Excerpts from

Rudolf Steiner

The Philosophy of Freedom

(translated by DeepL)

Preface to the New Edition (1918)

Part I: The Science of Freedom

1. Conscious Human Action
2. **The Fundamental Impulse Toward Science**
3. **Thinking in the Service of Worldview**
4. **The World as Perception**
5. The Cognition of the World
6. Human Individuality
7. **Are There Limits to Knowledge?**

Part II: The Reality of Freedom

1. The Factors of Life
2. The Idea of Freedom
3. The Philosophy of Freedom and Monism
4. **The Purpose of the World and the Purpose of Life (Human Destiny)**
5. Moral Imagination (Darwinism and Morality)
6. The Value of Life (Pessimism and Optimism)
7. Individuality and the Species

Part III: The Ultimate Questions

1. **The Consequences of Monism**
2. First Appendix (Addendum to the 1918 New Edition)
3. Second Appendix (Preface to the First Edition of 1884)

Preface to the New Edition (1918)

There are two fundamental questions of human spiritual life around which everything to be discussed in this book is organized. The first is whether there is a way to view human existence such that this view serves as a foundation for everything else that comes to a person through experience or science, yet which the person feels cannot stand on its own. It might be driven into the realm of the uncertain by doubt and critical judgment. The other question is this: May human beings, as volitional beings, attribute freedom to themselves, or is this freedom a mere illusion that arises within them because they fail to see through the threads of necessity to which their volition is just as bound as a natural phenomenon? This question is not prompted by some artificial web of thought. It arises quite naturally before the soul in a certain state of mind. And one can sense that the soul would be lacking something of what it is meant to be if it did not confront the two possibilities—freedom or necessity of volition—with the utmost seriousness of inquiry. This treatise aims to show that the spiritual experiences a person must undergo through the second question depend on the perspective they are able to adopt toward the first. An attempt is made to demonstrate that there is a conception of human nature capable of underpinning all other knowledge; and a further attempt is made to indicate that, with this conception, the idea of freedom of the will gains full justification, provided only that the realm of the soul is found in which free volition can unfold.

The conception discussed here in relation to these two questions presents itself as one that, once attained, can become a living part of the soul itself. No theoretical answer is provided that, once acquired, is merely carried along as a conviction preserved in memory. For the mode of perception underlying this book, such an answer would be merely superficial. No such ready-made, definitive answer is given; rather, reference is made to a realm of soul experience in which, through the soul's own inner activity, the question is answered anew and vividly at every moment when a person needs it. Once one has found the realm of the soul in which these questions unfold, it is precisely the true insight into this realm that provides what one needs for these two mysteries of life—so that, with what has been attained, one may continue to journey through the breadth and depth of this enigmatic life, wherever need and destiny lead one to go. - A insight that proves its validity and significance through its own life and through the kinship of this life with the entire life of the human soul thus seems to have been revealed.

That is how I viewed the content of this book when I wrote it twenty-five years ago. Even today, I must put such sentences into writing if I am to characterize the central ideas of this work. When I wrote it back then, I limited myself to saying no more than what was most directly related to the two fundamental questions I had identified. If anyone should be surprised that this book contains no reference yet to the realm of spiritual experience—which I have described in my later writings—let them bear in mind that my intention at that time was not to present the results of spiritual research, but rather to lay the foundation upon which such results can rest. This *Philosophy of Freedom* contains no such specific findings, any more than it contains specific findings from the natural sciences; but what it does contain, in my opinion, is indispensable for anyone seeking a firm foundation for such insights. What is said in this book may also be acceptable to some people who, for whatever reasons they deem valid, wish to have nothing to do with the findings of my spiritual scientific research. But for those who can regard these findings in the field of spiritual science as something to which they are drawn, what has been attempted here may also be of importance. This is: to demonstrate how an unbiased examination, extending merely to the two questions identified as fundamental to all knowledge, leads to the insight that human beings live within a true spiritual world. This book seeks to justify an understanding of the spiritual realm prior to entering into spiritual experience. And this justification is undertaken in such a way that, in these expositions, one need not look to the experiences I later describe in order to find what is said here acceptable—provided one is able or willing to engage with the nature of these expositions themselves.

Thus, it seems to me that this book, on the one hand, occupies a position entirely separate from my actual spiritual scientific writings; and on the other hand, it is nevertheless most closely connected to them. All of this has prompted me, now, twenty-five years later, to republish the content of the work essentially almost entirely unchanged. I have only added longer supplements to a whole series of sections. The experiences I have had with misunderstandings of what I have said made such detailed expansions seem necessary to me. I have made changes only where what I intended to say a quarter-century ago now

seems to me to have been expressed clumsily. (Only someone acting in bad faith would be led by these changes to say that I have altered my fundamental convictions.)

The book has been out of print for many years. Nevertheless, as is evident from what I have just said, it seems to me that what I expressed twenty-five years ago regarding the issues in question should still be stated today; I hesitated for a long time before completing this new edition. I asked myself time and again whether I ought not, at this or that point, to engage with the numerous philosophical views that have come to light since the publication of the first edition. My recent preoccupation with my purely humanities-based research prevented me from doing so in the manner I would have desired. However, after examining contemporary philosophical work as thoroughly as possible, I have now convinced myself that, as tempting as such an examination might be in itself, it does not belong in this book given what it is intended to convey. What I felt needed to be said about more recent philosophical trends from the perspective taken in *The Philosophy of Freedom* can be found in the second volume of my *Riddles of Philosophy*.

April 1918
Rudolf Steiner

I.2. The Fundamental Drive Toward Science

Two souls dwell, alas! in my breast,
One wants to part from the other;
One, in crude lust for love,
Clinging to the world with grasping limbs;
The other rises forcefully from the dust
Toward the realms of lofty ancestors.
(Faust I, 1112–1117)

With these words, Goethe articulates a trait deeply rooted in human nature. Man is not a uniformly organized being. He always demands more than the world willingly gives him. Nature has given us needs; among these are some whose satisfaction she leaves to our own activity. The gifts allotted to us are abundant, but our desires are even more so. We seem to be born into dissatisfaction. Our thirst for knowledge is merely a particular manifestation of this dissatisfaction. We look at a tree twice. The first time, we see its branches at rest; the second time, in motion. We are not satisfied with this observation alone. Why does the tree appear to us at rest one moment and in motion the next? So we ask. Every glance at nature gives rise to a host of questions within us. With every phenomenon that presents itself to us, we are given a task.

Every experience becomes a mystery to us. We see a creature resembling its mother emerge from an egg; we ask about the reason for this resemblance. We observe growth and development in a living being up to a certain degree of perfection: we seek the conditions underlying this experience. Nowhere are we satisfied with what nature presents to our senses. Everywhere we search for what we call *an explanation* of the facts.

