experience." The greater the number of individualized concepts a person has, the richer their experience will be. A person lacking intuitive capacity is not able to acquire experience. He loses the objects once they are out of sight, because he lacks the concepts that he should bring into relationship with them. On the other hand, a person with a well-developed thinking capacity, but with poorly functioning perception due to imperfect sense-organs, will also be unable to gather experience. Such a person can, it is true, acquire concepts in various ways, but his intuitions lack the living reference to specific things. The unthinking traveler and the scholar absorbed in abstract conceptual systems are both incapable of acquiring a wealth of experience.

### **6.5 Cognitive Objectivity**

[8] Reality presents itself to us in the form of percept and concept, and the subjective representation of this reality is the idea.

[9] If our personality expressed itself only in cognition, the sum of all that is objective would be given in percept, concept and idea.

## **6.6 Individual Ego**

[10] However, we are not satisfied with simply relating a percept to a concept by means of thinking. We also relate it to our particular subjectivity, to our individual Ego. The expression of this individual relationship is feeling, which we experience as pleasure or pain.

## **6.7 Two-Fold Nature**

[11] Thinking and feeling correspond to our two-fold nature, which we considered earlier. Thought is the element through which we participate in the universal process of the cosmos. Feeling is the element through which we withdraw into the narrow confines of our own being.

[12] Thought connects us to the world; feeling leads us back into ourselves and makes us individuals. If we were only thinking and perceiving beings, our whole life would pass by in unvarying indifference. If we could only know ourselves as “Self” through thought, we would be completely indifferent to ourselves. It is only because we experience self-feeling with self-knowledge, and pleasure and pain with the perception of objects, that we live as individuals whose existence is not consumed by our conceptual relation to the rest of the world. Besides our relationship to the world, we also have a special value for ourselves.

[13] One might be tempted to see in the life of feeling an element more richly filled with reality than the contemplation of the world by thought. The reply to this is that the life of feeling, after all, has this richer meaning only for my individual self. For the world as a whole, my feeling life can have value only if the feeling, as a percept of my self, becomes combined with a concept and in this roundabout way is integrated into the cosmos.

## **6.8 True Individuality**

[14] Our life is a continuous swinging back and forth between participating in the universal world process and our own individual existence. The higher we ascend into the universal nature of thought, where eventually what is individual interests us only as an example, as an instance of a concept, the more we lose our individual character—as a specific, separate personality. The farther we descend into the depths of our personal life, and let our feelings resound with every experience of the outer world, the more we cut ourselves off from universal life.

A true individuality will be the one who reaches up with his feelings as high as possible into the region of ideals. There are people for whom even the most universal Ideas entering their heads still take on a subjective coloring that shows unmistakably their connection with the individual who thinks them. There are others whose concepts are expressed without any trace of individual coloring, as if they had not sprung forth from a person of flesh and blood at all.

## **6.9 Standpoint**

[15] The way we form our ideas already gives our conceptual life an individual stamp. After all, each of us has a standpoint from which to view the world. His concepts link up with his percepts. He thinks the universal concepts in his own special way. This characteristic quality is a result of our standpoint in the world, that is, from the range of percepts dependent on our place in life.

## **6.10 Intensity Of Feelings**

[16] Another determining factor, distinct from the above, depends on our peculiar organization. Our organization is unique in its fully determined and well-defined details. Each of us attaches special feelings to his percepts, and do so in the most varying degrees of intensity. This is the individual element of our personality. It is what remains after we have taken into account all the determining factors in the milieu of our surrounding environment.

## **6.11 Education Of Feelings**

[17] A feeling-life completely devoid of thought, must gradually lose all connection with the world. But because it is inherent in man to be a whole, his knowledge of things will go hand in hand with the education and development of his feeling-life.

## **6.12 Living Concepts**

[18] Feeling is the means by which concepts first gain concrete life.

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## 7. ARE THERE ANY LIMITS TO KNOWLEDGE?

### 7.0 Cognitive Unity

[1] WE have established that the elements needed to explain reality are to be found in the two spheres of perception and thought. As we have seen, it is due to our organization that the full, total reality of things (including our own self as subject) appears at first as a duality. Cognition overcomes this duality by combining the two elements of reality: the percept and the concept worked out by thinking, into the complete thing. Let us call the way the world presents itself to us before it has taken on its true nature by means of cognition, "the world of appearance," in contrast to what has been put together out of percept and concept to form a single unity. We can then say, the world is given to us as a duality (Dualism), and cognition works upon it to bring about a unity (Monism). A philosophy that starts from this fundamental principle can be called a Monistic philosophy, or Monism. Opposed to this is the two-world theory, or Dualism. Dualism does not assume that there are two sides of a single reality that are held apart by our organization, but that there are two worlds completely different from each other. It then tries to find in one of these two worlds the principles of explanation for the other.

[2] Dualism rests on a misunderstanding of what we call knowledge. It divides the whole of reality into two realms, each with its own laws, and it leaves these two worlds standing outside one another.

[3] The distinction between the object of perception and the thing-in-itself, introduced by Kant into scientific thought and never since removed from it, stems from this kind of Dualism. Our discussion has shown that it is due to the way our mental organization functions that a particular (separate) thing can be given to us only as a perception. Thinking then overcomes this separation by assigning to each percept its lawful place in the world-whole. As long as we designate the separated parts of the world-whole as percepts, we are simply following in this act of separating-out a law of our subjectivity. If, however, we consider the sum-total of all percepts as one part, and place it over against a second part, the things-in-themselves, then our philosophizing loses all foundation. We are simply playing with concepts. We construct an artificial contrast, but can find no content for the second part, because the content for a particular thing can only be drawn from perception.

### 7.1 Hypothetical World Principle and Facts Of Experience

[4] Every kind of reality that is assumed to exist outside the realm of perception and conception must be assigned to the limbo of unverified hypotheses. The "thing-in-itself" belongs in this category. It is not surprising that the Dualistic thinker is unable to find a connection between his hypothetically-assumed world principle and the facts given in experience. A content can be found for his hypothetical universal world principle only by borrowing it from the world of experience and then deceiving oneself that this is not the case. Otherwise it remains an empty and meaningless concept, a mere form without content. The Dualistic thinker's usual reply to this is: the content of this concept is inaccessible to our knowledge; all we can know is that such a content must exist, but not what it is. In both cases it is impossible to overcome dualism. Even if one brings a few abstract elements from the world of experience to provide a content for the concept of the thing-in-itself, it still remains impossible to explain the rich, concrete life of experience on the basis of a few characteristics that themselves are only borrowed from experience. Du Bois-Reymond states that the non-observable atoms of matter give rise to sensation and feeling by means of their position and motion, and then infers from this premise that we can never find a satisfactory explanation of how matter and motion produce sensation and feeling, for:

"it is, and will forever remain, entirely incomprehensible that a number of atoms of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, etc., should be other than indifferent as to how they lie and move in the present, how

they lay and moved in the past and how they will lie and move in the future. It cannot in any way be conceived how consciousness can come into existence through their interaction."

This conclusion is characteristic of the tendency of this entire orientation of thought. Position and motion are abstracted from the rich world of percepts. These are carried over and applied to an imagined world of atoms. And then the thinker is astonished to find that he cannot develop real life out of this self-made principle borrowed from the world of perception.

[5] That the Dualist cannot arrive at an explanation of the world, working as he does with a completely empty concept of the "in-itself," follows from the very definition of his principle given above.

[6] In every case the Dualist feels compelled to set insurmountable limits to our cognitive capacity. The adherent of a Monistic world-view knows that everything he needs to explain any given world phenomenon is to be found within this world itself. What prevents him from reaching an explanation can only be chance limitations in time and space, or defects of his bodily or mental organization. Not deficiencies of the human organization in general, but of his particular, individual organization.

## **7.2 "I" Questions and Answers**

[7] It follows from the concept of knowledge, as we have defined it, that one cannot speak of limits to knowledge. Cognition is not a concern of the universe as such, it is something the human being has to settle for himself. Things do not demand explanations. They exist and act on each other according to laws that thinking can discover. They exist in inseparable unity with these laws. But we, in our selfhood encounter the things and, to begin with, only grasps that side of them we have called percepts. But within ourselves we find the power that enables us to discover the other part of reality as well. Only when the Self has combined for itself the two elements of reality that are inseparably united in the world, is cognitive satisfaction attained. The Self is then again in contact with reality.

[8] The preconditions necessary for an act of knowledge to take place exist through and for the Self. The Self sets itself questions to which it seeks answers. It draws questions from the elements of thought that are perfectly clear and transparent in themselves. If we ask ourselves questions that we cannot answer, then the content of the question must not be clear and intelligible in all its parts. It is not the world that poses questions to us; we pose them to ourselves.

[9] I can imagine finding myself unable to answer a question that I happened to see written down somewhere without knowing the universe of discourse from which the content of the question was taken.

## **7.3 Reconcile Well-Known Percepts and Well-Known Concepts**

[10] Our cognition involves questions that arise for us through the fact that a sphere of percepts conditioned by factors of place, time, and our subjective organization, confronts a sphere of concepts expressing the world as a unity. My task is to reconcile these two spheres, both of which are very well-known to me. There is no room here to speak of limits to knowledge. It may be that at a particular moment this or that remains unexplained because we are prevented by chance circumstances from perceiving the things involved. But what is not found today may be found tomorrow. These are only temporary limits and can be overcome with further progress in perception and thinking.

## **7.4 Conceptual Representation Of Objective Reality**

[11] Dualism makes the mistake of transferring the opposition of subject and object, which has significance only within the perceptual world, onto pure conceptual entities outside this world. Now the distinct and separate things within the perceptual field remain separated only as long as the perceiving subject refrains from thinking. For thinking cancels all separation showing it to be due to purely subjective factors. Therefore the Dualist is really transferring abstract determining factors to entities behind the perceptual world that have, even there, no absolute validity but only a relative validity. By doing this he divides the two factors involved in the cognitive process, percept and concept, into four: (1) the object-in-itself; (2) the percept which the subject has of the object; (3) the subject; (4) the concept which relates the percept to the object-in-itself. The relationship between the subject and the object is "real"; the subject is really (dynamically) influenced by the object. This real process does not



appear in our consciousness. But it evokes in the subject a response to the stimulation from the object. The result of this response is the percept. Only this enters our consciousness. The object has an objective reality (independent of the subject), while the percept has a subjective reality. This subjective reality is referred by the subject to the object. This reference is said to be ideal (conceptual). With this the Dualist divides the cognitive process into two parts. One part, the production of the perceived object out of the thing-in-itself, is said to take place outside our consciousness. The other part, the combining of the percept with the concept and referring the result to the object, is said to take place within our consciousness.

Given these assumptions, it is clear why the Dualist believes his concepts are only subjective representations of what is there prior to his consciousness. The objectively real process in the subject through which the percept comes about, and, even more so, the objective relationships between things-in-themselves, remain for such a Dualist unknowable in any direct way. In his view the human being can only construct for himself conceptual representations that do no more than represent what is objectively real. The bond of unity among things, that connects things with one another and also objectively with the individual mind of each of us (as thing-in-itself), lies beyond our consciousness in a Divine Being-in-itself, of which we can have in our consciousness no more than a conceptual representation.

### **7.5 Real Connecting Principles in addition to Ideal Principles**

[12] The Dualist thinks that the whole world would dissolve into a scheme of abstract concepts if he did not insist on "real" connections between things besides the conceptual ones. In other words, the ideal principles discovered by thinking are too airy and insubstantial for the Dualist, so he seeks, in addition, real principles by which to support them.

[13] Let us examine these "real principles" more closely. The naive person (Naive Realist) regards the things he experiences in the external world as real. The fact that he can grasp these objects with his hands and see them with his eyes is for him valid proof of their reality. "Nothing exists that cannot be perceived" can be said to be the first axiom of the naive person; and its reverse form is accepted to be equally valid: "Everything that can be perceived is real." The best evidence of this statement is the naive person's view on immortality and ghosts. He imagines the soul as consisting of an extremely fine material substance, which under certain conditions can become visible even to the ordinary person (naive belief in ghosts).

[14] Compared to his "real world," everything else for the naive realist, especially the world of ideas, is unreal, it is "merely ideal." What we add to things by way of thinking activity are mere thoughts about things. Thought adds nothing real to our perceptions.

[15] What is more, the naive person holds sense perception to be the sole evidence of reality, not only for the nature of things, but also for events (processes). In his view, one thing can only affect another when an actual sense-perceptible force goes forth from the one and acts upon the other. Ancient Greek philosophers, who were Naive Realists in the best sense of the word, held a theory of vision by which the eye sends out feelers that touch the objects. Earlier physicists thought that very fine substances stream out from objects and enter the soul through our sense organs. The actual seeing of these substances was said to be impossible only because of the crudeness of our senses compared with the fineness of the substances. In principle, these substances were granted reality for the same reason one grants it to the objects of the sense world, namely, because their kind of existence was thought to be analogous to that of sense-perceptible reality.

### **7.6 Real Evidence Of Senses in addition to Ideal Evidence**

[16] For the naive mind, the self-contained nature of the experience of Ideas is not considered to be real in the same way as what can be experienced through the senses. An object grasped in "mere idea" remains nothing more than a figment of the imagination until sense-perception can provide proof of its reality. To put it briefly, the naive person demands, in addition to the ideal evidence of his thinking, the real evidence of his senses. This need of the naive person is the reason why belief in revelation arose.

The God who is given through thought remains no more than a God we have conjured up in thought. The naive mind demands that God should manifest Himself in ways accessible to sense-perception. God must appear in the flesh, and must prove his Divinity by changing water into wine in a way that can be verified by sense-observation.

[17] Even cognition, the activity of gaining knowledge, is thought of by the naive person as a process analogous to sensory processes. Things make an impression on the mind, or they project image-copies of themselves that enter through our senses, and so on.

[18] All that the naive person can perceive with his senses he regards as real, and what he cannot perceive in this way (God, soul, knowledge, etc.) he imagines as being analogous to the objects of perception.

[19] A science based on Naive Realism would have to consist solely of an exact description of the content of perception. Concepts are for the Naive Realist only a means for achieving this goal. They are there to create conceptual counterparts to the things perceived. They mean nothing for the things themselves. For the Naive Realist only the individual tulips that are seen, or could be seen, count as real. The universal Idea of 'tulip' is to him an abstraction, an unreal thought-picture that the mind constructs for itself out of the characteristics common to all tulips.

### **7.7 Vanishing Perceptions and Ideal Entities**

[20] The fundamental principle of naive realism, that everything real is perceptible, is refuted by experience, which teaches us that the content of perceptions is transitory. The tulip I see is real today, in a year it will have vanished completely. What persists is the species "tulip." But, for the Naive Realist, this species is "only" an Idea, not a reality. Thus this worldview finds itself in the position of seeing its realities arise and then perish, while what it regards as unreal is more enduring than the real. In addition to percepts, The Naive Realist has to acknowledge the existence of something Ideal. He has to include entities that cannot be perceived with the senses. To avoid contradicting himself he conceives the form of existence of these entities to be analogous to that of sense-perceptible objects. These hypothetical realities are the invisible forces through which sense-perceptible things act on one another. One such thing is heredity, which has effects that survive the individual, and is the reason why there develops out of the individual a new one that is similar to it, whereby the species is maintained. The soul, the life-principle permeating the bodily organism, is another such reality for which the naive mind always forms a concept on the pattern of sense realities. And finally so, too, the Divine Being is conceived by the naive mind as such a hypothetical entity. The Deity is thought to act in a way that exactly corresponds to the way a human being is seen to act. The Deity is thought of anthropomorphically.

[21] Modern physics traces sense impressions back to processes in the smallest parts of the body and in an infinitely fine substance, the ether—or something similar. For example, what we sense as warmth is, within the space occupied by the warmth-giving body, the movement of its parts. Here again something imperceptible is thought of by the analogy of something perceptible. The sense-perceptible analogy to the concept "body" might be, according to this way of thinking, the interior of a room shut in on all sides, in which elastic balls are moving in all directions, colliding with one another, bouncing on and off the walls, and so on.

### **7.8 Perceptible Reality and Imperceptible Reality**

[22] Without assumptions of this kind, the world of the Naive Realist would disintegrate into a disconnected and unrelated chaos of percepts that does not come together to form a unity. Naive Realism can only make these assumptions by being inconsistent in its thinking. If it remained true to its fundamental principle: only what is perceived is real, then it would not assume the existence of something real where it perceives nothing. The non-perceivable forces sending out their effects from perceivable things are, in fact, unjustified hypotheses from the standpoint of Naive Realism. Because Naive Realism knows of no other realities, it endows its hypothetical forces with perceptual content. It applies a form of existence (perceptual existence) to a realm where sense perception—the only means that can provide any evidence of this form of existence—is lacking.