The excess of what we seek in things, beyond what is immediately given to us in them, splits our entire being into two parts; we become aware of our opposition to the world. We stand before the world as an independent being. The universe appears to us in these two opposites: *I* and *the world*.

We erect this dividing wall between ourselves and the world as soon as consciousness dawns within us. But we never lose the feeling that we do, after all, belong to the world, that there is a bond connecting us to it, that we are not a being *outside* but within the universe.

This feeling gives rise to the striving to bridge this opposition. And, in the final analysis, the entire spiritual striving of humanity consists in bridging this opposition. The history of spiritual life is a continuous search for unity between ourselves and the world. Religion, art, and science alike pursue this goal. The religious believer seeks, in the revelation that God bestows upon him, the solution to the world's mysteries posed by his ego, which is dissatisfied with the mere world of appearances. The artist seeks to imbue his material with the ideas of his ego in order to reconcile what lives within him with the external world. He, too, feels unsatisfied by the world of mere appearances and seeks to shape into it that "something more" which his self, transcending it, holds within. The thinker seeks the laws governing phenomena; through thought, he strives to penetrate what he experiences through observation. Only when we have made the *content of the world the content of* our *thoughts* do we rediscover the connection from which we have detached ourselves. We shall see later that this goal is achieved only if the task of the scientific researcher is understood in a much deeper sense than is often the case. The entire relationship I have outlined here is reflected in a phenomenon of world history: in the contrast between the unified worldview and the *Monism* and the theory of two worlds, or *dualism*. Dualism focuses solely on the separation between the self and the world as perceived by human consciousness. Its entire endeavor is a futile struggle to reconcile these opposites, which it calls by various names—sometimes *mind* and *matter,* sometimes *subject* and *object,* sometimes *thought* and *phenomenon*. It has a sense that there must be a bridge between the two worlds, but it is unable to find it. Insofar as human beings experience themselves as "I," they cannot help but conceive of this "I" as belonging to the realm of *spirit*; and insofar as they set this "I" in opposition to the world, they must include in the world the perceptual realm given to the senses—the *material* world. In this way, human beings place themselves within the opposition between spirit and matter. They must do so all the more since their own body belongs to the material world. The "I" thus belongs to the spiritual as a part; the *material* things and processes perceived by the senses belong to the "world." All mysteries relating to spirit and matter, man must find reflected in the fundamental mystery of his own being. *Monism* focuses solely on unity and seeks to deny or blur the opposites that once existed.

Neither of these two views is satisfactory, for they do not do justice to the facts. Dualism regards spirit (the "I") and matter (the "world") as two fundamentally different entities and therefore cannot comprehend how the two can interact with one another. How is the mind supposed to know what is happening in matter if its peculiar nature is entirely foreign to it? Or how, under these circumstances, is it supposed to act upon matter so that its intentions are translated into actions? The most ingenious and the most absurd hypotheses have been put forward to resolve these questions. But even with monism, the situation is not much better to this day. It has so far sought to resolve the issue in three ways: Either it denies the mind and becomes materialism; or it denies matter in order to seek salvation in spiritualism; or it asserts that even in the simplest entity in the world, matter and spirit are inseparably connected, which is why one need not be at all surprised when these two modes of existence appear in human beings, since they are never separate anywhere.

Materialism can never provide a satisfactory explanation of the world. For any attempt at an explanation must begin by reflecting on the phenomena of the world. Materialism therefore begins with the *concept* of matter or material processes. In doing so, it is already faced with two distinct realms of reality: the material world and our thoughts about it. It seeks to understand the latter by conceiving of them as a purely material process. It believes that thinking occurs in the brain in much the same way as digestion occurs in the animal organs. Just as it attributes mechanical and organic effects to matter, it also ascribes to it the ability to think under certain conditions. It forgets that it has merely shifted the problem to another location. Instead of attributing the ability to think to itself, it attributes it to matter. And with that, it is back at its starting point. How does matter come to reflect on its own nature? Why is it not simply content with itself and accepts its existence? The materialist has turned his gaze away from the specific subject—from our own "I"—and has arrived at an indeterminate, nebulous construct. And here he is confronted with the same enigma. The materialist view is unable to solve the problem, but only to postpone it.

What about the spiritualist view? The pure *spiritualist* denies matter's independent existence and conceives of it solely as a product of the spirit. If he applies this worldview to unraveling his own human nature, he finds himself cornered. The "I," which can be placed on the side of the spirit, is abruptly confronted by the sensory world. No *spiritual* access to this world seems to open up; it must be perceived and experienced by the "I" through material processes. The "I" does not find such material processes within itself if it wishes to regard itself solely as a spiritual entity. In what it achieves spiritually, there is never the sensory world within. The "I" seems to have to admit that the world would remain closed to it if it did not relate to it in a non-spiritual way. Likewise, when we set out to act, we must translate our intentions into reality with the help of material substances and forces. We are therefore dependent on the external world. The most extreme spiritualist—or, if you will, the thinker who, through absolute idealism, presents himself as an extreme spiritualist—is *Johann Gottlieb Fichte.* He attempted to derive the entire structure of the world from the "I." What he actually succeeded in creating was a magnificent *mental image* of the world, devoid of any empirical content. Just as it is impossible for the materialist to do away with the spirit, so too is it impossible for the spiritualist to do away with the material external world.

Because when a person directs their cognition toward the "I," they first perceive the activity of this "I" in the conceptual structuring of the world of ideas, the spiritualistically oriented worldview—when considering one's own human nature—may feel tempted to recognize only this world of ideas as the spirit. In this way, spiritualism becomes a one-sided form of idealism. It fails to seek a *spiritual* world *through* the world of ideas; it sees the world of ideas itself as the spiritual world. Consequently, it is compelled to remain, as if spellbound, within the sphere of activity of the "I" itself with its worldview.

A curious variant of idealism is the view *of Friedrich Albert Lange,* as he presented it in his widely read *History of Materialism*: he assumes that materialism is entirely correct in explaining all worldly phenomena, including our thinking, as the product of purely material processes; only, conversely, matter and its processes are themselves again a product of our thinking.

> *"The senses give us ... the effects of things, not faithful images, or even the things themselves. But these mere effects also include the senses themselves, along with the brain and the molecular movements conceived within it."*

In other words, our thinking is produced by material processes, and these in turn are produced by the thinking of the "I." Lange's philosophy is thus nothing other than the story of the intrepid Münchhausen—

who holds himself aloft in midair by a tuft of his own hair—translated into concepts. The third form of monism is that which sees the two entities—matter and spirit—already united in the simplest entity (the atom). However, this achieves nothing other than shifting the question that actually arises in our consciousness to a different arena. How does the simple entity come to express itself in a dual manner if it is an indivisible unity?

In response to all these viewpoints, it must be asserted that the fundamental and primordial contradiction first confronts us within our own consciousness. It is we ourselves who detach ourselves from the fertile soil of nature and set ourselves, as "I," in opposition to the "world." *Goethe* expresses this classically in his essay "Nature," even if his approach may at first seem entirely unscientific:

> *"We live in the midst of it (Nature) and are strangers to it. It speaks to us ceaselessly and does not reveal its secret to us."*

But Goethe also recognizes the flip side:

> *"All people are within her, and she is within all of them."*

Just as it is true that we have become estranged from nature, so it is true that we feel: we are within her and belong to her. It can only be her own workings that also live within us.

We must find our way back to her. A simple reflection can show us this path. We have indeed torn ourselves away from nature; but we must surely have brought something of it over into our own being. We must seek out this natural essence within us, and then we will find the connection again. Dualism fails to do this. It regards the human inner being as a spiritual entity entirely alien to nature and seeks to link this to nature. No wonder it cannot find the connecting link. We can find nature outside ourselves only if we first know it *within* ourselves. Its counterpart within our own inner being will be our guide. Thus, our path is laid out before us. We do not wish to engage in speculation about the interaction between nature and spirit. Rather, we wish to descend into the depths of our own being to find there those elements we have carried with us in our flight from nature. The exploration of our being must bring us the solution to the riddle. We must reach a point where we can say to ourselves: Here we are no longer merely "I"; here lies something that is more than "I."

I am prepared for the fact that some who have read this far may not find my remarks "in accordance with the current state of science." To that I can only reply that I have not sought to deal with any scientific findings thus far, but rather with the simple description of what everyone experiences in their own consciousness. The fact that a few sentences about consciousness's attempts to reconcile itself with the world have found their way into this discussion serves only the to clarify the actual facts. I have therefore not attached any importance to using individual terms such as "I," "mind," "world," "nature," and so on in the precise manner customary in psychology and philosophy. Everyday consciousness does not recognize the sharp distinctions of science, and so far the focus has been solely on capturing the facts of everyday life. I am not concerned with how science has interpreted consciousness thus far, but rather with how it manifests itself from moment to moment.

I.3. Thinking in the Service of a Worldview

When I observe how a billiard ball, upon being struck, transfers its motion to another, I have absolutely no influence on the course of this observed process. The direction and speed of the second ball are determined by the direction and speed of the first. As long as I remain merely an observer, I cannot say anything about the motion of the second ball until it has actually occurred. The situation is different when I begin to reflect on the content of my observation. The purpose of my reflection is to form concepts about the process. I relate the concept of an elastic ball to certain other concepts of mechanics and take into account the specific circumstances prevailing in the case at hand. I thus seek to add a second process—one that takes place in the conceptual sphere—to the process that unfolds without my intervention. The latter depends on me. This is evident in that I can content myself with observation and refrain from seeking concepts altogether if I have no need for them. But if this need does exist, then I am not satisfied until I have established a certain connection between the concepts of sphere, elasticity, motion, impact, velocity, etc., to which the observed process stands in a specific relationship. Just as certain as it is that the event takes place independently of me, so certain is it that the conceptual process cannot take place without my intervention. Whether this activity of mine is truly the outflow of my independent being, or whether the modern physiologists are correct in saying that we cannot think as we wish, but must think as determined by the thoughts and thought connections currently present in our consciousness (see *Ziehen,* Leitfaden der physiologischen Psychologie, Jena 1893, p. 171), will be the subject of a later discussion. For now, let us simply establish the fact that we feel constantly compelled to seek concepts and conceptual connections for the objects and events presented to us without our intervention, which stand in a certain relationship to them. Whether this activity is truly *our* own, or whether we carry it out in accordance with an inescapable necessity, we will leave open for the time being.

There is no question that it initially appears to us as our own. We know very well that the concepts of objects are not given to us at the same time as the objects themselves. That I myself am the agent may be based on an illusion; in any case, this is how the matter presents itself to immediate observation. The question now is: what do we gain by finding a conceptual counterpart to an event?

There is a profound difference between the way the parts of a process relate to one another for me before and after the discovery of the corresponding concepts. Mere observation can follow the course of the parts of a given process; however, their interrelationship remains obscure without the aid of concepts. I see the first billiard ball moving toward the other in a certain direction and at a certain speed; I must wait to see what happens after the shot is made, and even then I can only follow it with my eyes. Suppose, at the moment of the strike, someone blocks my view of the field where the event is taking place; then I—as a mere observer—have no knowledge of what happens afterward. The situation is different if I have identified the appropriate concepts for the constellation of relationships before my view was blocked. In this case, I can describe what happens even after the possibility of observation ceases. A process or object that is merely observed reveals nothing of its own about its connection to other processes or objects. This connection only becomes apparent when observation is combined with thought.

Observation and thought are the two starting points for all human intellectual endeavor, insofar as one is conscious of such an endeavor. The workings of common sense and the most complex scientific research rest on these two pillars of our mind. Philosophers have taken various fundamental oppositions as their starting points: idea and reality, subject and object, phenomenon and thing-in-itself, self and non-self, idea and will, concept and matter, force and substance, the conscious and the unconscious. However, it can easily be shown that all these oppositions must be preceded by that of *observation* and *thought,* which is the most important for human beings.

Whatever principle we may establish, we must demonstrate it somewhere as something we have observed, or express it in the form of a clear thought that can be contemplated by anyone else. Every philosopher who begins to speak of his fundamental principles must make use of the conceptual form of " " and thus of thought. In doing so, he indirectly admits that he already presupposes thought as a prerequisite for his activity. Whether thinking or something else is the primary element in the development of the world remains undecided here. But it is clear from the outset that without thinking, the philosopher cannot gain any knowledge of it. Thinking may play a secondary role in the coming into being of worldly phenomena, but it certainly plays a primary role in the formation of a view regarding them.

As for observation, it is inherent in our nature that we require it. Our thinking about a horse and the object "horse" are two things that appear separate to us. And this object is accessible to us only through observation. Just as we cannot form a concept of a horse merely by staring at it, we are equally incapable of producing a corresponding object through thought alone.

In terms of time, observation even precedes thinking. For we must first learn about thinking itself through observation. It was essentially the description of an observation when, at the beginning of this chapter, we illustrated how thinking is sparked by a process and extends beyond what is given without its intervention. We become aware of everything that enters the sphere of our experiences only through observation. The content of sensations, perceptions, intuitions, emotions, acts of will, dream and fantasy constructs, mental images, concepts, and ideas—as well as all illusions and hallucinations—are given to us through *observation*. Yet thinking, as an object of observation, differs significantly from all other things. The observation of a table or a tree occurs in me as soon as these objects appear on the horizon of my experiences. But I do not observe my thinking about these objects at the same time. I observe the table; I engage in thinking about the table, but I do not observe that thinking at the very same moment. I must first place myself in a position outside my own activity if I wish to observe not only the table but also my thinking about the table. While the observation of objects and events and the thinking about them are entirely everyday states that fill my ongoing life, the observation of thought is a kind of exceptional state. This fact must be taken into account appropriately when it comes to determining the relationship of thought to all other objects of observation. One must be clear that, in observing thought, one applies to it a procedure that constitutes the normal state for the consideration of the entire rest of the world's content, but which does not occur for thought itself in the course of this normal state.