[23] This self-contradictory worldview leads to Metaphysical Realism. This view constructs, in addition to perceptible reality, an imperceptible reality that is thought of on the analogy of the perceptible one. Consequently, Metaphysical Realism is, of necessity, Dualistic.

[24] Wherever the Metaphysical Realist observes a relationship between perceptible things (when two things move towards each other, when an external object enters consciousness, etc.), there he assumes a reality. But the relationship that he notices can only be expressed by means of thinking; it cannot be perceived. What is an ideal relationship is arbitrarily made into something similar to a perceptible one. So for this way of thinking the real world consists of perceptible objects that are in an endless process of becoming, arising and then disappearing, and of imperceptible forces that produce them and are the things that endure.

### **7.9 Monism: Sum of Perceptions and Laws of Nature**

[25] Metaphysical Realism is a self-contradicting mixture of Naive Realism and Idealism. Its hypothetical forces are non-perceptible entities with the qualities of perceptions. The Metaphysical Realist has decided to acknowledge—in addition to the realm for whose form of existence he has a means of knowledge in sense-perception—another realm for which this means of knowledge fails him as it can only be known through thinking. But at the same time he cannot make up his mind to recognize the form of existence that thinking conveys to him, the concept (the Idea), as a factor that is valid on an equal basis with perceptions. If one is to avoid the contradiction of imperceptible percepts, then it must be admitted that the relationships which thinking establishes between the percepts can have no other form of existence for us than that of the concept. When we reject the invalid part of Metaphysical Realism, the world is seen as a sum of percepts and their conceptual (ideal) relationships. Metaphysical Realism then arrives at a worldview that requires for the percept the principle of perceivability, and for the relationships between percepts the principle of conceivability. This view of the world has no room for the existence of a third realm, besides the perceptual and conceptual world, for which both principles – the so-called "real" principle and the "ideal" principle – are valid.

[26] When the Metaphysical Realist claims that, in addition to the ideal relationship between the perceived object and the perceiving subject, there must also be a relationship that is 'real' between the "thing-in-itself" of what is perceived and the "thing-in-itself" of the perceptible subject (the so-called individual mind), then his claim is based on the false assumption of a real process that is similar to a process in the sense-world, but non-perceivable. When the Metaphysical Realist goes on to say: I have a conscious, ideal relationship with my world of perceptions; but I can have only a dynamic relationship (of forces) with the real world—he then repeats the mistake we have already criticized. One can talk of a relationship between forces only within the world of perceptions (in the area of the sense of touch), but not outside it.

[27] Let us call the worldview we have just described, into which Metaphysical Realism merges when it discards its contradictory elements, Monism, because it combines one-sided Realism and Idealism to form a higher unity.

[28] For Naive Realism the real world consists of a sum of perceptible objects (percepts). For Metaphysical Realism, not only perceptible objects but also imperceptible forces are real. Monism replaces forces with ideal connections obtained by means of thinking. These connections are the laws of nature. A law of nature, after all, is nothing but the conceptual expression of the connection between certain percepts.

### **7.10 Separation and Reunion of Self into World Continuum**

[29] The Monist never has any need to look for principles other than percept and concept in order to explain reality. He knows that there is no reason to do so in the whole field of reality. He sees in the perceptual world, as it appears immediately to our perceiving, one half of the reality. He finds the full reality by uniting this world with the world of concepts.

The metaphysical realist may object to the monist: "It may be the case that for your own organization your knowledge is complete within itself, that it lacks nothing; but you do not know how the world appears to a mind organized differently from your own." The Monist would reply: "Maybe there are intelligences other than human; and maybe their percepts are configured differently from ours, if they have perception at all. But this is irrelevant to me for the following reasons."

Through my perception—in fact, through this specifically human way of perceiving—I, as subject, am confronted with the object. This causes the connection of things to appear broken. The subject re-establishes this connection through thinking. In doing so it integrates itself into the context of the world as a whole. As it is only through the Self, as subject, that what is a whole appears split in two along a line between our perception and our concept, so it is the union of these two factors that will give us true knowledge. For beings with a world of perceptions that had a different appearance (if, for example, they had twice as many sense-organs), the continuum would appear broken in another place, and the restoration would take a form specifically adapted to those beings. The question of limits to knowledge exists only for Naive and Metaphysical Realism; they both see in the content of the psyche only ideal representations of the real world. For them, the world outside the subject is something absolute, a self-contained whole, and the subject's mental content is a picture of it, completely external to this absolute. Here, the quality of knowledge depends on the degree of similarity between the representation and the absolute object. A being with fewer senses than man will perceive less of the world, one with more senses will perceive more. As a consequence of perceiving less of the world the former's knowledge will be less perfect knowledge than the latter's.

[30] For Monism the situation is different. The form in which the world continuum appears to be torn apart into subject and object is determined through the organization of the perceiving being. An object is not something absolute; it is only relative to the nature of the particular subject that perceives it. The bridging of the gap can therefore take place only in a very specific way that is characteristic of the particular human subject. As soon as the Self—which is separated from the world in the act of perceiving—integrates itself back into the world continuum through thinking investigation, then all further questioning ceases, since it was only a consequence of the separation.

[31] A differently constituted being would have a differently constituted cognition. Our own cognition is sufficient to answer the questions that result from our own mental constitution.

[32] The Metaphysical Realist must ask, What is it that gives us our percepts? What is it that stimulates the subject?

[33] For the Monist the way a percept is seen is determined by the subject. But in thinking the subject has the instrument for transcending this self-produced determination.

### **7.11 Induction Of Underlying Causes From Sum Of Perceived Facts**

[34] The Metaphysical Realist faces a further difficulty when it comes to explaining the similarity between the worldviews of different individuals. He has to ask himself, "Why is it that the theory of the world that I build up out of my subjectively determined percepts and out of my concepts, turns out to be the same view that another individual builds up out of his equally subjective factors? How can I, from my own subjective view of the world, draw any conclusions about the subjective view of another person? The Metaphysical Realist believes he can conclude that the reason people's subjective view of the world are similar stems from their ability to deal with and reach an understanding with one another in practical life. From this similarity of worldviews he then further concludes the similar nature of individual minds, meaning by "individual mind" the "I-in-itself" underlying each subject.

[35] This kind of conclusion infers, from a sum of effects, the character of their underlying causes. We believe that by observing a sufficiently large number of cases, we can know the situation well enough to be able to predict how the inferred causes will behave in other cases. We say that a conclusion of this kind has been arrived at by inductive reasoning. If further observation yields something unexpected, we will find ourselves forced to modify our conclusions, because they are based solely on the particular

details of earlier observations. Nevertheless, despite these limitations the Metaphysical Realist maintains that this conditional knowledge of causes is perfectly adequate for practical life.

[36] Inductive reasoning is the fundamental method of modern Metaphysical Realism. There was a time when it was thought one could develop something out of concepts that was no longer a concept. It was thought that the metaphysical reals, which Metaphysical Realism after all requires, could be recognized through concepts. This method of philosophizing is now a thing of the past. Instead it is thought that from a large enough number of perceptual facts one can infer the character of the thing-in-itself underlying these facts. Just as in the past one tried to derive the metaphysical from concepts, so today the Realist tries to derive it from perceptions. Since concepts are before the mind in transparent clarity, it was thought that the metaphysical, too, could be drawn out of them with absolute certainty. Percepts are not there for us with the same transparent clarity. Each successive percept of a kind is always a little different from the previous ones. In principle, anything inferred from past experience is somewhat modified by each following experience. Since it is subject to correction by future cases, the character of the metaphysically real obtained in this way can only be relatively true. This methodical principle characterizes the Metaphysics of Eduard von Hartmann. This is expressed in the motto he gave on the title-page of his first major work: "Speculative results gained by the Inductive Method of Natural Science."

### **7.12 Objective Real World Continuum and Subjective World Continuum**

[37] The form that the modern Metaphysical Realist gives to his things-in-themselves is arrived at through inductive reasoning. His deliberations concerning the process of cognition has convinced him of the existence of an objectively real world continuum, in addition to the "subjective" world continuum we come to know by means of percepts and concepts. He believes he is able to determine the nature of this objective reality by drawing conclusions inductively from his percepts.

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## **8. THE FACTORS OF LIFE**

### **8.0 Knowing Personality**

[1] LET us briefly review the results gained in the previous chapters. The world appears to me as a multiplicity, a sum of separate details. As a human being, I am myself one of these details, a thing among other things. We call this form of the world simply the given. Insofar as we just encounter it and do not explain it through our conscious activity, we call it percept. Within the world of percepts we perceive our Self. This perception of Self would simply remain as one percept among the many others, if something did not emerge out of this self-perception capable of connecting all percepts, and also the sum total of all percepts with the percept of our own Self. This something that emerges is not mere perception. Neither is it, like percepts, simply given. It is produced by our activity. It seems at first to be bound up with what each of us perceives as his Self. But its inner meaning reaches beyond the self. It adds conceptual definitions to the single percepts. These conceptual factors relate to each other and form a whole. This something conceptually defines what we gain in self-perception in the same way as it defines all other perceptions, and places it as subject, or "I," over against the objects. This "something" is thinking, and the conceptual factors are concepts and Ideas.

Thought, therefore, first manifests itself in connection with the percept of self. But thought is not merely subjective, for it is only with the help of thought that the Self can define itself as subject. How the Self relates to itself in thought determines our personality. Through it, we lead a purely conceptual existence. Through it, we are aware of ourselves as thinking beings. This determination of our lives would remain a purely conceptual (logical) one, if it were not supplemented by other determining factors of our Selves. Our lives would be spent in establishing purely conceptual relationships between percepts themselves, and between them and ourselves. If we call the establishment of a conceptual

relationship an "act of cognition," and the resulting change achieved in the self "knowledge," then, according to the above assumption, we would have to consider ourselves as only cognizing or knowing beings.

### **8.1 Feeling Personality**

[2] However, this assumption does not hold up to the facts. As we have already seen, we do not relate percepts to ourselves only through concepts, but also through our feelings. We are not beings with solely a conceptual content. In fact, the Naive Realist sees in the emotional life a more genuine life of the personality than in the purely conceptual activity of knowledge. From his standpoint he is entirely right to interpret it in this way.

### **8.2 Reality Of Personality**

The way a feeling first appears on the subjective side, is exactly the same way as a percept appears on the objective side. Therefore, according to the basic principle of naive realism — that everything that can be perceived is real — it follows that feelings guarantee the reality of one's own personality.

### **8.3 Knowledge Of Feeling**

Monism, however, recognizes that if a feeling is to be present in its full reality, it requires the same addition as do all percepts. A feeling as we first encounter it is an incomplete reality that lacks its second factor, the concept or Idea. This is why in actual life feelings, like all percepts, always appear before knowledge.

### **8.4 Concept Of Self**

At first we merely have a feeling of existence. It is only in the course of our gradual development that we struggle through to the point where the concept of Self emerges from within the blind mass of feelings that fill our existence. What emerges later, however, is from the beginning inseparably bound up with our feelings.

### **8.5 Cultivation Of Feeling**

This is why the naive person is led to believe that in feeling, he is directly related to what is there, what exists. While in thought he is only indirectly related to what exists after it is mediated through knowledge. Therefore the cultivation of the emotional life will seem to him more important than anything else.

### **8.6 Feeling Insight**

He must feel the connection of things in the world before he believes he has grasped it. He seeks insight through feeling rather than through knowledge; he attempts to make feeling the instrument of knowledge rather than thought.

### **8.7 Philosopher of Feeling**

Now a feeling is something entirely individual, something equivalent to a percept. So the Philosopher of Feeling makes a principle that has significance only within his personality into a world principle. He tries to inject himself into everything. What the Monist strives to grasp in concepts, the Philosopher of Feeling tries to attain through feeling. He looks on his own felt union with objects as more direct, with nothing else coming in between.

### **8.8 Mysticism**

[3] The tendency just described, the Philosophy of Feeling, is Mysticism. The error in the mystical form of intuition is that it wants to experience in feeling what should be attained as knowledge. The Mystic tries to elevate feeling, which is individual, into a universal principle.

[4] A feeling is completely individual. It is the effect of the external world on the subject, insofar as this effect is expressed in a purely subjective experience.

### **8.9 Willing Personality**

[5] There is another expression of human personality: willing. The Self, through thought, participates in the general life of the world. By means of thinking, in a purely conceptual way, it relates the percepts to itself, and itself to the percepts. In feeling, the Self experiences the direct effect of objects on itself as subject. In willing, the opposite is the case. In willing, too, we have a perception before us, namely, the

personal relation of the Self to the objective world. And whatever there is in willing that is not a purely conceptual factor is just as much an object of perception as are things in the external world.

### **8.10 Voluntarism**

[6] In spite of this, the naive realist believes that here again he has before him something far more real than can ever be attained by thought. He sees in the will an occurrence, a cause, of which he is directly aware, in contrast to thinking that only grasps the event afterwards in conceptual form. The will, by means of which the Self accomplishes things, is seen as a process that is experienced directly. The adherent of this philosophy believes that, in the will, he has really got hold of a corner of the world process. While all other events can only be followed from the outside by means of perception, he is confident that in his willing he directly experiences a real process. He makes the form of existence in which the will appears to him within the Self into the fundamental reality of the universe. His own will appears to him as a special case of the general world process. The general world process, then, is considered to be universal will. The will becomes the principle of reality just as, in Mysticism, feeling becomes the principle of knowledge. This way of viewing things is Voluntarism (Thelism). It makes something that can only be experienced individually into the dominant factor of the world.

### **8.11 Naive Knowledge Of Feeling And Willing**

[7] Voluntarism cannot be called a science anymore than can Mysticism. For both maintain that a conceptual interpretation of the world is inadequate. In addition to a conceptual principle, both demand a real principle as well. But since perception is the only way to comprehend these so-called real principles, it follows that what Mysticism and Voluntarism are both saying is that we have two sources of knowledge: thinking and perception, with perception appearing here as an individual, direct experience of feeling and will. Since the immediate experiences that flow from one source cannot be taken up directly into the thoughts that flow from the other, perception (immediate experience) and thought remain side by side, without any higher form of experience to mediate between them. Beside the conceptual principle that we attain by means of knowledge, there is supposed to exist a real principle that cannot be grasped by thought, but can be directly experienced. In other words, Mysticism and Voluntarism are both forms of Naive Realism, because they embrace the doctrine: What is directly perceived (experienced) is real. Compared with Naive Realism in its primitive form, they are guilty of the further inconsistency of making a particular instance of perception (feeling or willing) into the sole means of knowing reality. Since they can do this only if they hold to the general principle that everything perceived is real, they ought to attribute an equal value to external perception as a means of gaining knowledge.

### **8.12 Universal Will**

[8] Voluntarism turns into Metaphysical Realism when it asserts the existence of will in realms where it is not possible to experience it directly in the same way as it is in one's own subject. A hypothetical principle is assumed outside the subject, for which the sole criteria for its existence is subjective experience. As a form of Metaphysical Realism, Voluntarism is open to the criticism made in the previous chapter, namely, it has to overcome the contradictory element in every form of Metaphysical Realism, and recognize that the will is a universal world-process only to the extent it is conceptually related to the rest of the world.

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## **9. THE IDEA OF FREEDOM**

### **9.0 Conceptual Intuition**

[1] In the act of cognition the "concept tree" is determined by the "percept tree". When faced with a specific percept, there is only one specific concept I can select from the system of universal concepts. The connection of the percept with its concept is determined indirectly and objectively by thinking

according to the percept. The connection between a percept and its concept is recognized after the act of perception, but their belonging together is an inherent fact determined by the character of each.

[2] In willing the situation is different. The percept is here the content of my existence as an individual, while the concept is the universal element in me. What is brought into an ideal relationship to the external world by means of the concept is my own experience, a perception of my Self. More precisely, it is a percept of my Self as active, as producing effects on the external world. To comprehend my own acts of will I connect a concept with a corresponding percept, that is to say, with the specific volition. In other words, by an act of thinking I integrate my individual faculty (my will) into the general world affairs.

The content of a concept that corresponds to an external perception appearing within the field of my experience, is given through intuition. Intuition is the source for the content of my whole conceptual system. The percept only shows me which concept I have to apply, in any given instance, out of the sum of my intuitions. The content of a concept is conditioned by the percept, but it is not produced by it. On the contrary, it is intuitively given and connected with the percept by an act of thinking. The same is true of the conceptual content of an act of will which is just as little capable of being derived from the act itself. It is gained by intuition.

### **9.1 Idealistic Will**

[3] If now the conceptual intuition (the ideal content) of my act of will occurs before the corresponding percept, then the content of what I do is determined by my Ideas. The reason why I select from the number of possible intuitions just this special one, cannot be sought in a perceptual object, but is to be found rather in the purely ideal interdependence of the members of my system of concepts. In other words, the determining factors for my will are to be found, not in the perceptual, but only in the conceptual world. My will is determined by my Idea.