Someone might object that what I have noted here about thinking also applies to feeling and the other mental activities. For example, when we experience a feeling of pleasure, it is also aroused by an object, and while I observe this object, I do not observe the feeling of pleasure itself.

This objection, however, is based on a mistake. Pleasure is by no means in the same relationship to its object as the concept formed by thought. I am most certainly aware that the concept of a thing is formed through my own activity, whereas pleasure is produced in me by an object in a similar way to, for example, the change that a falling stone brings about in an object upon which it strikes. For observation, pleasure is given in exactly the same way as the process that causes it. The same does not apply to the concept. I can ask: Why does a certain process produce the feeling of pleasure in me? But I cannot at all ask: Why does a process produce a certain set of concepts in me? That would simply make no sense. When I reflect on a process, it is not at all a matter of an effect on me. I cannot learn anything about myself simply by knowing the corresponding concepts for the observed change caused by a stone thrown against a windowpane.

But I do learn something about my personality when I recognize the feeling that a certain event arouses in me. When I say of an observed object, "This is a rose," I am not saying the slightest thing about myself; but when I say of the same thing, "It gives me a feeling of pleasure," I have characterized not only the rose but also myself in my relationship to the rose.

There can therefore be no question of equating thinking with the feeling of observation. The same could easily be deduced for the other activities of the human mind. In relation to thinking, they belong in the same category as other observed objects and processes. It is precisely part of the peculiar nature of thought that it is an activity directed solely at the observed object and not at the thinking person. This is already evident in the way we express our thoughts about a thing, in contrast to our feelings or acts of will. When I see an object and recognize it as a table, I generally do not say, "I am thinking about a table," but rather, "This is a table." I will, however, say, "I am pleased with the table." In the former case, it is simply not important to me to express that I am entering into a relationship with the table; in the latter case, however, it is precisely this relationship that is at issue. With the statement "I am thinking about a table," I already enter into the exceptional state characterized above, in which something is made the object of observation that is always included in our mental activity but not as an observed object.

This is the peculiar nature of thinking: that the thinker forgets the act of thinking while he is engaged in it. It is not the act of thinking that occupies him, but the object of thought that he observes.

The first observation we make about thinking, then, is that it is the unobserved element of our ordinary mental life.

The reason we do not observe thinking in our everyday mental life is none other than that it is based on our own activity. What I do not produce myself enters my field of observation as an object. I find myself confronted with it as something that has come into being independently of me; it approaches me; I must accept it as the prerequisite for my thought process. While I reflect on the object, I am engaged with it; my gaze is directed toward it. This engagement is precisely the act of thinking. My attention is directed not toward my own activity, but toward the object of that activity.

In other words: while I am thinking, I do not focus on my own thinking—which I bring about myself—but on the object of thought, which I do not bring about.

I am in the same situation even when I allow an exceptional state to occur and reflect on my thinking itself. I can never observe my present thinking; rather, I can only make the experiences I have had regarding my thought process the object of thought afterward. I would have to split myself into two personalities—one that thinks and the other that observes this thinking—if I wanted to observe my present thinking. I cannot do that. I can only carry this out in two separate acts. The thinking that is to be observed is never the thinking that is currently in progress, but rather another. Whether I make my observations for this purpose on my own past thinking, or whether I follow another person's thought process, or finally, whether I assume a fictitious thought process—as in the above case with the movement of billiard balls—is irrelevant.

Two things are incompatible: active creation and contemplative comparison. Even the first book of Moses knows this. In the first six days of creation, it has God bring the world into being, and only once it exists is it possible to contemplate it: "And God saw everything that He had made; and behold, it was very good." So it is with our thinking as well. It must first be there before we can observe it.

The reason that makes it impossible for us to observe thought in its immediate course is the same reason that allows us to perceive it more directly and intimately than any other process in the world. Precisely because we produce it ourselves, we know the characteristic features of its course—the way in which the events involved unfold. What can be discovered only indirectly in other spheres of observation—the objective connection and the relationship between individual objects—we know in the case of thinking in a completely immediate way. I do not know offhand why, in my observation, thunder follows lightning; I know immediately— —from the contents of the two concepts why my thinking connects the *concept* of thunder with that of lightning. Of course, it does not matter at all whether I have the correct concepts of lightning and thunder. The connection between the concepts I do have is clear to me, and indeed through the concepts themselves.

This transparent clarity regarding the thought process is entirely independent of our knowledge of the physiological foundations of thought. I am speaking here of thought insofar as it arises from the observation of our mental activity. How one material process in my brain triggers or influences another while I am performing a mental operation is not at all relevant here. What I observe about thinking is not which process in my brain links the concept of lightning with that of thunder, but rather what prompts me to relate the two concepts in a certain way. My observation shows that, in making these mental connections, I have nothing to guide me other than the content of my thoughts; I do not base my thinking on the physical processes in my brain. In an age less materialistic than our own, this remark would, of course, be entirely superfluous. At present, however, when there are people who believe that if we know what matter is, we will also know how matter thinks, it must be said that one can speak of thought without immediately coming into conflict with brain physiology. Today, many people find it difficult to grasp the concept of thought in its purity. Anyone who immediately counters the conception of thought I have developed here with *Cabanis's* statement—"The brain secretes thoughts just as the liver secretes bile, the salivary gland secretes saliva, and so on"—simply does not know what I am talking about. They seek to discover thinking through a mere process of observation, in the same way we proceed with other objects of the world. But they cannot find it this way, because, as I have demonstrated, it eludes normal observation precisely in this regard. Anyone who cannot overcome materialism lacks the ability to bring

about within themselves the exceptional state I have described, which brings to their consciousness what remains unconscious in all other mental activity. With someone who lacks the good will to adopt this perspective, one could discuss thinking no more than one could discuss color with a blind person. But let him not believe that we regard physiological processes as thinking. He does not explain thinking because he does not perceive it at all. For anyone, however, who has the ability to observe thinking—and with good will, every normally organized person has it—this observation is the most important one they can make. For he observes something of which he himself is the creator; he is not confronted with an object that is initially foreign to him, but with his own activity. He knows how what he observes comes about. He understands the circumstances and relationships. A firm foundation has been established from which one can search, with justified hope, for an explanation of the rest of the phenomena of the world.

The feeling of having such a fixed point led the founder of modern philosophy, Renatus Cartesius, to base all human knowledge on the proposition: *"I think, therefore I am*." All other things, all other events exist without me; I do not know whether they are truth, an illusion, or a dream. There is only one thing I know with absolute certainty, for I myself bring it into secure existence: my thinking. Whether it may have another origin, whether it may come from God or elsewhere—that it exists in the sense in which I myself bring it into being, of that I am certain. At first, Descartes had no justification for attributing any other meaning to this proposition. He could only assert that, within the content of the world, I perceive myself in my thinking as my very own activity. Much has been debated regarding what the attached phrase—*"therefore I am*"—is supposed to mean. However, it can have meaning only under a single condition. The simplest statement I can make about a thing is that it *is,* that it exists. How, then, this existence is to be defined more precisely cannot be stated immediately, at the very moment, for any thing that enters the horizon of my experiences. Every object must first be examined in relation to others in order to determine in what sense one can speak of it as existing. An experienced event can be a sum of perceptions, but it can also be a dream, a hallucination, and so on. In short, I cannot say in what sense it exists. I will not be able to deduce this from the event itself, but I will learn it when I consider it in relation to other things. Yet even then, I cannot know *more* than how it stands in relation to these things. My search only finds firm ground when I find an object from which I can derive the meaning of its existence from the object itself. But that object is myself as a thinking being, for I give my existence the specific, self-contained content of thinking activity. Now I can proceed from there and ask: Do other things exist in the same sense or in a different one?

When one makes thought the object of observation, one adds to the rest of the observed content of the world something that otherwise escapes attention; but one does not change the way in which a person relates to other things. One increases the number of objects of observation, but not the method of observation. While we observe other things, a process—which I now include in the events of the world—intervenes in the world's events, a process that is overlooked. There is something present that is distinct from all other events, yet it is not taken into account. But when I examine my own thinking, no such unaccounted-for element is present. For what now hovers in the background is, in turn, nothing but thinking itself. The observed object is qualitatively the same as the activity directed toward it. And this, in turn, is a characteristic feature of thinking.

When we make it the object of our consideration, we are not compelled to do so with the aid of something qualitatively different, but we can remain within the same element.

When I weave an object—given without my intervention—into my thinking, I go beyond my observation, and the question then arises: What gives me the right to do so? Why don't I simply let the object act upon me? In what way is it possible for my thinking to have a relationship to the object?

These are questions that anyone who reflects on their own thought processes must ask themselves. They fall away when one reflects on thought itself. We add nothing foreign to thought; therefore, we need not justify such an addition.

Schelling says: "To know nature is to create nature."—Anyone who takes these words of the bold natural philosopher literally will likely have to forgo all knowledge of nature for the rest of their life. For nature already exists, and to create it a second time, one must recognize the principles according to which it came into being. In order to create a nature that one first intended to create, one would have to observe

the conditions of existence in the nature that already exists. This act of observation, which would have to precede creation, would, however, constitute the recognition of nature—even if, after the observation had been made, the act of creation were to be entirely omitted. Only a nature that does not yet exist could be created without *first* recognizing it.

What is impossible in nature—creating before understanding—we accomplish in thought. If we were to wait to think until we had understood it, we would never get around to it. We must resolutely set out to think in order to arrive at its understanding afterward by observing what we have done ourselves. We ourselves first create an object for the observation of thought. The existence of all other objects has been provided for without our intervention.

One could easily counter my statement—"we must think before we can observe thinking"—with another equally valid one: "we cannot wait to digest until we have observed the process of digestion." That would be an objection similar to the one Pascal raised against Descartes, when he claimed that one could also say, "I go for a walk, therefore I am." Certainly, I must also digest resolutely before I have studied the physiological process of digestion.

But this could only be compared to the contemplation of thought if, afterward, I were not to contemplate digestion thoughtfully, but rather to eat and digest. After all, it is not without reason that, while digestion is not the object of digestion, thought can very well become the object of thought.

So there is no doubt: in thinking, we hold onto a corner of world events where we must be present if anything is to come about. And that is precisely what matters. That is precisely the reason why things appear so enigmatic to me: that I am so uninvolved in their coming about. I simply find them as they are; but in thinking, I know how it is done. Therefore, there is no more fundamental starting point for contemplating all worldly events than thinking.

I would now like to mention a widespread misconception that prevails with regard to thinking. It consists in the claim that thinking, as it is in and of itself, is not given to us anywhere. Thinking, which connects the observations of our experiences and weaves them together with a network of concepts, is by no means the same as that which we subsequently extract again from the objects of observation and make the object of our contemplation. What we first unconsciously weave into things is said to be entirely different from what we then consciously extract again.

Anyone who draws this conclusion fails to understand that, in this way, it is not at all possible for them to escape thought. I cannot step outside of thought at all if I wish to contemplate thought. If one distinguishes preconscious thought from subsequent conscious thought, one should not forget that this distinction is entirely external and has nothing to do with the matter itself.

I do not in any way turn one thing into another simply by contemplating it. I can imagine that a being with sensory organs of a completely different nature and with an intelligence that functions differently would have a completely different conception of a horse than I do, but I cannot imagine that my own thinking becomes something different simply because I observe it. I observe for myself what I myself accomplish. How my thinking appears to an intelligence other than my own is not the issue here; rather, the issue is how it appears to me. In any case, however, the image *of my* thinking in another intelligence cannot be any truer than my own. Only if I were not the thinking being myself, but rather if thinking were presented to me as the activity of a being alien to me, could I say that my image of thinking does indeed appear in a certain way; but as for what the thinking of that being is in and of itself, I could not know that.

However, for the time being, I have not the slightest reason to view my own thinking from a different standpoint. After all, I perceive the entire rest of the world through the medium of thought. Why should I make an exception for my own thinking?

I therefore consider it sufficiently justified to proceed from thought in my view of the world. When Archimedes invented the lever, he believed that with its help he could lift the entire cosmos out of its hinges, if only he could find a point where he could rest his instrument. He needed something that is supported by itself, not by anything else. In thought, we have a principle that exists by itself. Let us attempt

to comprehend the world from this vantage point. We can grasp thought through thought itself. The only question is whether, through it, we can also grasp something else through it.

So far, I have spoken of thought without taking into account its bearer, human consciousness. Most contemporary philosophers will object: before there can be thought, there must be consciousness. Therefore, one must start from consciousness and not from thought. There is no thought without consciousness. To this I must reply: If I wish to gain clarity on the relationship between thought and consciousness, I must reflect on it. In doing so, I presuppose thought. Now, one might of course reply: When the philosopher wishes to *understand* consciousness, he makes use of thought; in that sense, he presupposes it; but in the ordinary course of life, thought arises within consciousness and thus presupposes it. If this answer were given to the creator of the world, who wishes to create thought, it would undoubtedly be justified. Of course, one cannot bring thought into being without first bringing consciousness into being. But the philosopher is not concerned with the creation of the world, but with its understanding. He must therefore seek the starting points not for the creation, but for the understanding of the world. I find it quite strange when the philosopher is reproached for being concerned, above all else, with the correctness of his principles, rather than immediately with the objects he wishes to comprehend. The Creator of the world had to know, above all, how to find a vehicle for thought, but the philosopher must seek a secure foundation from which he can understand what exists. What good does it do us to start from consciousness and subject it to rational reflection if we know nothing beforehand about the possibility of gaining insight into things through *rational* reflection?