The conceptual system that corresponds to the external world is conditioned by this external world. We must determine from the percept itself what concept corresponds to it; and how, in turn, this concept will fit in with the rest of my system of Ideas, depends on its intuitive content. The percept thus conditions directly its concept and, thereby, indirectly also its place in the conceptual system of my world. But the ideal content of an act of will, which is drawn from the conceptual system and which precedes the act of will, is determined only by the conceptual system itself.

An act of will that depends on nothing but this ideal content must itself be regarded as ideal, that is, as determined by an Idea. This does not imply, of course, that all acts of will are determined only by Ideas. All factors which determine the human individual have an influence on his will.

### **9.2 Ethical Character**

[4] For an individual act of will we must distinguish two factors: the motive and the driving force. The motive is the conceptual factor, the driving force is the perceptual factor in will. The conceptual factor, or motive, is what momentarily determines the will, the driving force is the permanent determining factor in the individual. The motive of an act of will may be a pure concept, or a concept with a specific reference to something perceived, that is, an idea. Universal and individual concepts (ideas) become motives of will by affecting an individual and determining his action in a certain direction. However, one and the same concept, or one and the same idea works differently in different individuals. The same concept (or idea) can motivate different people to different action.

An act of will, then, is not the result of a concept or an idea alone, but is also influenced by the individual make-up of the person. This individual make-up we will call, according to Eduard von Hartmann, the "characterological disposition." The way in which concepts and ideas affect a person's characterological disposition gives his life a particular moral or ethical character.

### **9.3 Motivated Idea**

[5] The characterological disposition consists of the more or less permanent content of the individual's life, that is, the habitual ideas and feelings he has accumulated. Whether an idea that enters my mind motivates me to will something or not, depends on how it relates to the rest of my ideas and also to my



peculiarities of feeling. The stored content of my ideas will depend on the sum total of concepts that during my individual life have become linked to percepts, that is, have become ideas. This sum, again, depends on my greater or lesser capacity for intuition, and on the range of my observations. In other words, it will depend on the subjective and the objective factors of my experiences, on the structure of my mind and on my environment. My feeling life is especially important in determining my characterological disposition. Whether or not I make a particular idea or concept the motive for action will depend on whether it gives me pleasure or pain.

These are the factors to be considered in an act of will. The immediately present idea or concept becomes a motive and determines the goal or purpose of my willing; my characterological disposition determines whether or not I will direct my activity toward that goal. The idea of taking a walk in the next half-hour determines the goal of my action. But this idea is raised to the level of a motive only if it meets with a suitable characterological disposition; that is, if during my life I have formed ideas of the sense and purpose of taking walks such as its value for health, and further, if the idea of taking a walk is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure.

[6] We must therefore distinguish (1) the possible subjective dispositions that will turn specific ideas and concepts into motives, and (2) the possible ideas and concepts capable of influencing the characterological disposition so that an act of will results. The first is the driving force of a moral act, the second its goal.

#### **9.4 Levels Of Morality**

[7] We can identify the driving forces in the moral life by analyzing the elements that make up the life of the individual.

[8] The first level of individual life is perception, more particularly sense-perception. In this stage of individual life perceiving is immediately transformed into willing, without the intervention of either a feeling or a concept. Here the driving force may be called simply instinct. The satisfaction of our lower, purely animal needs (hunger, sexual drive, etc.) occurs in this way. The main characteristic of instinctive life is the immediacy with which the perception triggers the will. This immediacy, originally belonging only to the lower sense life, can also be extended to the perceptions of the higher senses. We react to some event in the external world without thinking, and without any particular feeling. This happens, for example, in conventional social behavior. The driving force of this kind of action is called tact or social good taste. The more often such an immediate reaction to a percept occurs, the more the person will spontaneously act purely under the guidance of tact. Tact becomes part of his characterological disposition.

[9] The second level of life is feeling. Certain feelings attach to what we perceive in the external world. These feelings can become the driving force of action. If I see someone who is starving, my compassion may become the driving force of my action. Such feelings include shame, pride, sense of honor, humility, remorse, compassion, revenge, gratitude, piety, loyalty, love, and duty.

[10] The third level of life is to have thoughts and ideas. An idea or concept can become the motive of an action through mere consideration of the situation. Ideas become motives because in the course of life I regularly connect certain goals of my will to percepts that keep returning in a more or less modified form. This is why, when people who are not entirely without experience face certain percepts, they will always be aware of ideas of actions they have carried out in a similar case, or have seen others carry out. These ideas hover before their minds as determining models in all later decisions; they become part of their characterological disposition. We can call this driving force of the will practical experience. Practical experience gradually becomes purely tactful behavior. This happens when certain typical pictures of actions have become so firmly connected in our minds with ideas of certain situations in life that, in any given case, we skip over all experience based deliberation and pass immediately from the percept to the action.

[11] The highest level of individual life is that of conceptual thinking without reference to any specific perceptual content. We determine the content of a concept through pure intuition on the basis of a

conceptual system. Such a concept contains, at first, no reference to any specific percepts. If we act under the influence of a concept that refers to a percept, that is, under the influence of an idea, then it is the percept that determines our action indirectly by way of the concept. But when we act under the influence of pure intuitions, the driving force of our action is pure thinking. Since it is customary in philosophy to call pure thinking “reason,” we are justified in calling the moral driving force characteristic of this level practical reason. The clearest account of this driving force of the will has been given by Kreyenbuhl. In my opinion his article on this subject is one of the most important contributions to present-day philosophy, especially to Ethics. Kreyenbuhl calls this driving force the practical apriori, that is, an impulse to act springing immediately from my intuition.

[12] It is clear that such an impulse does not, strictly speaking, belong to the characterological disposition. For what acts here as driving force is no longer something purely individual, but is the conceptual, and therefore universal content of my intuition. As soon as I see the justification for making this content the basis and starting-point for action, I enter into willing, regardless of whether I already had the concept, or whether it only enters my consciousness immediately before the action,—that is, regardless of whether or not it already existed in me as a predisposition.

[13] An action is a real act of will only when a momentary impulse, in the form of a concept or idea, acts on the characterological disposition. Such an impulse then becomes the motive of the will.

[14] The motives of moral conduct are ideas and concepts. There are ethicists who also regard feeling as a motive of morality. They claim that the goal of ethical behavior is to provide the greatest possible amount of pleasure for the acting individual. However, pleasure itself can never be a motive; at best only the idea of pleasure can act as motive. The idea of a future feeling, but not the feeling itself, can act on my characterological disposition. For the feeling does not yet exist in the moment of action; rather, it has to first be produced by the action.

[15] The idea of one's own or another's well-being is, however, properly recognized as a motive of the will. The principle of producing the greatest amount of pleasure for oneself through one's action—that is, of attaining individual happiness—is called Egoism. The attainment of this individual happiness is sought either by ruthlessly considering only one's own well-being and striving to attain it even at the cost of the happiness of other individuals (Pure Egoism), or by furthering the well-being of others, either because one expects to gain from it indirectly, or because of the fear that upsetting others will endanger one's own interests (morality of prudence). The particular content of a person's egoistic ethical principles will depend on his ideas of what constitutes his own, or others' happiness. A person will determine the content of his egoistic striving according to what he considers to be the good things in life (luxurious living, hope of happiness, deliverance from various evils, and so forth).

[16] Another kind of motive is the purely conceptual content of an action. This content does not refer to a particular action, as in the case of specific ideas of what brings one pleasure, but rather to action that is based on a system of ethical principles. These principles, in the form of abstract concepts, can govern the individual's ethical life without him having to trouble himself about the origin of the concepts. In that case, we simply feel the moral necessity to submit to an ethical concept which, in the form of law, controls our actions.

The establishing of this moral necessity is left to those who demand our moral submission; that is, to whatever moral authority we recognize (the head of the family, the state, social custom, the authority of the church, divine revelation). Another example of these ethical principles is when the law does not come from an external authority, but comes from within ourselves. (moral autonomy). In this case we believe we hear the voice to which we must submit in our own mind. The expression of this voice is conscience.

[17] Moral progress occurs when a person does not simply accept the commandments of an outer or inner authority as a motive for action, but tries to understand the reason why a particular principle of conduct should motivate him. This is to advance from morality based on authority to conduct based on moral insight. At this level of morality a person will consider the needs of a moral life and will let this

knowledge determine his actions. Such needs are (1) the greatest possible good of all humanity purely for its own sake; (2) the progress of culture or the moral development of humanity to ever greater perfection; and (3) the realization of individual moral goals that have been grasped by pure intuition.

[18] The greatest possible good of all humanity will naturally be understood in different ways by different people. This principle does not refer to any specific idea of this “good”, but rather means that each individual who acknowledges this principle will strive to do whatever in his opinion best promotes the good of all humanity.

[19] For the person who takes pleasure in the benefits of culture, the progress of culture is seen to be a special application of the ethical principle of greatest possible good. However, he will have to accept the price of progress in the decline and destruction of many things that also contribute to the common good. It is also possible for someone to see a moral necessity in the progress of culture, apart from any feeling of pleasure that it brings. In that case the progress of culture is for him an ethical principle of its own, in addition to the principle of the common good.

[20] The principles of the common good and the progress of culture are both based on ideas, that is, based on how one applies the content of ethical Ideas to specific situations (percepts). The highest conceivable principle of morality, however, is one that does not start with any reference to specific experience, but springs from the source of pure intuition, and only afterward finds its relationship to percepts (to life). Here, the decision of what is to be done proceeds from a point of view very different than in the previous examples. Whoever favors the principle of the common good, will first ask in all his actions, what his ideals contribute to this general good. Someone who is committed to the ethical principle of the progress of culture will do the same.

There is, however, a still higher level of conduct that does not start from one particular moral goal in each case, but sees a certain value in all ethical maxims and in each case asks whether one or another principle is more important. In certain situations I might regard the progress of culture as right and make it the motive of my action; in others I may contribute to the common good; and in a third case furthering my own individual good is the right course. But only when all other determining factors come second do we rely on conceptual intuition as the primary consideration. In conceptual intuition all other motives retreat and the ideal content alone motivates the action.

### **9.5 Moral Intuition**

[21] We described the highest level of characterological disposition to be the one that is effective as pure thinking, or practical reason. We have now described conceptual intuition as the highest motive. On closer inspection it will be seen that at this level of morality the driving force and motive coincide; which means that our conduct is not influenced by a predetermined characterological disposition or the external authority of ethical principles accepted as a moral norm. The deed is therefore not the stereotypical action of one who follows the rules of a moral code, nor is it an automatic reaction in response to an outside trigger. Rather it is a deed determined solely by its ideal content.

[22] For such an action to be possible, we must first be capable of moral intuitions. Whoever lacks the ability to think out for himself the ethical principle to apply in each situation, will never achieve genuine individual willing.

[23] Kant's principle of morality: Act so that the basis of your action can be valid for all people — is the exact opposite of ours. His principle would mean death to all individual action. How all people would act cannot be the standard for me, but rather what is right for me to do in each particular case.

### **9.6 Situational Idea**

[24] A superficial criticism could make this objection: How can an action be individually adapted to fit a particular case and situation, and yet at the same time be determined in a purely conceptual way by intuition? This objection is due to confusing the ethical motive with the perceptible content of an action. The perceptible content can be the motive, and is one, for example, when an act is done for the progress of culture or from pure egoism, etc., but it is never the motive when the reason for action is a pure moral intuition. Of course, my Self takes notice of the perceptual content, but it does not allow

itself to be determined by it. This content is used only to construct a cognitive concept of the situation for oneself; but the corresponding ethical concept is not derived from the perceptible event. The cognitive concept of knowledge of a given situation is also a moral concept only if I base my point of view on a single fixed moral principle. If I want to base all my actions exclusively on the moral maxim of cultural progress, then I go through life along a fixed route. From every event that I notice and which attracts my interest there springs a moral duty; namely, to do my part to ensure that the event is used to advance culture.

In addition to the cognitive concept that reveals to me the connections of events or objects according to natural laws, the event or object also has a moral label with instructions for me, as a moral person, about how I should behave. At a higher level these moral labels disappear, and my action is determined in each particular case by my Idea; and more particularly by the Idea that reveals itself to me when I face a concrete situation.

### **9.7 Ethical Individualism**

[25] People vary in their capacity for intuition. In some, Ideas bubble up easily, while others acquire them with great difficulty. The life situations of people that provide the setting for their action is also very different. How a person acts will depend on the way his intuition functions when he is faced with a particular situation.

This aggregate of active Ideas within us, that is, the specific concrete content of our universal intuitions (see 5.10), is part of the individual make up of each person in spite of the universal character of our Idea-world. Insofar as this intuitive content is a reference for action, it is the ethical content of the individual. To let one's individual ethical content express itself in life is the ethical maxim of the one who regards all other ethical principles as subordinate. We call this standpoint ethical individualism.

[26] In a specific situation the decisive factor in an intuitively determined action is to find the appropriate, completely individual intuition. At this level of morality, we do not speak of general moral concepts (norms, laws), except when they are the result of generalizing individual impulses. General norms always presuppose concrete facts from which they can be derived. But these facts have first to be created by the moral action of individuals.

### **9.8 Love Of Goal**

[27] When we look for the laws (conceptual principles) guiding the actions of individuals, peoples, and eras, we obtain a system of Ethics that is not a science of ethical norms, but rather is a natural science of morality. Only the laws discovered in this way relate to human conduct as natural laws relate to a particular phenomena. But these laws are not at all identical with the principles on which individuals base their actions. (If someone wants to understand how an individual's action springs from ethical willing, then he must first investigate in what way the will is related to the action. For this purpose he must single out for study those actions in which this relationship is the determining factor. 1918) If I or someone else reflect on my action later, we can discover the ethical principle it is based on. (While I am acting I am motivated to act by the ethical principle to the extent it lives in me intuitively; this ethical principle is united with my love for the goal that I want to accomplish by my deed. 1918) I do not consult any person or moral code with the question, "Should I do this?" — rather, I carry it out as soon as I have formed the Idea of it. This alone makes it my action.

If a person acts because he accepts certain moral norms, his action is the result of the principles that happen to be part of his moral code. He merely carries out orders. He is a higher form of automaton. Inject some stimulus into his mind and, right away, the gearwheels of his moral principles will begin to turn in a lawful manner to produce a Christian, humane, or selfless action or an action to further cultural progress. It is only when I follow my love for my objective that it is I, myself, who act. At this level of morality I do not acknowledge a lord over me, or an external authority, or a so-called inner voice. I do not accept any external principle for my conduct, because I have found the reason for my action in myself, namely, my love of action.

(I do not ask whether my deed is good or evil; I do it out of my love for it. My action is “good” if my intuition, steeped in love, fits in the right way in the interrelationships between things; the world continuum. This can be experienced intuitively (see 12. 3). My action is “evil” if that is not the case. 1918) I do not ask myself, “How would another person act in my situation?” Rather, I act as I, this particular individuality, is motivated to act. I am not led by what is usually done, no common custom, no universal human principle that applies to all, no moral standard. Rather, my immediate guide is my love for the goal. I feel no compulsion, neither the compulsion of nature that dominates me through my instincts, nor the compulsion of moral commandments. I simply want to carry out what lies within me.

### **9.9 Free Action**

[28] The defenders of universal ethical norms might object to these arguments as follows: If everyone has the right to fully express themselves and do what he pleases, then there is no difference between a good deed and a crime, every corrupt impulse in me has the same right to be expressed as has the intention of serving the common good. As an ethical person, the decisive factor for me is not the fact that I have conceived the Idea of an action, but whether I judge it to be good or evil. Only if it is good should I carry it out.

[29] My reply to this objection is this: I am not talking about children or immature people who follow their animal or social instincts. I am talking about those who are capable of rising to the level of the conceptual content of the world.

(If we want to get at the essence of human willing, we must distinguish between the path that brings willing up to a certain stage of development, and the unique character willing acquires as it nears the goal. Rules play a rightful part at a stage of development on the way towards this goal. The goal is to conceive ethical aims grasped by pure intuition. A person attains ethical aims to the extent that he has any ability at all to lift himself to the level at which intuition grasps the conceptual content of the world. In individual cases of willing, other elements are usually mixed in with ethical aims, either as motive or driving force. Nevertheless, intuition can still be the determining factor in human willing, wholly or in part. A person does what he should do; he provides the setting where “should” becomes “do.” One’s own action is allowed to spring from oneself. Here, the impulse can only be completely individual. And, in fact, only an act of will that springs from intuition can be individual. 1918 addition) It is only in an age where immature people include blind instinct as part of human individuality, (that something evil like the act of a criminal can be described as an expression of individuality in the same sense as an action that expresses a pure intuition. The animal instinct that drives someone to commit a crime does not originate in intuition. It does not belong to what is individual in a person. It belongs to what is most common in him, to what is equally present in all individuals. Each of us must work our way out of what is common by means of our individuality.)