We must first consider thought in a completely neutral way, without reference to a thinking subject or a thought object. For in "subject" and "object" we already have concepts formed by thought. It cannot be denied: *Before anything else can be understood, it must first become thought.* Anyone who denies this overlooks the fact that, as a human being, he is not the first link in creation but its final link. For this reason, in order to explain the world through concepts, one cannot start from the earliest temporal elements of existence, but rather from what is given to us as the nearest, the most intimate. We cannot transport ourselves in a single leap to the beginning of the world to begin our examination there; rather, we must start from the present moment and see whether we can ascend from the later to the earlier. As long as geology spoke of fictitious revolutions to explain the present state of the Earth, it groped in darkness. Only when it began to investigate which processes are still taking place on Earth today and, from these, deduced the past, did it gain firm ground. As long as philosophy continues to assume all manner of principles—such as the atom, motion, matter, will, and the unconscious—it will remain suspended in the air.

Only when the philosopher regards the absolute last as his first can he reach his goal. This absolute last, to which the development of the world has led, is, however, *thought*.

There are people who say: whether our thinking is correct in and of itself or not, we cannot determine with certainty. In this respect, therefore, the starting point remains, in any case, a dubious one. This is just as reasonable as doubting whether a tree is correct in and of itself or not. Thinking is a fact; and to speak of the correctness or incorrectness of such a fact is meaningless. At most, I can have doubts about whether thinking is being used correctly, just as I can doubt whether a certain tree yields wood suitable for a practical tool. Determining to what extent the application of thinking to the world is correct or incorrect will be the very task of this treatise. I can understand if someone harbors doubts that thinking about the world can lead to any conclusions; but it is incomprehensible to me how anyone can doubt the correctness of thinking in and of itself.

Addendum to the New Edition (1918).

The preceding remarks point to the significant difference between thinking and all other mental activities as a fact that becomes apparent upon truly impartial observation. Anyone who does not strive for this unbiased observation will be tempted to raise objections to these remarks, such as the following: when I think about a rose, this merely expresses a relationship between my "I" and the rose, just as when I feel the beauty of the rose. There is just as much of a relationship between the "I" and the object in thinking as there is, for example, in feeling or perceiving. Anyone who raises this objection fails to consider that it is only in the act of thinking that the "I" recognizes itself, down to every branch of the activity, as one with the agent. This is not entirely the case with any other mental activity. When, for example, a pleasure is felt, closer observation can very well distinguish to what extent the "I" identifies itself with an active agent and to what extent there is a passive element present within it, so that the pleasure merely occurs for the "I." And so it is with the other mental activities as well. One should simply not confuse "having mental images" with processing thoughts through thinking. Mental images can arise in the soul in a dreamlike manner, like vague inspirations. This is not *thinking*. — Of course, someone might now say: if thinking is understood in this way, then volition is inherent in thinking, and one is dealing not merely with thinking but also with the volition of thinking. Yet this would only justify saying: true thinking must always be willed. But this has nothing to do with the characterization of thinking as presented in these remarks. Even if the nature of thinking necessitates that it be *willed*, what matters is that nothing is willed which, as it takes place, does not appear to the "I" entirely as its own activity, one that it can fully comprehend. One must even say that, *because* of the nature of thought asserted here, it appears to the observer as thoroughly *willed*. Anyone who truly endeavors to fathom everything that comes into consideration for the assessment of thought will be unable to avoid noticing that this mental activity possesses the characteristic of which we are speaking here. A figure whom the author of this book holds in very high regard as a thinker has objected to him that one cannot speak of thinking in the way done here, because what one believes one observes as active thinking is merely an illusion. In reality, one observes only the results of an unconscious activity that underlies thinking. It is precisely because this unconscious activity is not observed that the illusion arises that the observed thinking exists of its own accord—just as one might believe one sees a movement when electric sparks flash in rapid succession. This objection, too, is based solely on an inaccurate view of the situation. Those who raise it fail to consider that it is the "I" itself that, while situated within thought, observes *its own* activity. The "I" would have to stand outside of thinking if it could be deceived in this way, as in the case of rapid, successive flashes of light from electric sparks. One might rather say: whoever makes such a comparison is gravely mistaken, much like someone who, observing a light in motion, would insist that it is relit by an unknown hand at every point where it appears. - No, anyone who wishes to see in thought something other than what is produced within the "I" itself as a comprehensible activity must first blind themselves to the simple facts presented to observation in order to then be able to attribute a hypothetical activity to thought. Anyone who does not blind themselves in this way must recognize that everything they "add" to thought in this manner leads away from the essence of thought. Unbiased observation shows that nothing can be counted among the essence of thought that is not found *within* thought itself. One cannot arrive at anything that thought *brings about* if one leaves the realm of thought.

I.4. The World as Perception

Thinking gives rise to *concepts* and *ideas*. What a concept is cannot be expressed in words. Words can only make a person aware that he has concepts. When someone sees a tree, his thinking reacts to his observation; an ideal counterpart is added to the object, and he regards the object and the ideal counterpart as belonging together. When the object disappears from their field of observation, only its mental counterpart remains. The latter is the concept of the object. The more our experience expands, the greater the sum of our concepts becomes. However, these concepts do not stand in isolation. They coalesce into a systematic whole. The concept "organism," for example, is linked to the others: "regular development, growth." Other concepts formed from individual things merge completely into one. All the concepts I form of lions merge into the general concept "lion." In this way, the individual concepts combine to form a coherent system of concepts in which each has its own specific place. Ideas are not qualitatively different from concepts. They are merely more content-rich, more saturated, and more comprehensive concepts. I must emphasize that it is important to note here that I have designated *thinking* as my starting point, and not *concepts* and *ideas,* which are only obtained through thinking. These already presuppose thinking. Therefore, what I have said regarding the self-contained, undetermined nature of thought cannot simply be applied to concepts. (I note this explicitly here because this is where my disagreement with *Hegel* lies. He posits the concept as the first and original.)

A concept cannot be derived from observation. This is evident from the fact that a growing child only slowly and gradually forms concepts of the objects that surround him. Concepts are added to observation.