What is individual in me is not my organism with its instincts and feelings, but the unified world of Ideas that lights up within this organism. My instincts, cravings, and passions only establish the fact that I belong to the general human race. What establishes my individuality is the fact that something ideal expresses itself in a unique way through these instincts, passions, and feelings. Through my instincts and cravings I am the kind of person of whom there are twelve to the dozen. What makes me an individual is the unique shaping of Ideas by which I designate myself as an I within the dozen. Only a person other than myself might distinguish me from others by differences in my animal nature. I distinguish myself from others by my thinking, that is, by actively grasping the Ideal element that expresses itself through my organism. Therefore it definitely cannot be said that a criminal act is motivated by an Idea in him. In fact, the characteristic feature of criminal activity is precisely that it is motivated by non-ideal elements in the human being.

[30] An action is free when its reason springs from the ideal part of my individual nature. An action is not free when it is compelled by nature or is carried out under the obligation imposed by a moral norm.

[31] A person is free to the extent he is able to obey only himself in every moment of his life. An ethical act is my act only if it can be called free in this sense. So far we have examined the prerequisites

necessary for a willed action to feel free. What follows will show how this purely ethical Idea of freedom comes to actualization in human nature.

### **9.10 Social Harmony**

[32] Acting out of freedom does not exclude moral laws; it includes them, but shows itself to be on a higher level than actions dictated solely by these laws. Why should my action be of less service to the common good if I have acted for the love of it, than if I have acted only because I consider it my duty to serve the common good? The concept of duty excludes freedom, because it does not recognize the right of individuality, but demands that the individual conform to general norms. Freedom of action is conceivable only from the standpoint of Ethical Individualism.

[33] But how is a social life possible if each one is only striving to assert their own individuality? This question is characteristic of misguided Moralism. The Moralist believes that a social community is possible only if all are united by a common moral order. This shows that the Moralist does not understand the unity of the world of Ideas. He fails to see that the world of Ideas that inspires me is none other than the one inspiring my neighbor.

*This unity of individuals, however, is a result of our experience of the world. It cannot be anything else. For if we could recognize it in any other way than by individual observation, it would follow that universal norms rather than individual experience would be dominant in that sphere. Individuality is only possible when each individual knows others through individual observation alone. 1918 addition* I differ from my neighbor, not because we are living in two entirely different mental worlds, but because he receives different intuitions than I do out of our common world of Ideas. He wants to live out his intuitions, I mine. If our source truly is the world of Ideas, and we do not obey any external impulses (physical or spiritual), then we can only meet in the same striving, in the same intentions. A moral misunderstanding, a clash of aims, is impossible between morally free people. Only the morally unfree person who blindly obeys natural instincts or the commands of duty turns his back on a neighbor if he does not obey the same instincts and the same commands as himself. To live and let live is the fundamental principle of a free human being. *That is, to live in love of the action and to let live in understanding the other's will.* He knows of no other obligation *than the one his volition is in intuitive agreement.* His power of conceiving Ideas will tell him how he should act in a particular situation.

[34] If the source of social compatibility were not a basic part of human nature, no external laws could instill it into human nature! Only because individuals are of one mind can they live out their lives side by side. The free individual lives in full confidence that he and all other free human beings belong to one spiritual/intellectual world, and that their intentions will harmonize. The free individual does not demand agreement from his fellow human beings, but he expects it, because it is inherent in human nature. *(I am not referring here to the necessity for this or that external institution. I refer to the disposition, to the state of mind, through which a person, aware of himself among fellow human beings whom he values, best expresses the ideal of human dignity.)*

### **9.11 Free Spirit**

[35] Many will say that the concept of the free individual that I have outlined here is a chimera nowhere to be found in practice. We have to deal with real people and with them we can expect moral behavior only if they obey moral rules, if they look upon their ethical task as a duty and do not freely follow their inclinations and loves. I certainly do not doubt this. One would have to be blind to do so. But if this is to be the final conclusion, then away with all this hypocrisy about "ethics."! Then simply say: Since human nature is not free, it must be forced to the right action.

It is irrelevant whether his unfreedom is controlled by physical force or by moral laws, whether a person is unfree because he follows his insatiable sexual drive, or because he is bound by the restrictions of conventional morality. But one should not say that such a person can correctly call his actions his own, since he is driven to them by a force other than himself. Yet, within all this enforced order there arise free spirits who in all the entanglement of customs, legal codes, religious practice, and so on learn to be true to themselves. They are free in so far as they obey only themselves; unfree in so

far as they submit to control. Which of us can say that he is really free in all he does? Yet in each of us there dwells something deeper in which the free human finds expression.

[36] Our life is made up of free and unfree actions. The concept of man is not complete unless it includes the free spirit as the purest expression of human nature. After all, we are human in the fullest sense only to the extent that we are free.

[37] Many will say this is an ideal. No doubt, but it is an ideal that has reality. It is a real element in our nature that manifests its effects on the surface. It is no “thought-out” or “dreamed-about” ideal, but one that has life and manifests itself clearly even in the least developed form of its existence. If human beings were nothing but creatures of nature, it would be absurd to look for ideals—that is, our Ideas that are not yet actualized but whose implementation we demand.

In dealing with external objects the Idea is determined by the percept. We have done our part when we recognize the connection between Idea and percept. But this is not so with the human being. The content of his nature is not determined without him. The concept of his true self as an ethical human being (free spirit) is not objectively united with the perceptual content “human being” from the start, needing only to be confirmed by knowledge later. A human being must unite his concept with the percept “human being” by his own activity. In this case concept and percept only coincide if the individual through his own effort makes them coincide. But he cannot do this until he has found the concept of the free spirit, which is the concept of his true Self.

Because of the way we are constituted—a boundary-line is drawn by our organization between percept and concept; knowledge overcomes this division. A division is also present in our subjective nature; the individual overcomes it in the course of his development by bringing the concept of his true Self to expression in his outward life. Thus, both the intellectual and the moral life of the human being lead him to his twofold nature; perception (immediate experience) and thought. The intellectual life overcomes the division through knowledge. The moral life overcomes it by actualizing the free spirit. Every existing thing has its inborn concept (the law of its existence and activity). In external things the concept is indivisibly united with the percept, and only appears to be separated from it within the organization of human minds. But in the case of the human being percept and concept are at first actually separated, to be just as actually united by him.

Someone might object that a particular concept corresponds to our perception of a person at every moment of his life, just as is the case with everything else. I can form the concept of a typical person and I may also find such a person as a percept. If I now add the concept of the typical person to the concept of the free spirit, then I have two concepts for the same object.

[38] This objection is one-sided thought. As a perceptible object I am subject to continual change. As a child I was one thing, as a youth another, as an adult still another. In fact, at every moment the perception-picture of myself is different from what it was a moment before. These changes can take place in such a way that they are always the expression of the same stereotypical person, or in such a way that they represent the expression of the free spirit. My actions, too, as perceptible objects, are subject to these changes.

[39] The perceptible object “human” has the possibility of transformation, just as the plant seed has the possibility of growing into a fully developed plant. The plant is transformed in growth because of the objective laws of nature that are inherent in it. The human being remains in his undeveloped state if he does not take up the stuff of transformation within him and develop himself through his own power. Nature makes a human into merely a natural being; society makes him into a law-abiding being; only he alone can make himself into a free being. At a certain stage of his development nature releases the human being from her chains; society carries his development a stage further; he alone can give himself the finishing touches.

[40] The standpoint of free morality does not claim that the free spirit is the only form in which a human being can exist. It sees the free spirit as the final stage of human evolution. This does not deny that conduct in obedience to norms has its legitimate place as a stage in development. The point is that

we cannot acknowledge this stage to be the highest level of morality. The free spirit overcomes the rules of norms in that he does not solely accept commands as motives, but orders his conduct according to his own impulses (intuitions).

[41] Kant says: "Duty! You exalted, mighty name! You who contain nothing lovable, nothing ingratiatingly agreeable, but demand submission." You "lay down a law,... before which all inclinations are silent, even though they secretly work against it!" To this, a human being, out of the consciousness of the free spirit, replies: "Freedom! You friendly, more human name! You who contain all that is morally loved, all that my humanity most values, and makes me no one's servant. You lay down no law, but wait for what my moral love acknowledges as law, because it resists every law that is forced upon it."

[42] This is the contrast between morality that is law-abiding and morality that is free.

### **9.12 Social Order**

[43] The philistine, who sees morality as outwardly established rules, is sure to look upon the free spirit as a danger to society. But this is only because his view is narrowly focused on a limited period of time. If the philistine were able to see beyond this, he would soon find that the free spirit seldom finds it necessary to transgress the laws of the state, and never needs to confront these laws with any real conflict. For the laws of the state, just like all other objective ethical laws, have their origin in the intuitions of free spirits. There is no traditional law exercised by a family authority that was not at one time intuitively conceived and laid down by an ancestor. Likewise, the conventional laws of morality are first established by certain individuals. And the laws of the state always originate in the head of a statesman.

These leading minds have set up laws over others. No one is made unfree by these laws unless he forgets their origin and turns them into divine commands, objective moral duties, or the authoritative voice of his own conscience. But the person who does not forget the origin of laws and seeks it in the human being, will recognize them as belonging to the same world of Ideas that is the source of his own moral intuitions. If he thinks he has better intuitions, he will try to replace the existing ones with his own. If he finds the existing ones justified, he will act in accordance with them as if they were his own.

[44] The human being is not here for the purpose of establishing a moral world order. Anyone who claims that he is, remains, in his scientific knowledge of Man, at the same point at which natural science stood when it believed that a bull has horns in order to butt. Fortunately, scientists have thrown out the concept of objective purposes in nature as a dead theory.

Ethics is having more difficulty getting rid of this concept. However, just as horns are not there for the sake of butting, rather butting exists through the presence of horns, so human beings are not there for the sake of morality, but morality exists through the presence of human beings. The free human being acts morally because he has a moral Idea, he does not act in order to be moral. Human individuals, with moral Ideas that belong to their nature, are the precondition for a moral world order.

[45] The human individual is the source of all morality and the center of all life. State and society exist only because they have necessarily grown out of the life of individuals. That state and society should react back on the life of the individual is understandable, just as it is understandable that butting, which exists through the horns, reacts back to further develop the bull's horns which would otherwise become stunted with prolonged disuse. Likewise, the individual would become stunted with prolonged isolation outside human society. This is why the social order is formed, so that it can react back favorably on the individual.

**Editor's Note:** I am including below a 1918 revision to Chapter 9.1 about the repression of the psycho-physical organization by the *essential nature of thinking*. It shows that there is a characteristic in the nature of thinking that makes human freedom possible.

### **What is the essential nature of thinking?**

"To experience the essential nature of thinking, that is, to work one's way into the world of concepts



through one's own activity, is an entirely different thing from experiencing something perceptible through the senses. Whatever senses man might possibly have, not one would give him reality if his thinking did not permeate with concepts whatever he perceived by means of it." *TPOF Chap. 7 addition, Are Their Limits To Knowledge?*

"If we turn towards thinking in its essence, we find in it both feeling and will, and these in the depths of their reality; if we turn away from thinking towards "mere" feeling and will, we lose from these their true reality." *TPOF Chap. 8 addition, The Factors Of Life*

### **9.1 Psyche-Physical Organization (1918 revision)**

To struggle through, by means of unbiased observation, to recognize the truth that the nature of thinking is intuitive requires effort. But without this effort we will not succeed in clearing the way for a proper understanding of the human psycho-physical organization. Then we will recognize that this organization has no effect whatever on the essential nature of thinking. At first sight this seems to contradict obvious facts. For ordinary experience, human thinking always takes place connected with, and by means of, this organization.

The psycho-physical organization asserts itself so strongly that its actual significance can only be understood by someone who has recognized that nothing from this organization plays any part in the essential nature of thinking. Once that is recognized one will also appreciate the extraordinary relationship between the human organization and thinking. For this organization contributes nothing to the essential nature of thought, but withdraws whenever the activity of thinking takes place. It suspends its own activity, it makes room. And the space that has been set free is occupied by thought. The essential activity at work in thinking has a twofold function: first, it represses the activity of the human organization; next, it steps into its place. Yes, even the repression of the bodily organization is an effect of thinking activity; the part of thinking activity that prepares for the appearance of thinking.

This explains why what is found in the bodily organization is a reflection of thinking. Once we perceive this, we will no longer misjudge the importance of this physical counterpart for thinking itself. When someone walks over soft ground his feet leave footprints in the soil. But no one will be tempted to say that the forces of the ground, from below, have formed these tracks. No one will attribute to these forces any part in the production of the tracks. Neither will anyone who observes the essential nature of thinking with an open mind, attribute any part of this essence to traces in the physical organism that are produced by thinking in preparation for its appearance by means of the body.

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## **10. FREEDOM PHILOSOPHY AND MONISM**

### **10.0 Moral Authority**

[1] The naive person, who only accepts as real what he can see with his eyes and grasp with his hands, also demands motives for his moral life that can be perceived with the senses. He needs someone to communicate the grounds for action to him in a way that is understandable to his senses. He will allow these grounds of action to be dictated to him as commands by a person whom he considers wiser and more powerful than himself, or whom he recognizes for some other reason to be a power over him. In this way there result, as moral principles, the authority of family, state, society, church and Divinity mentioned in the previous chapter. The most narrow-minded person still submits to the authority of one particular person. He who is a little more advanced allows his ethical conduct to be dictated by a majority (state, society). In every case he relies on some power that can be perceived. When at last the conviction dawns on some one that his authorities are, after all, human beings just as weak as himself, then he seeks guidance from a higher power, from a Divine Being, whom he endows, however, with features perceptible to the senses. He conceives this Being as communicating to him the conceptual

content of his moral life in a perceptible way—believing, for example, that God appeared in a burning bush, or that He walked among the people in human form, telling them in ways audible to their ears what to do and what not to do.

[2] At the highest ethical level of development attained by naive realism, the moral law (the moral Idea) is separated from every external being, and is thought of hypothetically as an absolute power within oneself. What is first heard as the external voice of God is now perceived as an independent power in his own mind. He now speaks of it in a way that identifies it with the voice of conscience.

### **10.1 Mechanical Laws Of Materialism**

[3] When this happens, the level of naive consciousness has been abandoned and we enter the region where moral laws, as ethical standards, are treated as independently existing norms. They are no longer made dependent on a human mind, but are turned into metaphysical entities that exist in and through themselves. They are analogous to the visible-invisible forces that always accompany Metaphysical Realism. Metaphysical Realism, as we have seen, refers the world of percepts which is given to us, and the world of concepts which we think, to an external thing-in-itself. In this, its duplicate world, it must also look for the origin of morality. Here there are several different possible views on the origin of morality. If the thing-in-itself is unthinking and acts according to purely mechanical laws, which is the view of materialism, then it must also produce out of itself, by purely mechanical necessity, the human individual along with everything about him. On that view the consciousness of freedom can be nothing but an illusion. For while I believe myself to be the creator of my deeds, it is the material substances of which I am composed, together with their processes, that are at work within me. I imagine myself free, but in fact everything I do is merely the result of the material processes underlying my physical and mental organization. We have the feeling of freedom only because we are ignorant of the motives that compel us. "We must emphasize that the feeling of freedom is due to the absence of external compelling motives... Our action, like our thinking, is necessitated." (Ziehen, Guidelines of Physiological Pathology)

### **10.2 Dictates Of Spiritual Being**

[4] Another possibility is that the Absolute hidden behind all phenomena is thought of as a spiritual being. In this case he will also seek the impulse to act in some kind of spiritual power. He will regard the moral principles to be found in his own reason as flowing from this spiritual being which has its own special intentions for humanity. To this kind of Dualist the moral laws appear to be dictated by the Absolute. The human being's only task is to discover, by means of his reason, the decisions of the Absolute Being and then carry them out. For the Dualist the moral world order is the visible reflection of a higher order that lies behind it. Our earthly morality is a manifestation of the divine world order. It is not human beings who matter in this moral order but reality in itself, that is, God. Human beings should do what God wills. Eduard von Hartmann, who presents this being as a deity whose existence is a life of suffering, believes that the Divine Being created the world so that it could be redeemed from its infinitely great suffering through it. This philosopher regards the moral evolution of humanity as a process whose purpose is the redemption of God.

"Only through the building up of an ethical world order by reasoning, self-aware individuals is it possible for the world process to be led towards its goal... Existence in its reality is the incarnation of God. The world process is the passion of God who has become flesh, and at the same time the path to redemption of Him who was crucified in the flesh; and morality is our cooperation in the shortening of this path of suffering and redemption." (Hartmann, Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness)

### **10.3 Automaton Or Slave**

In this view, the human being does not act of his own volition; he is obliged to act because it is God's will to be redeemed. A Materialistic Dualist makes the human being into an automaton, whose action is nothing but the effect of causality according to purely mechanical laws, a Spiritualistic Dualist (the one who treats the Absolute, the thing-in-itself, as spiritual) makes the human being a slave of the will of

the Absolute. There is no room for freedom in Materialism or Spiritualism, and in fact any form of Metaphysical Realism.

#### **10.4 Imposed Principles**

[5] Naive and Metaphysical Realism, if they are to be consistent, have to deny freedom for one and the same reason. They both see the human being as doing no more than putting into effect, or carrying out, principles imposed upon him by necessity. Naive Realism kills freedom through submission to authority, whether it be that of a perceptible being, or that of an entity thought of as similar to a perceptible being, or, finally, that of the abstract voice of conscience. The Metaphysician cannot acknowledge freedom because, for him, the human being is determined, mechanically or morally, by a "thing-in-itself."

#### **10.5 Ethical Impulse**

[6] Monism acknowledges the partial justification of Naive Realism because it recognizes the part played by the world of percepts. Whoever is not capable of producing moral Ideas through intuition must accept them from others. To the extent a person receives his ethical principles from outside he is in fact unfree. But Monism attaches as much importance to the Idea as to the percept. And the Idea can manifest itself in the human individual. To the extent a person follows his impulses from this side, he is free.

#### **10.6 Accusation Of Unfreedom**

Monism denies any validity to Metaphysics, and consequently it also rejects the impulses of action that come from so-called "things-in-themselves." According to the Monistic view, a person acts unfreely when he obeys some perceptible external compulsion, he acts freely when he obeys none but himself. There is no room in Monism for any kind of unconscious compulsion hidden behind percept and concept. If someone claims that the action of another person is done unfreely, then he must identify the thing or the person or the institution within the perceptible world, that made this person act. If the claimant bases his assertion upon motivating causes of action lying outside the real world that is accessible to the human being through his senses and intellect, then Monism must reject such an assertion.

#### **10.7 Realization Of The Free Spirit**

[7] According to the Monistic view, human action is partly free, partly unfree. He is conscious of himself as unfree in the world of percepts, but from within himself he brings the free spirit to realization.

#### **10.8 Individual Will Impulse**

[8] The moral laws which the Metaphysician is bound to assume flow from a higher power, are, for the Monist, thoughts conceived by human beings. For him the ethical world order is neither the imprint of a purely mechanical natural order, nor that of a divine government of the world. It is entirely the free creation of human beings. The human being does not have to enforce God's will in the world, but his own. He does not carry out the decisions and intentions of another being, but his own. Monism does not find, behind human actions, a ruler of the world who determines them according to his will. Rather, to the extent that they realize intuitive Ideas, human beings pursue only their own, human goals. In fact, each individual pursues his own particular goals. For the world of Ideas does not come to expression in a collective of people, but only in human individuals. What appears as the common goal of a collective of people is in reality the result of the will impulses of individual members, usually a few select ones whom the others obey as authorities. Each one of us has it in him to be a free spirit, just as every rosebud is potentially a rose.

#### **10.9 Course Of Development That Leads To Free Spirit**

[9] Monism, then, in the sphere of genuinely moral action, is the true philosophy of freedom. As a philosophy of reality, Monism rejects the metaphysical (unreal) restrictions on the free spirit—just as it recognizes the physical and historical (naive real) restrictions on the naive person. Because the Monist does not look upon the human being as a finished product who expresses his full nature in every

moment of his life, he considers the dispute as to whether a human being is free or not to be of no consequence. He sees a self-developing human being and asks whether, on this course of development, can the level of the free spirit be attained.

#### **10.10 Find Own Self**

[10] Monism knows that Nature does not release the human being from its care finished and complete as a free spirit, but that she leads him up to a certain stage. From this, as still an unfree being, he must develop himself further to the point where he finds his own self.

#### **10.11 Truly Moral Worldview**

[11] Monism is not a denial of morality; it is the clear realization that someone acting under physical or moral compulsion cannot be truly ethical. It regards the stages of automatic behavior (following natural urges and instincts) and the passage through obedient behavior (following ethical norms), as necessary preparatory stages of morality, but it also understands that the human being can overcome both preliminary stages through the free spirit. Monism liberates a truly moral world view from the shackles, within the world, of naive ethical maxims, and from the ethical maxims, outside the real world, of speculative Metaphysicians. Monism can no more eliminate naive maxims from the world than it can eliminate percepts from the world. But it rejects the otherworldly maxims of speculative Metaphysicians because Monism looks for all the principles for explaining world phenomena within the world, and none outside it.

#### **10.12 Moral Way Is Freedom**

Just as Monism refuses even to think about cognitive principles other than those that apply to human beings (see Chapter 7), so it also decisively rejects the thought of ethical maxims other than those originated by human beings. Human morality, like human knowledge, is conditioned by human nature. And just as beings of a higher order would probably understand knowledge to mean something very different from what it means to us, so we may assume that they would also have a very different morality. Perhaps, even, their actions should not be viewed from the standpoint of morality at all. To talk about such things is absurd from the point of view of Monism. For Monists, morality is a specifically human quality, and freedom is the human way of being moral.

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## **11. WORLD PURPOSE AND LIFE PURPOSE (Human Destiny)**

### **11.0 Concept Of Purpose**

[1] Among the various currents of thought pursued in the cultural life of humanity, there is one we must now trace that can be called the elimination of the concept of purpose in areas where it does not belong. A purposeful event has a certain kind of sequence of phenomena. Purposefulness is truly real only when, in contrast to the relationship between cause and effect where an earlier event determines a later one, the reverse is the case and a later event determines an earlier one. This sequence is possible only in the case of human action. The human being carries out a deed that he first depicts to himself in idea, and lets this idea determine his action. With the help of the idea, what comes later (the deed) influences the earlier (the doer). This detour of first depicting the action with an idea is always necessary for a chain of events to contain purpose.

#### **11.1 Perceptual Factor**

[2] In analyzing the process of cause and effect, we must distinguish percept from concept. The percept of the cause precedes the percept of the effect. Cause and effect would simply remain side by side in our consciousness, if we were not able to connect them through their corresponding concepts.

#### **11.2 Conceptual Factor**

The percept of the effect must always come after the percept of the cause. If the effect is to have a real

influence on the cause, it can do so only by means of the conceptual factor. For the perceptual factor of the effect simply does not exist prior to the perceptual factor of the cause. Anyone who claims that the flower is the purpose of the root, that is to mean that the flower influences the root, can only say this about the factor in the flower that is revealed by thinking. The perceptual factor of the flower does not yet exist at the time when the root is formed.

### **11.3 Human Purpose**

In order for a connection to contain purpose it is necessary to have not only an ideal, lawful connection between the later and the earlier event, but the concept (law) of the effect must actually, by a perceptible process, influence the cause. Such a perceptible influence of a concept on something else can only be observed in the case of human actions. Here alone, then, is the concept of purpose applicable.

### **11.4 Invented Purpose**

The naive consciousness, which accepts as real only what is perceptible—as we have repeatedly pointed out—attempts to introduce perceptible factors where only ideal factors can actually be found. It looks for perceptible connections in perceptible events or, if it does not find them, imagines them to be there. The concept of purpose, valid for subjective actions, is well suited for inventing such imaginary connections. The naive mind knows how he brings about an event, and concludes that Nature will do it in the same way. In the purely ideal connections of Nature he sees not only imperceptible forces but also imperceptible real purposes. The human being make his tools to fit a purpose. So the Naive Realist has the Creator construct organisms on the same principle. This false concept of purpose is only gradually disappearing from the sciences. In philosophy, even today, it still does a great deal of mischief. Philosophers still ask such questions as: What is the purpose of the world? What is the destination of humanity? (and consequently the purpose) and so forth.

### **11.5 Laws Of Nature**

[3] Monism rejects the concept of purpose in all areas, with the sole exception of human action. It looks for laws of Nature, but not for purposes of Nature. Purposes in Nature are arbitrary assumptions just like imperceptible forces (Chapter 7).

### **11.6 Purposeful Life**

From the standpoint of monism, purposes of life not set by the human being himself are also unjustifiable assumptions. For something to be purposeful, a human being must first give it purpose. Something done on purpose can only come about through an idea being realized. In a realistic sense, an idea can become operative only in human beings.

### **11.7 Human Destiny**

Therefore human life has no other purpose or destiny than the one that the human being gives it. To the question: What is one's task in life? Monism can only answer: The task he sets himself. I have no predestined mission in the world; it is at every moment the one I choose. I do not set out on life's journey confined to a fixed route.

### **11.8 Purposeful Ideas Actualized**

[4] Ideas are realized purposefully only through human agents. Consequently, it is invalid to speak of the embodiment of ideas by history. Statements such as: "History is the evolution of humanity towards freedom," or "the realization of the moral world order" and so forth, are untenable from the Monistic point of view.

### **11.9 Formative Principle Of Nature**

[5] Advocates of the concept of purpose believe that to give up purpose in the world, they would also have to give up all order and unity in the world. Here for example is Robert Hamerling:

"As long as there are instincts in Nature, it is foolish to deny purposes in it."

[6] "Just as the structure of a limb of the human body is not determined and conditioned by an Idea of this limb floating in the air, but by its connection with the more inclusive whole—the body to which the limb belongs—so the structure of every natural being, whether plant, animal, or man, is not determined

and conditioned by an Idea of it floating in the air, but by the formative principle of the more inclusive whole of nature which creates and organizes itself according to a purpose.”

### **11.10 Teleology**

And in the same volume:

"The theory of purpose (Teleology) only maintains that in spite of the thousand discomforts and sufferings of this natural life, there is a high degree of adaptation to purpose and plan unmistakably present in the forms and evolutions of Nature—a purpose and a plan, however, that is realized only within the limits of natural laws, and which does not tend to the production of some Utopia, where life faces no death, and growth no decay, with all the more or less unpleasant but unavoidable stages in between...

[7] When the critics of the concept of purpose (Teleology) bring a laboriously collected rubbish-heap of partial or complete, imaginary or real examples that appear to show no purpose, and place this against a miraculous world full of purpose such as can be seen in all of Nature's domains, then I just find that amusing.”

### **11.11 Harmony Within Whole**

[8] What is meant here by “purpose”? The harmony between the parts to form a perceptible whole. However, since there are laws (Ideas) underlying all percepts that we discover by means of thinking, the harmony found between the parts of a perceptible whole is in fact the ideal (logical) harmony of the Ideas that underlies this perceptible whole. To say that an animal or the human being is not determined by an Idea floating in the air is a misleading way of putting it. When expressed in the right way the criticized view ceases to be absurd. Certainly an animal is not determined by an Idea floating in the air; it is however, determined by an inborn Idea that makes up the law of its nature. It is just because the Idea is not outside of the being, but works within it as its nature, that one cannot speak of purpose. Those who deny that natural beings are determined from outside (whether by an Idea floating in the air or an Idea that exists outside the creature in the mind of a world creator is, in this context, irrelevant) should admit that these beings are not determined by purpose and plan from outside, but by cause and law from within.

I construct a machine purposefully, according to purpose, when I connect its parts together in a way that is not given in nature. The purpose contained in the arrangement consists in my having set how the machine will operate, as its Idea, into the machine itself. This makes the machine an object of perception with a corresponding Idea. Creatures of Nature are beings of this kind. Whoever calls a thing purposeful if it is formed according to a plan or law might just as well apply the same label to beings of nature. But this kind of lawfulness must not be confused with the purpose underlying subjective human action. In order to have a purpose it is absolutely necessary that the effective cause is a concept—in fact, the concept of the effect. But nowhere in nature can we find evidence that concepts are causes. The concept always proves to be merely the conceptual link between a cause and an effect. In nature, causes are always something perceptible.

### **11.12 World Being**

[9] A Dualist can talk of world purposes and nature purposes. Where we see an example of a systematic linking of cause and effect according to law, a Dualist is free to assume that what we are seeing is only a faint copy of a relationship within which the absolute world being has realized his purpose. For the Monist, any reason for assuming purpose in the World or Nature falls away with the rejection of an absolute world being.

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## **12. MORAL IMAGINATION (Darwinism and Ethics)**

## **12.0 Moral Intuition (originate ethical decision)**

[1] A free spirit acts according to his impulses—that is, according to intuitions selected by thinking from his whole world of ideas. The reason why an unfree spirit singles out a particular intuition from his world of ideas, in order to make it the basis of a deed, lies in what the perceptual world has given him—that is, in his past experiences. Before making a decision he recalls what someone else has done or recommended in a similar situation, or what God has commanded to be done in such a case, and so on. Then he acts according to these recollections. The free spirit is not bound by these prior conditions. He makes a completely original decision. He cares as little about what others have done, as about what they have ordered be done in such a case. He is influenced by purely ideal (logical) reasons to select a particular concept from the sum total of his concepts, and to translate it in action. His action will, however, belong to perceptible reality. What he accomplishes will have a very specific perceptible content. The concept will be realized in a particular concrete event. As a concept, it cannot contain this particular instance. It is related to the event in the same way as a concept in general relates to a percept — for example, as the concept “lion” relates to a particular lion. The link between concept and percept is the idea (see Chapter 6). The unfree spirit is given this intermediate link from the start. His motives are present in his mind from the start in the form of ideas. When he intends to do something he does it in the way he has seen others do it or he obeys the instructions he receives in each separate case. That is why authority is most effective through examples, by conveying very specific actions for the guidance of the unfree spirit. The action of a Christian is based less on the doctrines than on the example of the Savior. Rules are less effective for positive deeds to get things done than for restraining certain actions. Laws are formulated as universal concepts only when they forbid something, not when they order something done. Laws concerning what the unfree spirit should do must be given in specific concrete form: Clean the walk in front of your door! Pay your taxes in this amount at that tax office here named! And so on. The laws forbidding actions are given a conceptual form: You should not steal! You should not commit adultery! These laws, too, only influence the unfree spirit by means of a concrete idea; for example, the idea of the corresponding secular punishment, or of the torments of conscience, or of eternal damnation, and so on.

### **12.1 Concrete Idea (specific goal)**

[2] The moment an impulse to action is present in universal conceptual form (for example, You should do good to your fellow human beings! You should live in ways that ensure good health!) then in each particular case the concrete idea of the action (the relation of the concept to a perceptual content) must first be found. For a free spirit, who has no role model and no fear of punishment, etc., this translation of the concept into an idea is always necessary.

### **12.2 Moral Imagination (translate ethical principle to specific goal)**

[3] Concrete ideas are formed by us on the basis of our concepts by means of the imagination. Therefore what the free spirit needs in order to carry out his ideas, in order to assert himself in the world, is moral imagination. This is the source of the free spirit's action. In fact, only people with moral imagination are actually morally productive. Those who merely preach morality, people who merely devise codes of ethics without the ability to condense them into concrete ideas—are morally unproductive. They are like the critic who can explain very competently what a work of art should be like, but is himself incapable of achieving the slightest artistic production.

### **12.3 Moral Technique (transform world w/o violating existing laws)**

[4] In order to realize the ideas produced by moral imagination, one must set to work in a specific field of percepts. Human deeds do not create percepts; but transforms already existing ones by giving them a new form. To be able to transform a specific perceptual object or group of objects in accordance with a moral idea, it is necessary to understand their underlying laws (the way it has worked until now, which one intends to change or give a new direction). One must also find the method by which it is possible to transform the existing laws into new ones. This part of effective moral activity depends on a knowledge of the particular world of phenomena with which one is dealing. This knowledge will be found in a

branch of general scientific knowledge. So in addition to the faculty for having moral concepts (moral intuition) and moral imagination, moral deeds presuppose the ability to transform the perceptible world without violating the natural laws by which things are connected. This ability is moral technique. It can be learned in the same way that science in general can be learned.

In general, people are better able to find concepts for the existing world than to productively originate out of their imagination future deeds, not yet in existence. Therefore, someone without moral imagination may well receive moral ideas from others and skillfully work them into reality. The reverse can also occur, where someone with moral imagination lacks technical skill and must rely on the service of others to carry out their ideas.

[5] Insofar as knowledge of the objects within our field of activity is necessary for acting morally, our action will depend on this kind of knowledge. What we need to know here are natural laws. These belong to the Natural Sciences, not to Ethics.

#### **12.4 Science Of Morality**

[6] Moral imagination and the faculty for having moral concepts can become a subject of knowledge only after they have first been put to use by the individual. By then, they no longer regulate life; for they have already put it in order. They must now be regarded as operating causes, and be explained in the same way as any other causes (they are purposes only for the subject). The study of them is a Natural Science of moral ideas.

[7] It is not possible to have ethics as a Normative Science in the form of a science of standards, over and above this science.