A widely read contemporary philosopher *(Herbert Spencer)* describes the mental process we carry out in relation to observation as follows:

> "If, while walking through the fields on a September day, we hear a sound a few steps ahead of us and see the grass moving at the side of the ditch from which it seemed to come, we will probably head toward that spot to find out what caused the sound and the movement. As we approach, a partridge flutters into the ditch, and our curiosity is satisfied: we have what we call an explanation of the phenomena. This explanation, mind you, boils down to the following: because we have experienced countless times in life that a disturbance in the quiet state of small bodies is accompanied by the movement of other bodies situated between them, and because we have therefore generalized the relationships between such disturbances and such movements, we consider this particular disturbance to be explained as soon as we find that it provides an example of precisely this relationship."

On closer inspection, the matter presents itself quite differently from how it is described here. When I hear a sound, I first look for the concept that corresponds to this observation. It is this concept that points me beyond the sound. Those who do not think any further simply hear the sound and are content with that. Through my reflection, however, it becomes clear to me that I must understand a sound as an effect. Thus, only when I connect the concept of *effect* with the perception of the sound am I prompted to go beyond the individual observation and search for the *cause*. The concept of effect gives rise to that of cause, and I then search for the causative object, which I find in the form of the partridge. However, I can never arrive at these concepts—cause and effect—through mere observation, no matter how many cases they may encompass. Observation challenges thought, and it is thought alone that shows me the way to link one individual experience to another.

If one demands that a "strictly objective science" derive its content solely from observation, one must at the same time demand that it renounce all thinking. For thinking, by its very nature, goes beyond what is observed.

Now it is appropriate to move from thought to the thinking being. For it is through this being that thought is connected to observation. Human consciousness is the arena where concept and observation meet and where they are linked together. This, however, is precisely what characterizes this " " (human) consciousness. It is the mediator between thought and observation. Insofar as a person observes an object, it appears to him as given; insofar as he thinks, he appears to himself as active. He regards the object as *an object and* himself as the thinking *subject.* Because he directs his thinking toward observation, he is conscious of objects; because he directs his thinking toward himself, he is conscious of himself—that is, *he* possesses *self-consciousness.* Human consciousness must necessarily be self-

consciousness at the same time, because it is *thinking* consciousness. For when thinking directs its gaze toward its own activity, it has its very own essence—that is, its subject—as its object. However, it must not be overlooked that we can only determine ourselves as subjects and set ourselves in opposition to objects with the help of thinking. Therefore, thinking must never be conceived of as a merely subjective activity. Thinking transcends both subject and object. It forms these two concepts just as it forms all others. Thus, when we, as thinking subjects, relate a concept to an object, we must not conceive of this relationship as something merely subjective. It is not the subject that brings about the relationship, but thinking. The subject does not think because it is a subject; rather, it appears to itself as a subject because it is capable of thinking. The activity that human beings exercise as *thinking* beings is therefore not merely subjective, but one that is neither subjective nor objective—one that transcends these two concepts. I must never say that my individual subject thinks; rather, it itself lives by the grace of thought. Thought is thus an element that leads me beyond myself and connects me with objects. But at the same time, it separates me from them by setting me opposite them as a subject.

This is the basis of the dual nature of human beings: they think and thereby encompass both themselves and the rest of the world; but at the same time, through thinking, they must define themselves as individuals standing opposed to things.

The next step will be to ask ourselves: How does the other element—which we have so far referred to merely as an object of observation, and which encounters thought in consciousness—enter into the latter?

To answer this question, we must exclude from our field of observation everything that has already been introduced into it by thought. For the content of our consciousness is always already interwoven with concepts in the most manifold ways.

We must imagine that a being with fully developed human intelligence arises out of nothing and encounters the world. What it would perceive there, before it engages in thought, is the pure content of observation. The world would then present to this being nothing but a mere, disjointed aggregate of *objects of sensation:* colors, sounds, sensations of pressure, heat, taste, and smell; and feelings of pleasure and displeasure. This aggregate is the content of pure, thoughtless observation. Opposite it stands thought, which is ready to unfold its activity as soon as it finds a point of entry. Experience soon teaches us that such a point is found. Thinking is capable of drawing connections from one element of observation to another. It links certain concepts to these elements and thereby relates them to one another. We have already seen above how a sound we encounter is linked to another observation by our designating the former as an effect of the latter.

If we now recall that the activity of thought is by no means to be understood as a purely subjective one, we will not be tempted to believe that such relationships, established by thought, have merely subjective validity.

The task now will be to seek, through thoughtful reflection, the relationship that the immediately given observational content described above has to our conscious subject.

Given the variability in linguistic usage, it seems necessary for me to clarify with my reader the meaning of a word that I must use in what follows. I shall call the immediate objects of sensation that I mentioned above *"perceptions*," insofar as the conscious subject becomes aware of them through observation. Thus, I use this term not to denote the process of observation, but rather the *object* of that observation.

I do not choose the term *"sensation"* because it has a specific meaning in physiology that is narrower than my concept of "perception." I can certainly describe a feeling within myself as a perception, but not as a sensation in the physiological sense. I also become aware of my feelings through the fact that they become *perceptions* for me. And the way in which we gain knowledge of our thinking through observation is such that we can also call thinking a perception for our consciousness when it first arises.

The naive person regards his perceptions—as they immediately appear to him—as things that have an existence entirely independent of him. When he sees a tree, he initially believes that it stands in the form

he perceives, with the colors of its parts, and so on, at the place toward which his gaze is directed. When the same person sees the sun appear in the morning as a disk on the horizon and follows the course of that disk, he believes that all of this exists and unfolds in this way (in and of itself), just as he observes it. He holds fast to this belief until he encounters other perceptions that contradict it. A child, who has no experience yet of distances, reaches out for the moon and only corrects what it initially took to be real when a second perception contradicts the first. Every expansion of the scope of my perceptions compels me to correct my picture of the world. This is evident in daily life as well as in the intellectual development of humanity. The picture that the ancients formed of the relationship between the Earth and the Sun and the other celestial bodies had to be replaced by a different one by Copernicus because it did not agree with perceptions that were previously unknown. When Dr. Franz operated on a man who had been blind from birth, the man said that before his operation, he had formed a completely different picture of the size of objects based on his sense of touch. He had to correct his tactile perceptions with his visual perceptions.

Why is it that we are compelled to make such constant corrections to our observations?