#### **12.5 Ethical Rules Newly Created At Every Moment**

[8] Some people have tried to retain the normative character of moral laws— at least, to the extent that ethics is being understood in the same way as dietetics. Dietetics derives general rules from the organism's requirements for life, in order then, on the basis of these laws, to give detailed directions for influencing the body (Paulson, System of Ethics). This is a false comparison, because our moral life is not comparable to the life of the organism. The organism functions without our doing anything about it. We find its laws already present in the world, so we can seek the laws and apply those that we discover. Moral laws, on the other hand, do not exist until we create them. We cannot apply them until they have been created. The error is due to the fact that the content of moral laws is not newly created at every moment, but is handed down. The moral laws inherited from our ancestors appear to be given, just like the natural laws of the organism. But it does not follow that a later generation has the right to apply them as if they were rules of diet. For they apply to individuals, and not, like natural laws, to a member of a species. As an organism I am a member of a species and will live in harmony with nature if I apply the natural laws of the species to my particular case. As a moral being I am an individual and have my own laws.

#### **12.6 Evolution Of Morality**

[9] The view taken here appears to contradict the fundamental doctrine of modern Natural Science known as the Theory of Evolution. But it only appears to do so. By evolution we mean the real emergence of the later out of the earlier according to natural laws. In the organic world, evolution means that the later (more perfect) organic forms are real descendants of the earlier (less perfect) forms, and have emerged from them according to natural laws. An adherent of the theory of organic evolution imagines a time on earth when someone could have followed with his own eyes the gradual emergence of reptiles out of the Proto-Amniotes, if he could have been there as an observer endowed with a sufficiently long span of life. In the same way Evolutionists imagine that someone could have watched the solar system emerge from out of the Kant-Laplace primordial nebula, if he could have remained at a suitable spot out in the cosmic world ether during that infinitely long time. But no Evolutionist will claim that, without having ever seen a reptile, he could derive the concept of reptiles with all its characteristics, from his concept of Proto-Amniotes. Just as little would it be possible to derive the solar system from the concept of the Kant-Laplace nebula, if the concept of the nebula is understood to



be determined solely by the direct perception of the primordial nebula. This means, in other words, if the Evolutionist is consistent in his thinking, he must concede that while later phases of evolution do evolve out of earlier ones, we can see the connection only if we are given both concepts: that of the less perfect and that of the perfect. But he could never say that the concept formed from the earlier phases of evolution is sufficient to develop the concept of the later from it.

From this it follows for the philosopher of Ethics that, while he can certainly see the connection between earlier and later moral concepts, not one single new moral idea can be drawn from earlier ones. The individual, as a moral being, produces his own content. For an ethicist, this content is just as much a given fact as reptiles are a given fact for the natural scientist. Reptiles developed out of Proto-Amniotes, but natural scientists cannot get the concept of reptiles from out of the concept of Proto-Amniotes. Later moral ideas have evolved out of earlier ones, but the ethicist cannot extract from the moral principles of an earlier cultural period the moral principles of a later one. The confusion arises because when we investigate nature we already have the phenomena before us, and then we gain knowledge of it; while for ethical action we must first create the phenomena ourselves and then investigate it afterward. In the evolution of the ethical world order we accomplish something that Nature accomplishes on a lower level: we change something perceptible. As we have seen, an ethical rule cannot at first be known like a law of nature; it must first be created. Only when it is there can it become an object of our knowing.

[10] But is it not possible to make the old the standard for the new? Are we not all obligated to assess what we produce by our moral imagination by comparing it with traditional ethical teachings? If we are to be truly ethically productive, this is as absurd as it would be to assess a new form in Nature by comparing it with an older one, and saying that because reptiles do not conform to the Proto-Amniotes their form is unjustified (pathological).

### **12.7 Evolution Of Ethical Nature**

[11] Ethical Individualism, then, is not in opposition to the theory of evolution, but is a direct continuation of it. Haeckel's genealogical tree, from protozoa up to human beings as organic beings, would have to be traceable—without interrupting natural law or breaking the uniformity of evolution—right up to the individual as a being with a particular ethical nature. True as it is that the moral ideas of the individual have perceptibly grown out of those of his ancestors, it is also true that an individual is ethically barren unless he has moral ideas of his own.

[12] The same Ethical Individualism that I have developed on the basis of the preceding principles could also be developed from the theory of evolution. The final result would be the same. Only the way it was reached would be different.

### **12.8 Sovereignty Of Ethical Individual**

[13] The appearance of completely new ethical ideas from moral imagination is no more miraculous for the theory of evolution than the development of a new animal species out of an earlier one. But, as a Monistic worldview, evolutionary theory must reject—in ethics, as in science—every otherworldly (metaphysical) influence. This is the same principles that it follows when it seeks causes of new organic forms without invoking the intervention of some otherworldly God who—by supernatural influence—produces each new species according to a new creative idea. Just as the Monist has no need for supernatural ideas of creation to explain living organisms, so he has no need to derive the ethical order of the world from causes lying outside the world. He does not find any continuing supernatural influence on ethical life (divine government of the world from the outside), or to an act of revelation at a particular moment in history (giving of the ten commandments), or to the appearance of God on earth (divinity of Christ). For Monism, ethical processes—like everything else that exists—is a product of the world and their causes must be looked for in the world, and that means in human beings, because humans are the bearers of morality.

[14] Ethical Individualism, then, is the crown of evolution. It is the theory of evolution built by Darwin and Haeckel for natural science extended to the moral life.

## 12.9 Characterization Of Deed (free or not free)

[15] Anyone who from the start, narrowly restricts the concept of what is natural within an arbitrarily limited boundary, can then easily come to the conclusion that there is no room in nature for a free individual deed. The evolutionary theorist who proceeds consequently cannot fall into such narrow-mindedness. He cannot let the natural course of evolution come to an end with the ape, and then give humans a “supernatural” origin. He cannot stop at human organic functions, and find only these to be 'natural'. He must also regard the free, moral life of self-determination as the continuation of organic life.

[16] The Evolutionist, then, if he is to keep to his fundamental principles, can only claim that present ethical behavior evolves out of the less perfect kinds of natural processes. The characterization of an action—whether it is a free deed—can be discovered only by the direct observation of the action of each agent. All that he claims is that humans have evolved out of non-human ancestors. What the nature of humans actually is must be determined by observing them. The results of this observation cannot possibly contradict the history of evolution. Only the assertion that the results exclude their being due to a natural ordering of the world would contradict recent developments in the Natural Sciences.

Footnote: It is justified to call thoughts (ethical ideas) observable objects. For even if what thinking produces does not enter the field of observation while thinking takes place, it can become the object of observation afterward. It is in this way that we have been able to characterize human action.

## 12.10 Free Deed (realization of pure ideal)

[17] Ethical Individualism is in full agreement with a Natural Science that understands itself: for observation shows that freedom is the characteristic quality of the perfect form of human action. The establishment of a conceptual connection between this fact of observation and other kinds of processes results in the theory of the natural origin of the free deed. *This freedom must be attributed to the human will, insofar as the will brings to realization purely ideal intuitions. For these intuitions are not the effects of a necessity influencing him from the outside, but are based on themselves. When a person's action is the image of such an ideal intuition, he experiences it to be free. The freedom of a deed consists of this characteristic feature.*

## 12.11 Free To Want What Is Right

[18] From the standpoint of nature, what can be said about the distinction made in Chapter One between the two statements: “To be free means to be able to do what one wants,” and “To be at liberty to desire or not to desire, as one pleases, is the real meaning of the dogma of freewill”? Hamerling bases his view of free will on this distinction, declaring the first statement to be correct and the second to be an absurd tautology. He says, “I can do what I want, but to say that I can determine what I want is an empty tautology.” Whether I can carry something out, that is, translate into reality what I want to do, what I have set before me as my Idea of action, that depends on external circumstances and on my technical skill (see above). To be free means to be able to determine out of oneself, by moral imagination, the ideas (motives) on which the action is based. Freedom is impossible if anything other than I myself (whether a mechanical process or God) determines my moral ideas. In other words, I am free only when I myself produce these ideas, but not when all I do is carry out the ideas that someone else has implanted in me. A free being is one who wants what he considers to be right. Whoever does anything other than what he wants must be driven to do it by motives that do not originate in himself. His action is not free. To be at liberty to want what one considers right or want what one considers wrong, would mean to be at liberty to be free or unfree. This is obviously just as absurd as to see freedom as the ability to do what one is forced to want. Yet this is exactly what Hamerling asserts when he says, “It is perfectly true that the will is always determined by motives, but it is absurd to say that it is therefore unfree; for a greater freedom can neither be desired or conceived than the freedom to realize one's will in proportion to its strength and determination.” “Yes! One could wish for a greater

freedom, and that is the real and true freedom. Namely, the freedom to decide for oneself the reasons for one's willing.

### **12.12 Enslaved Spirit**

[19] Under certain circumstances a person may hold himself back from doing what he wants to do. But to allow others to dictate to him what he ought to do—in other words, to want what another and not what he himself considers to be right—to this he will submit only if he does not feel free.

[20] External powers may prevent me from doing what I want. Then they simply damn me to do nothing. Not until they enslave my spirit, drive my motives out of my head, and put their own motives in the place of mine, do they really intend to make me unfree. This is why the Church is not only against actions, but is especially against impure thoughts—the motives of my action. And for the Church all motives that it has not authorized are impure. A Church or other community does not produce genuine slaves until its priests or teachers regard themselves as advisers of conscience, and the believers must come to them (to the confessional) to receive the motives for their actions from them.

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## **13. THE VALUE OF LIFE (Optimism And Pessimism)**

### **13.0 Good World Or Miserable Life**

[1] A counterpart to the question concerning the purpose and destiny of life (see Chapter 11) is the question of the value of life. Here we encounter two opposing views, and between them all conceivable attempts at compromise. One view says: The world is the best possible, and to live and work in it is a good of inestimable value. Everything that exists displays harmonious and purposeful cooperation and is worthy of admiration. Even what appears bad and evil can be seen, from a higher point of view, to be good, for it represents a beneficial contrast to the good. We are more able to appreciate the good when it is clearly contrasted with evil. In any case evil is not truly real; what we experience as evil is only a lesser degree of good. Evil is the absence of good; in itself it is without significance.

[2] The opposite view claims that life is full of misery and agony. Everywhere pain outweighs pleasure, sorrow outweighs joy. Existence is a burden, and under all circumstances non-existence would be preferable to existence.

[3] The main proponents of the first view—Optimism—are Shaftesbury and Leibniz; of the second view—Pessimism—the main proponents are Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann.

### **13.1 Best Possible World (cooperative participation)**

[4] Leibniz says the world is the best there can be. A better world is not possible. For God is good and wise. A good God wants to create the best possible world; a wise God knows what is best. He is able to distinguish the best from all other possible worse ones. Only an evil or unwise God would create a less than perfect world.

[5] Whoever starts from this point of view will find it easy to set the direction human conduct should take in order to contribute its share to the greatest good of the world. All that is necessary is for the human being to inquire into God's decrees and act accordingly. Once he knows what God's intentions are for the world and for humanity, he will be able to do what is right. And he will feel happy knowing he is adding his share to all the other good in the world. From this optimistic standpoint, then, life is worth living. It must stimulate us to cooperative participation.

### **13.2 Pain Of Striving (universal idleness)**

[6] Schopenhauer pictures things differently. He does not think of ultimate reality as an all-wise and all-good being, but as blind craving or will. The fundamental characteristic of all willing is eternal striving, ceaseless craving for satisfaction that is for ever beyond reach. As soon as one goal is attained a new need arises, and so on. Satisfaction, when it does occur, lasts less than an instant. All the rest of life consists of cravings that are never fulfilled, of dissatisfaction and suffering. If at last blind craving is

dulled, then all content is gone from our lives; an endless boredom fills our existence. The best one can do is to stifle all wishes and needs within us and exterminate the will. Schopenhauer's Pessimism leads to complete inactivity; his ethical goal is universal idleness.

### **13.3 Pain Outweighs Pleasure (selfless service)**

[7] Hartmann tries to justify pessimism and then use it as a foundation for ethics in a very different way. He follows a favorite modern trend and attempts to base his worldview on experience. By observing life he wants to discover whether there is more pleasure or more pain in the world. He reviews before the court of reason whatever appears to people as good or fortunate, in order to show that on closer inspection all so-called satisfaction turns out to be illusion. It is illusion to believe that we have sources of happiness and satisfaction in health, youth, freedom, sufficient income, love (sexual satisfaction), compassion, friendship and family life; in self-esteem, honor, fame, power, religious education, pursuit of science and of art, hope of life after death, or participation in cultural progress. When looked at soberly, every enjoyment brings much more evil and misery into the world than pleasure. The displeasure of a hangover is always greater than the pleasure of intoxication. Pain far outweighs pleasure in the world. No person, even the relatively happiest one, if asked, would want to go through this miserable life a second time. Since Hartmann does not deny the existence of an ideal factor (wisdom) in the world, and even gives it equal standing with blind urge (will), he can credit the creation of the world to his Absolute Being only by allowing pain to serve a wise world purpose. Now, since he sees the life of the world as a whole as identical with the life of God, all pain is nothing but God's pain. A Being that is all-wise can only have as its goal release from suffering and, since all existence is suffering, that means release from existence. The world was created with the purpose of transforming existence into the far better non-existence. The course of the world is a continuous struggle against God's pain, which will finally end with the annihilation of all existence. Therefore, human morality is participation in the annihilation of existence. God has created the world so that through it he can free himself from his infinite pain. According to Hartmann, that pain must "in a sense be regarded as an itching eruption on the Absolute." Through this itching eruption, the unconscious healing power of the Absolute frees itself from an inner illness; or we may think of it "as a painful poultice that the All-One Being applies to itself, in order first to draw the inner pain outward and then remove it altogether." Human beings are part of the world. God suffers in them. He created them in order to disperse his infinite pain. The pain that each one of us suffers is only a drop in the infinite ocean of God's pain (Hartmann, *Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness*).

[8] The human being must steep himself in the knowledge that the pursuit of individual satisfaction (egoism) is foolish. He ought to be guided solely by the task of dedicating himself to the redemption of God through selfless service to world progress. The Pessimism of Hartmann, in contrast to the Pessimism of Schopenhauer (universal idleness), leads to activity devoted to a lofty task.

[9] But can it be said that this view is actually based on experience?

### **13.4 Pleasure Of Striving (future goal)**

[10] To strive for satisfaction means that our life activity reaches out beyond the present content of life. A creature will strive to satisfy its hunger when its organic functions demand fresh supplies of life sustaining nourishment in order to continue. To strive for honor means that a person only considers what he does or leaves undone to be of value when he receives outside recognition from others. The striving for knowledge arises when a person finds that something is missing in the world that he sees, hears, etc., as long as he has not understood it. The fulfillment of striving causes pleasure in the striving individual, failure causes pain. Here it is important to notice that pleasure or pain are dependent on the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of my striving. The striving itself can by no means be counted as pain. Even though a new striving may arise the moment one has been fulfilled, this is no reason for saying that pleasure has produced pain in me, because in fact enjoyment always creates a desire for it to be repeated or desire for new pleasure. I can speak of pain only when a desire hits up against the impossibility of fulfillment. Even when an enjoyment creates a desire for a greater or more refined

pleasure I can only speak of it as pain caused by the first pleasure when the possibility to experience the greater or more refined pleasure fails. When pain follows enjoyment as a consequence of natural law, for example when a woman's sexual enjoyment results in the pain of childbirth, only then can I speak of enjoyment being a direct cause of pain. If striving caused pain, then the removal of striving should be accompanied by pleasure. But the opposite is true. A lack of striving in one's life causes boredom, and boredom is connected with pain. Since striving can go on for a long time before receiving any fulfillment, and since, in the meantime, one is content to live in the hope of fulfillment, it must be recognized that there is no connection in principle between pain and striving, but that pain depends solely on the non-fulfillment of the striving. Schopenhauer, then, is certainly wrong when he declares that desire or striving (the will) as being in principle the source of pain.

[11] In reality, the opposite is true. Striving (desire) is in itself pleasurable. Who does not know the pleasure of living in the hope of a distant, but intensely desired goal? This pleasure is the companion of all work whose fruit will be enjoyed by us only in the future. This pleasure is entirely independent of our achieving the goal. When the goal is reached the pleasure of fulfillment is then added, as something new, to the pleasure of striving. Someone may now say: The pain of not reaching one's goal is increased by the pain of disappointed hope, and this makes the pain of non-fulfillment still greater than the possible pleasure of fulfillment. The reply to this would be: The reverse can also occur; the recollection of past pleasure will just as often work to ease the pain caused by non-fulfillment. He who cries out in the face of shattered hopes: "I have done all that I could!" is living proof of this. The inspiring feeling of having tried one's best is overlooked by those who say of every unfulfilled desire that, not only has the joy of fulfillment been lost, but also the enjoyment of striving has been destroyed.

### **13.5 Quantity Of Pleasure (rational estimate of feeling)**

The satisfaction of a desire causes pleasure and its non-satisfaction causes pain. But we should not conclude from this fact that pleasure always means the satisfaction of a desire and pain means its non-satisfaction. Both pleasure and pain can be experienced without being the result of desire. Illness is pain that is not preceded by desire. If someone claims that illness is an unsatisfied desire for health, he makes the mistake of regarding the natural and unconscious wish not to become sick to be a positive desire. If someone receives an inheritance from a rich relative whose existence he had not the slightest idea, he experiences a pleasure that was not preceded by desire.

[13] If we are to investigate whether there is more pleasure or pain in the world, we must take into account the pleasure of striving, the pleasure of fulfilled striving, and the pleasure that comes to us without the effort of striving. On the debit side of our account sheet we must enter the pain of boredom, the pain of unfulfilled striving, and finally the pain that comes our way without any striving on our part. Under this last heading belongs the pain caused by work not chosen by ourselves but forced upon us.

[14] This leads to the question: What is the right method for estimating the balance between our credit and the debit columns? According to Eduard von Hartmann reason is able to establish this. However he also says: "Pain and pleasure exist only to the extent that they are actually felt." From this statement it would follow that there can be no standard for pleasure other than the subjective standard of feeling. I must 'feel' whether the sum total of my feelings of pain, compared with the sum total of my feelings of pleasure, results in a balance of more joy or more pain. But disregarding this, Hartmann asserts that, "Even though the value of life of each individual can only be assessed according to his own subjective standard, this is not to say that everyone is capable of calculating the correct algebraic sum from all the emotions that influence his life; in other words, there is no guarantee that his overall judgment of his own life that he arrives at concerning his subjective experiences would be correct." However, in saying this, Hartmann has once more made rational judgment as the standard of value to estimate feeling.

[15] It is because Von Hartmann holds this view that he thinks it necessary, if he is to evaluate life correctly, to set aside all factors that falsify our judgment about the balance between pleasure and pain. He tries to do this in two ways. First, by showing that our desire (instinct, will) interferes with a sober evaluation of our feelings. For example, we should tell ourselves that sexual enjoyment is a source of

evil, the power of the sexual drive seduces us, promising greater pleasure than it delivers. We want the enjoyment, and so do not admit to ourselves that it makes us suffer. Second, von Hartmann subjects feelings to criticism to show that, when examined by reason, the things to which our feelings attach themselves turn out to be illusions, and are destroyed the moment our constantly growing intelligence sees through the illusion.

### **13.6 Quality Of Pleasure (critical examination of feeling)**

[16] Von Hartmann, then, thinks of the matter in the following way. Suppose an ambitious man wants to clearly know whether his life has so far contained more pleasure or pain. To do this he has to eliminate two sources of error that are likely to affect his judgment. Since he is ambitious, this basic trait of his character will cause him to magnify the joys from the public recognition of his achievements and minimize the humiliation of his setbacks. Back when he suffered the setbacks, he felt the insults deeply, precisely because he is ambitious. In memory, however, these setbacks appear in a milder light; while the pleasures of recognition, for which he is so susceptible, leave a far deeper impression. Certainly, it is a real benefit to an ambitious man that it should be so. The deception diminishes his pain at the time of introspection. Nevertheless, his judgment is false. Although he actually experienced the full intensity of the suffering when it occurred, time has drawn a veil over it, so he enters it at an incorrect valuation in his account book of life. In order to arrive at a correct judgment, an ambitious man would have to set aside his ambition during the time he is making his calculation and review his life without any distorting glasses before his mind's eye. Otherwise, he is like a merchant who includes his zeal for business in the income column of his books.

[17] Hartmann goes even further. He says the ambitious man must also realize that the acclaim he so eagerly pursues is valueless. Either on his own or with the help of others, he must come to the insight that a reasonable person cannot care about the recognition of others, since one can always be sure that: "In all matters, except vital questions of evolution, or those definitely settled by science," one can always be sure that "the majority is wrong and the minority is right... Whoever makes ambition his guiding star places his life happiness at the mercy of an unreliable judgment." (Philosophy of the Unconscious)

Once the ambitious man admits all this to himself he will recognize everything as an illusion that he has achieved through his ambition, including the feelings attached to satisfying his ambitious desires. This is why Hartmann says the feelings of pleasure produced by illusions must also be removed from the balance sheet of the value of life. What is left, then, represents the illusion-free sum of pleasure, and this is so small in comparison with the sum of endured pain that life is not enjoyable, and non-existence is preferable to existence.

[18] While it is obvious that the interference of the ambition instinct must lead to a false result when calculating the balance of pleasure, we must still challenge what Hartmann says about the illusory character of the things that are found pleasurable. It would be an error to remove from the calculation of life's pleasure all pleasurable feelings connected with actual or supposed illusions. The ambitious man has genuinely enjoyed the acclaim of the masses, regardless of whether he or someone else later recognizes this acclaim is an illusion. This later recognition does not at all diminish the happy feeling he already enjoyed. The elimination of all these "illusory" feelings from life's balance sheet does not make our judgment about our feelings more correct, but rather erases from life actual feelings that were experienced.

[19] And why should those feelings be eliminated? [Whoever has these feelings gains pleasure from them; whoever has conquered them gains through the experience of self-conquest an ennobled pleasure that is purely mental, but no less significant. (not from the vain emotion: "What a wonderful person I am!" but rather through the objective source of pleasure to be found in self-conquest) 1918] If feelings are deleted from the pleasure side of our account because they are attached to things that turn out to be illusion, we make the value of life dependent, not on the quantity, but on the quality of pleasure, and this quality, in turn, is made dependent on the value of the things that cause the pleasure. But if I set out

to determine the value of life by comparing the quantity of pleasure with the pain it brings, I have no right to bring in some other factor by which I first determine the value or non-value of the pleasure. If I say I will compare the amount of pleasure with the amount of pain and see which is greater, then I must take into account all pleasure and pain in their actual amounts, whether they are based on illusion or not. If I credit a lesser value to a pleasure that is based on an illusion than to one that can be justified by reason, then I make the value of life dependent on factors other than pleasure.

[20] To assess a pleasure at a lower value because it is derived from something frivolous is like a merchant who enters in his account the considerable profits of a toy factory at a quarter of their worth, on the grounds that the factory produces only playthings for children.

[21] When it is simply a question of weighing the amount of pleasure against the amount of pain, then the illusory character of certain things giving pleasure should be left entirely out of the picture.

### **13.7 Pursuit Of Pleasure (hopelessness of egotism)**

[22] The rational criticism of the quantities of pleasure and pain caused by life, the method recommended by Hartmann, has led us to the point where we know how to set up our account; we know what we have to put down on each side of our balance sheet. But how should the actual calculation be made? Is reason able to determine the balance?

[23] A merchant has made a mistake in his calculations if his calculated profit does not match a business's past profits that can be shown or can be projected as future gains. Likewise, a philosopher will have made a mistake in his estimate, if it is impossible to prove that his estimated surplus of pleasure—or, as the case may be, of pain—that he has somehow reasoned out, is actually felt.

[24] For the moment, I will disregard the calculations of the Pessimists who support their view of the value of the world with rational estimation. However, someone who has to decide whether to carry on the business of life or not will demand to be shown where the alleged surplus of pain is to be found.

[25] Here we touch the point where reason alone is not in a position to determine the surplus of pleasure or pain, but where this surplus must be shown in life as something actually felt. For human beings cannot attain the reality (truth) of things through concepts alone, but only through the interpenetration, mediated by thinking, of concepts and percepts (and feelings are percepts) (see Chapter 5). A merchant, after all, will give up his business only if the losses calculated by his accountant are confirmed by the facts. If that does not happen, he will have the accountant calculate the figures again. This is exactly what a person will do in the business of life. If a philosopher tries to convince him that life contains more pain than pleasure, but he does not experience it that way, then he will say to the philosopher: "You have made a mistake in your theorizings; think it through again! But if a time comes when a business faces losses so great that its credit can no longer satisfy the creditors, then bankruptcy will result—even if the merchant's bookkeeping obscures the state of his affairs. Likewise, it would lead to bankruptcy in the business of life if a person's pain at some point became so great that no hope (credit) of future pleasure could get him through the pain.

[26] Now the number of those who commit suicide is relatively small compared with the number of those who live bravely on. Very few people give up the business of life because of the pain involved. What does that show? Either that it is not true to say that the amount of pain is greater than the amount of pleasure, or else we simply do not make the continuation of life dependent on the amount of pain or pleasure we feel.

[27] Eduard von Hartmann's Pessimism oddly declares that life has no value because it is dominated by pain, and yet maintains that we must go through with it anyways. We must do so because the world purpose mentioned above (13.3) can be achieved only through ceaseless, devoted human labor. But, as long as people are still pursuing their egotistical desires they are unfit for such selfless work.

[28] According to this view, then, the striving for pleasure is fundamentally inherent in human nature. Only out of insight into the impossibility of fulfillment does this striving withdraw and make way for higher human tasks.

[29] It cannot be said that Egotism is truly overcome by an ethical worldview that hopes to achieve devotion to selfless goals in life by the acceptance of Pessimism. Ethical ideals are said to be strong enough to master the will only if a person has recognized that his egotistical striving for pleasure does not lead to any satisfaction. The selfishness of the human being longs for the grapes of pleasure but declares them sour because they are beyond his reach, so he turns his back on them and devotes himself to a selfless way of life. In the Pessimist's view, moral ideals do not have the power to overcome Egotism. Instead, they establish their rulership on the ground cleared by the recognition of the hopelessness of Egotism.

[30] If it is the natural disposition of the human being to strive after pleasure, but he cannot possibly achieve it, then the annihilation of existence and salvation through non-existence would be the only sensible goal. And if we accept the view that the real bearer of the pain of the world is God, it follows that the task of human beings is to help bring about the deliverance of God. This goal, far from being advanced, is hindered by the suicide of the individual. God in his wisdom must have created human beings for the sole purpose of bringing about his salvation through their labor. Otherwise creation would have no purpose. Each one of us must carry out his appointed task in the universal work of deliverance. If he withdraws from his task through suicide, then someone else must do the work intended for him. Someone else must endure the agony of existence in his place. And since God is in every being as the real bearer of pain, the suicide has not diminished the quantity God's pain, but has rather imposed upon God the additional burden of providing a replacement to take over the task.

### **13.8 Value Of Pleasure (satisfaction of needs)**

[31] This whole theory presupposes that pleasure is the standard for the value of life. Life expresses itself through a number of instincts (needs). If the value of life depends on whether it brings more pleasure than pain, then an instinct that brings an excess of pain would have to be called valueless. Let us now examine instinct and pleasure to see whether the value of instinct can be measured by pleasure. In order to avoid the suspicion that life for us only begins with the "aristocratic intellect," we begin with a "purely animal" need: hunger.

[32] Hunger arises when our organs can no longer continue to function properly without a fresh supply of food. What a hungry person wants first of all is to satisfy the hunger. As soon as enough food has been taken in for the hunger to cease, everything that the instinct for food craved is achieved. The pleasure that comes with being satisfied consists primarily in putting an end to the pain caused by hunger. But in addition to the mere urge to eat, there is another need. By eating, the human being does not only want to restore normal organic functions and get rid of the pain of hunger, he also wants it to be accompanied by pleasurable sensations of taste. If he feels hungry and is within half an hour of an appetizing meal, he will even refuse inferior food that could satisfy him sooner, so as not to spoil his pleasure for the better food to come. He needs the hunger in order to get the full enjoyment from his meal. In this way hunger also becomes a source of pleasure for him. Now if all the existing hunger in the world could be satisfied, it would result in the full measure of pleasure due to our desire for food. To this we would have to add the special enjoyment the gourmet achieves by cultivating his sense of taste beyond the ordinary.

[33] This enjoyment would have its highest possible value if all needs connected with this kind of enjoyment are satisfied and if a certain amount of pain did not have to be accepted into the bargain.

[34] Modern Science holds the view that Nature produces more life than it can sustain, that is to say, Nature produces more hunger than it can satisfy. In the struggle for survival, the surplus of life that is produced must perish in pain. Granted, the needs of life at any given moment in the course of the world are greater than the available means of satisfying them, and this does detract from the enjoyment of life. However, any individual enjoyment that actually does occur is not in the least reduced. Wherever a desire is satisfied, there is a corresponding amount of enjoyment, even if there is a large number of unsatisfied instincts in the desiring being itself or in others alongside it. What is diminished is the "value" of the enjoyment of life. If only a part of a living being's total needs are satisfied, it experiences



a corresponding degree of pleasure. This pleasure has a lower value, the smaller it is in proportion to the total demands made on life by the instinct in question. We can imagine this value represented by a fraction, whose numerator is the actually experienced pleasure, while the denominator is the sum total of needs. This fraction has the value of 1 when the numerator and the denominator are equal, that is, when all needs are fully satisfied. The value will be greater than 1 when the being experiences more pleasure than its desires demand, and it becomes less than 1 when the quantity of pleasure falls short of the sum total of desires. But the fraction can never have the value 0 as long as the numerator has any value at all, however small. If a person were to make a final account before his death, distributing over his whole life the amount of pleasure he had derived from a certain instinct—for example, hunger with all its demands—then the total pleasure he had experienced might have a very small value, but it could never be nil. In a case where the amount of pleasure remains constant the pleasure of life will diminish if the needs of the being increases. The same is true for the sum total of all life in nature. The greater the total number of creatures in proportion to those who are able to fully satisfy their instinctive cravings, the smaller is the average value of the pleasure of life. Our shares in life's pleasure in the form of instincts fall in value when there is no hope of cashing them in at their full value. If I get enough to eat for three days and then have to go hungry for the next three days, the enjoyment on the three days when I ate is not diminished. But, as I have to think of it as distributed over six days, its value for my need of food is reduced by half. The same applies to the amount of pleasure in relation to the degree of my need. If to satisfy my hunger I need two sandwiches but I can only get one, the enjoyment gained from eating the one sandwich has only half the value it would have had if it had satisfied my hunger. This is how the value of a pleasure is determined in life. It is measured by the needs of life. Our desires are the measure; pleasure is what is measured. The enjoyment of eating has a value only because hunger exists, and it attains a specific value in proportion to the degree of the existing hunger.

[35] Unfulfilled demands cast a shadow even over satisfied desires, and detract from the value of enjoyable hours. One can also speak of the value of a present feeling of pleasure. The present value of a pleasure is lower, the smaller the pleasure is compared to the duration and intensity of our desire.

[36] A quantity of pleasure has its highest value for us when it exactly matches the duration and intensity of our desire. A quantity of pleasure that is less than what is demanded by our desire reduces the value of the pleasure. A quantity that is greater produces a surplus which has not been demanded and is only felt as pleasure as long as we are able to increase the intensity of our desire during the enjoyment. If we are not able to increase our demand in order to keep pace with the increasing pleasure, then the pleasure turns into displeasure. The object that would otherwise satisfy us, overwhelms us without our wanting it, and makes us suffer. This proves that pleasure has value for us only to the extent that we can measure it against our desire. Excessive pleasure turns into pain. We can observe this especially in people who have very little desire for certain kinds of pleasure. In people whose desire for food is dulled, eating quickly leads to nausea. Again, we can see from this that desire is the measure of value for pleasure.

[37] The Pessimist might say that an instinct for food that remains unsatisfied is the cause not only of the loss of enjoyment, but also positive pain, suffering, and misery in the world. He can point to the untold misery of those who are starving, and to the vast amount of pain these people suffer indirectly from lack of food. And if he wants to widen his argument to the rest of nature, he can point to the suffering of animals that starve to death at certain times of the year. The Pessimist maintains that these evils far outweigh the amount of pleasure that the instinct for food brings into the world.

[38] There is no doubt that pleasure and pain can be compared, and one can estimate the surplus of one or the other much as we do in the case of profit and loss. But if the Pessimist believes that life has no value because it contains an excess of pain, he is mistaken, for the simple reason that he makes a calculation that is not made in real life.

### 13.9 Will For Pleasure (intensity of desire)

[39] In each case, our desire is directed toward a specific object. As we have seen, the greater our pleasure is that matches the intensity of our desire, the higher the value of pleasure in satisfying the desire. And how much pain we are willing to accept in order to achieve the pleasure also depends on the intensity of our desire. We do not compare the amount of pain with the amount of pleasure, but with the intensity of our desire. Because of his enjoyment in better times, someone who takes great pleasure in eating will find it easier to endure a period of hunger than someone else who lacks this joy of satisfying his instinct for food. A woman who wants a child does not compare the joy of having one with the amount of pain due to pregnancy and childbirth, but with her desire to have the child.

[40] We never strive for an abstract amount of pleasure, but for concrete satisfaction in a very specific way. If the pleasure we want can be derived only from a specific object or sensation, no other object or sensation will do, even if the amount of pleasure derived from it would be the same. Someone who wants to satisfy his hunger cannot replace the pleasure of eating by the same amount of pleasure he derives from going for a walk. Our desire would disappear only if, in a general way, it was for a certain amount of pleasure, and the price of achieving it turned out to be an even greater amount of pain. It is because we strive for a specific kind of satisfaction that we experience the pleasure of fulfillment, even if, along with it, a greater amount of pain must be accepted. The reason we cannot set down in our account the pain endured in achieving the goal as a factor of equal value to the pleasure, is because the drives of instinctive life move in a specific direction and go straight toward concrete goals. Provided the desire is strong enough to still exist to some degree after overcoming the pain—no matter how great the pain—the pleasure of satisfaction can still be enjoyed to its full extent. Thus the desire does not directly compare the pleasure sought with the pain involved in attaining it, but indirectly measures its own intensity with that of the pain. The question is not whether the pleasure to be gained is greater than the pain involved, but whether the desire for the goal is greater than the resistance of the pain involved in reaching that goal. If the resistance is greater than the desire, then the desire gives way to the inevitable, it weakens and strives no further. Since a specific kind of satisfaction is demanded, the pleasure connected with it acquires an importance that makes it possible—after satisfaction has occurred—to take account of the pain only to the extent that it has reduced the intensity of our desire. A passionate admirer of beautiful views never directly compares the amount of pleasure he gains from the mountain top view with the amount of pain caused by the laborious ascent and descent. What he does consider is whether his desire for the view will still be sufficiently intense after all obstacles have been conquered. Pleasure and pain can only be compared indirectly through the strength of the desire. The question is not whether there is more pleasure or more pain, but whether the will for pleasure is strong enough to overcome the pain.

[41] A proof of the correctness of this view is the fact that we put a higher value on pleasure when attained at the cost of great pain, than when it simply falls into our lap like a gift from heaven. When our desire has been tempered by pain and suffering and yet the goal is still achieved, then the pleasure in proportion to the remaining desire is all the greater. As I have shown (p. xxx) this proportion represents the value of pleasure. A further proof is given through the fact that living creatures (including humans) will seek to satisfy their instincts for as long as they are able to endure the pain and suffering involved. The struggle for existence is only a result of this fact. All existing life strives to express itself, and only those give up the fight whose desire is stifled by the force of the opposing difficulties. Every living creature seeks food until lack of food destroys its life. A human being, too, only takes his own life if he believes (rightly or wrongly) that the goals of life worth striving for are beyond his reach. He will battle against all suffering and pain for as long as he believes there is a possibility of achieving the things he considers worth striving for. Philosophy would first have to convince the human being that an act of will makes sense only when the pleasure is greater than the pain; for according to his nature he will strive to achieve what he desires for as long as he can endure the unavoidable pain, no matter how great. But such a philosophy would be mistaken because it makes

the human will dependent on a factor (the surplus of pleasure over pain) which is basically foreign to human nature. The fundamental measure of the will is desire, and desire presses forward as long as it can. Suppose that, when buying a certain quantity of apples, I am required to take twice as many bad apples as good ones, because the seller wants to clear out his stock. I will not hesitate to take the bad apples as well if I value the good ones highly enough that, in addition to the purchase price, I am willing to accept the effort of disposing of the bad ones. This example illustrates the relationship between the amounts of pleasure and pain resulting from an instinct. I determine the value of the good apples, not by subtracting them from the number of bad ones, but by assessing whether the good ones still have value for me despite the presence of the bad ones.

[42] And just as I disregard the bad apples in my enjoyment of the good ones, so I give myself up to the satisfaction of a desire after having shaken off the unavoidable pains.

[43] Even if Pessimism was right in its claim that there is more pain than pleasure in the world, it would have no influence on the will, for living beings would still strive after whatever pleasure remains. The empirical proof that pain outweighs pleasure is certainly effective for showing the futility of that school of thought that sees the value of life in a surplus of pleasure (Eudaemonism). It would not, however, be suitable for showing that will in general is irrational, for the will does not seek a surplus of pleasure, but what pleasure remains after enduring the pain. This remaining pleasure still appears as a goal worth striving for.

### **13.10 Magnitude Of Pleasure (amusement)**

[44] There are those who attempt to refute Pessimism on the grounds that it is not possible to calculate whether there is a surplus of pleasure or of pain in the world. Calculation is possible only if the things to be calculated are comparable in respect of their magnitudes. Every pain and every pleasure has a specific magnitude (intensity and duration). We can also compare the approximate magnitudes of different kinds of pleasurable feelings. We know whether a good cigar or a good joke gives us more pleasure. No objections can be raised against comparing different kinds of pleasure and pain according to their magnitudes. A researcher who sets out to discover whether there is a surplus of pleasure or of pain in the world starts from a legitimate premise. One may be able to show that the conclusions of Pessimism are false, but it cannot be disputed that it is possible to scientifically estimate the quantities of pleasure and pain, and from this determine the balance of pleasure. But it is incorrect to claim that the result of this calculation has any influence on the human will. The only case where our actions really depend on a surplus of pleasure is when we are indifferent about the thing toward which our activity is directed. When it is only a matter of deciding whether to amuse myself after work with a game or light conversation, and I am indifferent as to which of the two I choose, then I simply ask myself: Which will give me the most pleasure? And I will definitely abandon the activity if the scale dips toward the side of displeasure. When buying a toy for a child our choice depends on which toy we think will give the child the most pleasure. In all other cases we do not base our decisions exclusively on the balance of pleasure.

### **13.11 Highest Pleasure (realization of moral ideals)**

[45] When the Pessimistic ethicist believes that he prepares the way for selfless devotion to cultural progress by showing that life contains more pain than pleasure, he overlooks that the human will, by its very nature, is not influenced by this knowledge. Human striving is directed towards the greatest possible satisfaction that is attainable after all difficulties are conquered. The hope of this satisfaction is the foundation of all human activity. The work of every individual and the whole achievement of civilization springs from this hope. The Pessimistic theory of Ethics believes that it is necessary to present the pursuit of happiness as an illusion in order to induce the human being to devote himself to his proper ethical tasks. But these ethical tasks are precisely what his actual natural and spiritual instincts desire, and he will strive to satisfy them despite the accompanying pain. In fact, the pursuit of happiness that Pessimism wants to eradicate does not exist. Once the human being recognizes his true tasks he fulfills them, because it is in his very nature that he wants to fulfill them. According to ethics

based on Pessimism the human being will devote himself to his proper task in life only when he has given up the pursuit of happiness. But no system of ethics can invent any life tasks for the human being other than realizing the things he desires, and fulfilling his moral ideals. No ethics can take from him the pleasure he has in bringing to fulfillment what he wants. When the Pessimist says, "Do not strive for pleasure, for you can never attain it; strive rather for what you recognize to be your task," we must reply, "It is inherent in human nature to do just that. The notion that he strives merely for happiness is the invention of a philosophy going off on false paths." His aim is to satisfy what his nature demands. He does not have some abstract "happiness" in mind, his pleasure is the achievement of concrete objectives. When Pessimistic Ethics demands that you not strive for pleasure, but instead strive to achieve what you recognize as your life's task, it points to the very thing that humans by their nature want. There is no need for philosophy to turn the human being inside out, he does not have to deny his nature in order to be ethical. Morality means the striving for a goal one has recognized as justified; it lies in human nature to pursue this goal as long as the pain involved does not completely extinguish the desire for it. This is the character of all genuine will. Ethical behavior does not depend on the eradication of all striving for pleasure so that anemic abstract ideas can establish their rule unchallenged by a strong desire for enjoyment in life. Ethics depends on a strong will carried by ideal intuitions that achieves its goal even though the path is full of thorns.

[46] Ethical ideas spring from human moral imagination. To achieve them depends on whether he desires them intensely enough to overcome pain and suffering. Ethical ideals are human intuitions, the driving force harnessed by his spirit. He wants them, because their realization is his highest pleasure. He does not need ethics to forbid him to strive for pleasure and then tell him what he should strive for. He will strive for ethical ideals if his moral imagination is sufficiently active to inspire him with intuitions that give his will the strength to make its way through all resistance, including the inner obstacles and unavoidable pain lying within his organization.

[47] Whoever strives for sublimely great ideals does so because they are part of his nature, and to achieve them brings a joy compared with which the pleasure that impoverished spirits draw from satisfying everyday drives is trivial. Idealists revel in spirit in translating their ideals into reality.

[48] Whoever wants to eradicate the pleasure of fulfilling human desires must first make the human being into a slave who does not act because he wants to, but only because he ought to. For the achievement of what one wants to do gives pleasure. What is called "the Good," is not what a person ought to do, but what he wants to do when he expresses his fully developed true human nature. Those who cannot recognize this fact feel obligated first to drive out a person's own desires and then dictate to him from the outside what content he is to give his will.

[49] A human being values the fulfillment of a desire because the desire springs from his own nature. What is achieved has value because he wants it. If one denies any value to the goals of a human being's own will, then one has to find worthwhile goals in something that the human being does not want.

[50] A system of Ethics built on Pessimism arises from a disregard for moral imagination. Only those who consider the individual human mind as incapable of determining for itself the goals to strive for could see in the longing for pleasure the totality of the human will. A person who lacks imagination creates no ethical ideas. They must be given to him. Physical nature ensures that he strives to satisfy his lower desires. But the fully developed human being also contains desires that originate in the spirit. Only if one holds the view that the nature of the human being is completely devoid of any spiritual desires is it possible to claim that he must receive them from outside. And then it would also be justifiable to say that a person is duty bound to do things that he does not want to do. An Ethical system that demands a human being suppress his own will in order to fulfill tasks he does not want, does not take account of the whole human being, but with a stunted being who lacks the capacity for spiritual desire. In a harmoniously developed human being the ideals of virtue are not outside, but within the compass of his will. Ethical conduct does not come about by eradicating a one-sided personal will, but rather in fully developing human nature. Those who believe that ethical ideals are attainable only if the

human being destroys his individual will, ignore the fact that these ideals are wanted by the human being as much as he wants to satisfy his so-called animal instincts.

### **13.12 Joy Of Achievement (measure achievement against aims)**

[51] There is no denying that the views outlined here can easily be misunderstood. Immature people without moral imagination like to look at the instinctive life of their half-developed nature as the fullest expression of humanity, and reject all ethical ideas not created by them so that they can “live themselves out” without being disturbed. It is obvious that what is right for a fully developed human being does not apply to one who is only half-developed. What one expects from a fully developed person cannot be expected from the still immature who need to be brought by education to the point where their ethical nature breaks through the shell of their lower passions. It was not my intention to show what needs to be instilled into the undeveloped person, but what lies in the nature of a mature human being. My intention was to demonstrate that freedom is possible, that freedom manifests, not in acts of sensory or psychological constraint, but in those actions sustained by spiritual intuitions.

[52] The mature person is the maker of his own value. He does not strive for pleasure that is to him a gift of grace given by nature or by the Creator; nor does he live to fulfill what he is supposed to recognize as duty, after he has renounced all pursuit of pleasure. He acts as he wants to act—according to his moral intuitions—and he finds the true enjoyment of life in achieving what he wants. He determines the value of life by comparing what he has achieved with the goals striven for. An Ethical system which replaces "want to" with "ought to," inclination with duty, will, as a consequence, determine the value of a human being by comparing the demands of duty with the fulfillment of duty. It places a standard on a human being that does not apply to his true nature.

The view developed in this book points the human being back to himself. It recognizes the true value of life as nothing except what each individual regards as such by the measure of his own will. It knows of no value of life that is not recognized by the individual, just as it knows of no purpose of life that does not arise from these values. It sees in the all-around development of the human being, a true individuality who is his own master and the assessor of his own value.

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## **14. INDIVIDUALITY AND TYPE**

### **14.0 The Question Of Free Individuality**

[1] The view that the human being is an independent, free individuality seems to be contradicted by the fact that, as human beings, we make our appearance as members of a natural whole (race, tribe, nation, family, male or female) and we are active within a social whole (state, church, and so forth). We express the general characteristics of the community to which we belong, and what we do is defined by the position we hold within a larger social group.

[2] Given all this, is individuality even possible? Can we regard the individual human being as a self-contained whole, seeing that he grows out of one group and fits in as a member of another group?

#### **14.1 Group Type**

[3] The characteristics and function of each part of a whole are defined by the whole. An ethnic group is a whole, and all the members of an ethnic group have the characteristic traits that are conditioned by the nature of the tribe. How the single member is constituted and his general behavior will be determined by the character of the ethnic group. This is why the physiognomy and behavior of the individual has a typical quality. If we ask why a particular thing about a person is like this or like that, we are directed away from the individual person and toward his group type. The type is used to explain why something in the individual appears in the form we observe.

#### **14.2 Emancipation From Type**

[4] However, the human being frees himself from what is typical. When experienced properly, our

common qualities as members of the human race do not restrict freedom and should not by artificial means be made to do so. The human being develops qualities and activities of his own for reasons that can only be found in himself. The typical factors serve him only as a means to develop his own individual nature. He uses the characteristics given by nature as material, and gives them a form that expresses his own individuality. If we look to the laws of type to explain the expressions of human individuality we will seek in vain. We are dealing with an individual, and individuals can be explained only individually. When a human being has advanced to the point of emancipation from what is typical, and we still want to explain everything about that person in terms of type, then we have no sense for what is individual.

### **14.3 Judge According To Character**

[5] One can never completely understand a human being if one's judgment is based on concepts of the type. The tendency to judge according to type is most persistent where differences of sex are involved. Man sees in woman, and woman in man, nearly always too much of the general characteristics of the other sex, and too little of what is individual in the other. Positions in society are not always determined by the individual character of each person, but by what is generally considered to be the natural role and needs of a man or a woman. Our activity in life should be determined by our individual abilities and inclinations, not solely by the fact of being a man or a woman. No one should be the slave of the typical, to the general idea of manhood or womanhood.

### **14.4 Occupational Choice**

What lies in a person's nature to strive for had better be left to the person themselves to decide. If it is true that people are suited only to the occupations that they are now in, then they are unlikely to have it in them to attain any other on their own. But they must be allowed to decide for themselves what is and what is not appropriate to their nature. To all who fear a social upheaval should women be accepted as individuals rather than as members of their sex, it must be said that a social structure in which the status of half of humanity is beneath the dignity of a human being is itself in great need of improvement.

### **14.5 Free Self-Determination**

[6] Whoever judges people according to their typical characteristics stops short at the boundary line beyond which people begin to be individuals whose activity is based on free self-determination. What lies below this boundary line can naturally become the subject of academic study. The characteristics of race, ethnicity, nation and sex are the subjects of specific branches of study. Only a person who wishes to live as nothing more than an example of a type could possibly fit the general picture that emerges from this kind of academic study. None of these branches of study are able to reach the unique character of the single individual. Determining the individual according to the laws of his type ends, where the region of freedom (in thinking and acting) begins.

### **14.6 Free Thinking**

In order to have the full reality, the human being connects his conceptual content with perception by means of thinking. No one can fix this conceptual content once and for all, and hand it over to humanity in a finished form. Each individual must gain his concepts through his own intuition. How an individual should think cannot be derived from any concept of the type. It depends solely on the individual.

### **14.7 Find Innermost Core**

Nor is it possible to tell from general human traits what concrete goals an individual will choose to pursue. Anyone who wishes to understand the single individuality must find his way to the innermost core of his particular being, and not stop short at the level of typical characteristics. In this sense each human being is a separate challenge.

### **14.8 Individual Views And Actions**

And every kind of study concerned with abstract thoughts and concepts of type is only a preparation for the knowledge we gain when an individuality tells us his way of viewing the world. And preparation for the knowledge we gain from the content of his acts of will.

### **14.9 Knowing An Individuality**

Whenever we feel we are dealing with a person who is free of the stereotypical thinking and instinctive willing of a type, we must refrain from calling up any of our mind's preconceptions if we want to understand him. Knowledge consists in combining concepts with the perception by means of thinking. In the case of everything else, the observer gains his concepts through his intuition. But if we are to understand a free individuality we must receive into our mind those concepts by which he defines himself, in their pure form (without mixing in our own conceptual content). Those who immediately mix their own concepts into every judgment of others can never reach an understanding of an individuality. Just as the free individuality emancipates himself from typical characteristics, so must our method of knowing an individual emancipate itself from the method used to understand type.

### **14.10 Free Spirit In Community**

[7] A person can be considered a free spirit within a community only to the degree he has emancipated himself, in the way indicated, from the characteristic traits of his type. No human being is all type; none is all individuality, but every person gradually emancipates a greater or lesser part of his being from the animal-like life of the species and from the controlling decrees of human authorities.

### **14.11 Ethical Conduct**

[8] In the part of his nature where he is unable to win this freedom, he remains a member incorporated into the natural and social organism. In this regard, he lives by imitating others, or by obeying their commands. Only the part of his conduct that springs from his intuitions has ethical value in the true sense.

### **14.12 Moral Contribution To Humanity**

Free ethical conduct is his contribution to the already existing total of moral ideas. All moral activity of humanity has its source in individual ethical intuitions. One can also say that the moral life of humanity is the sum total of what free human individuals have produced through their moral imagination. This is the creed of Monism. Monism looks upon the history of the moral life, not as the education of the human race by a transcendent God, but as the gradual living out in practice of all concepts and ideas that spring from the moral imagination.

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