A simple line of reasoning provides the answer to this question. When I stand at one end of an avenue, the trees at the other end—which is farther away from me—appear smaller and closer together than they do where I am standing. My perceptual image changes when I change the location from which I make my observations. It is therefore, in the form in which it presents itself to me, dependent on a factor that does not lie with the object but rather with me, the observer. It makes no difference to an avenue where I stand. The image I receive of it, however, depends essentially on that. Likewise, it makes no difference to the sun and the planetary system that people are observing them from Earth. The perceptual image that presents itself to them, however, is determined by their location. This dependence of the perceptual image on our place of observation is the one that is easiest to grasp. The matter becomes more difficult when we come to understand the dependence of our perceptual world on our physical and mental organization. The physicist shows us that within the space in which we hear a sound, vibrations of the air take place, and that the body in which we seek the source of the sound also exhibits a vibrating motion of its parts. We perceive this motion as sound only if we have a normally functioning ear. Without one, the entire world would remain eternally silent to us. Physiology teaches us that there are people who perceive nothing of the magnificent splendor of colors that surrounds us. Their perceptual image consists only of shades of light and dark; others perceive only a certain color—for example, red—not at all. Their worldview lacks this color tone, and is therefore indeed different from that of the average person. I would like to call the dependence of my perceptual image on my vantage point a mathematical one, and that on my physiological organization a qualitative one. The former determines the proportions and mutual distances of my perceptions; the latter determines their quality. The fact that I see a red surface as red—this qualitative determination—depends on the physiological organization of my eye.

My perceptual images are, therefore, initially subjective. The realization of the subjective nature of our perceptions can easily lead to doubts as to whether anything objective underlies them at all. If we know that a perception—for example, that of the color red, , or a certain tone—is not possible without a certain configuration of our organism, then one might come to believe that this perception, apart from our subjective organism, has no substance; that without the act of perception of which it is the object, it has no mode of existence. This view found a classic proponent in *George Berkeley*, who believed that from the moment a person becomes aware of the importance of the subject for perception, they can no longer believe in a world that exists without the conscious mind. He says:

> "Some truths are so obvious and self-evident that one need only open one's eyes to see them. I consider the important proposition that the entire host in the heavens and everything that belongs to the earth—in a word, all the bodies that make up the vast structure of the world— have no subsistence outside the mind, that their being consists in their being perceived or known, that consequently, as long as they are not actually perceived by me or exist in my consciousness or that of another created mind, they either have no existence at all or exist in the consciousness of an eternal mind."

According to this view, nothing remains of perception apart from the act of being perceived. There is no color if none is seen, no sound if none is heard. Just as color and sound do not exist outside the act of perception, neither do extension, shape, and motion. Nowhere do we see mere extension or form; rather, we always find them linked to color or other properties that are indisputably dependent on our subjectivity. If the latter disappear with our perception, then the same must be true of the former, which

are bound to them.

To the objection that, even if figure, color, sound, etc., have no existence other than that within the act of perception, there must still be things that exist independently of consciousness and to which the conscious perceptual images are similar, the view described above responds by stating: a color can only be similar to a color, a figure similar to a figure. Our perceptions can only resemble our perceptions, but no other things whatsoever. Even what we call an object is nothing other than a group of perceptions connected in a certain way. If I remove from a table its shape, extension, color, etc.—in short, everything that is merely my perception—nothing remains. This view, taken to its logical conclusion, leads to the assertion: The objects of my perceptions exist only through me, and indeed only to the extent and for as long as I perceive them; they disappear with perception and have no meaning without it. Apart from my perceptions, however, I know of no objects and cannot know of any.

There is nothing to object to this assertion as long as I merely consider, in general terms, the fact that perception is co-determined by the organization of my subject. The matter would, however, be fundamentally different if we were able to specify what the function of our perception is in the formation of a perception. We would then know what happens to the object of perception during the act of perceiving, and could also determine what must already be present in it before it is perceived.

Thus, our consideration shifts from the object of perception to the subject of perception. I do not merely perceive other things; I also perceive myself. The perception of myself initially consists in the fact that I am the enduring element in contrast to the constantly coming and going images of perception. The perception of the "I" can always arise in my consciousness while I am having other perceptions. When I am absorbed in the perception of a given object, I am, for the time being, conscious only of that object. The perception of my self can then join this. I am now not merely conscious of the object, but also of my personality, which stands opposite the object and observes it. I do not merely see a tree; I also know that *it is I* who am seeing it. I also recognize that something is happening within me while I observe the tree. When the tree disappears from my field of vision, a residue of this process remains in my consciousness: an image of the tree. This image has become linked to my self during my observation. My self has been enriched; its content has incorporated a new element. I call this element my *idea* of the tree. I would never be in a position to speak of *representations* if I did not experience them in the perception of my self. Perceptions would come and go; I would let them pass by . Only because I perceive my self and notice that with every perception *its* content also changes am I compelled to relate the observation of the object to the change in my own state and to speak of my representation.

I perceive the representation within myself in the same way that I perceive color, sound, etc., in other objects. I can now also distinguish between these other objects that stand opposite me—which I call *the external world*—and the content of my self-perception, which I designate as *the internal world*. The failure to recognize the relationship between representation and object has led to the greatest misunderstandings in modern philosophy. The perception of a change within us—the modification that my self undergoes—has been pushed to the forefront, while the object causing this modification has been completely lost sight of. It has been said: we do not perceive objects, but only our representations. I am supposed to know nothing about the table in itself, which is the object of my observation, but only about the change that takes place within myself while I perceive the table. This view must not be confused with the Berkeleyan view mentioned earlier. Berkeley asserts the subjective nature of the content of my perception, but he does not say that I can know only my ideas. He limits my knowledge to my ideas because he believes that there are no objects outside of the mind. What I perceive as a table, in Berkeley's sense, no longer exists as soon as I no longer direct my gaze toward it. Therefore, Berkeley posits that my perceptions arise directly through the power of God. I see a table because God evokes this perception within me. Berkeley therefore recognizes no real beings other than God and human minds. What we call the world exists only within the mind. What the naive person calls the external world or physical nature does not exist for Berkeley. This view is contrasted by the now-dominant Kantian view, which does not limit our knowledge of the world to our ideas because it is convinced that there can be no things outside these ideas, but because it believes we are organized in such a way that we can only experience the changes in our own selves, not the things-in-themselves that cause these changes. It concludes from the fact that I know only my own ideas, not that there is no existence independent of these ideas, but only that

the subject cannot immediately apprehend within itself such an existence that is not, other than through the

> "medium of its subjective thoughts" (O. *Liebmann,* *On the Analysis of Reality*, p. 28).

This view claims to state something absolutely certain, something that is immediately self-evident without any proof.

> "The first fundamental principle that the philosopher must bring to clear consciousness consists in the realization that our knowledge *initially* extends to nothing more than our ideas. Our ideas are the only thing we experience directly; and precisely because we experience them directly, even the most radical doubt cannot rob us of our knowledge of them. In contrast, knowledge that goes beyond our representations—I am using this term here in its broadest sense, so that all mental processes fall under it—is not protected from doubt. Therefore, *at the outset of philosophical inquiry*, all knowledge that goes beyond representations must be explicitly regarded as subject to doubt,"

This is how *Volkelt* begins his book on "Immanuel Kant's Theory of Knowledge." What is presented here as if it were an immediate and self-evident truth is, in reality, the result of a line of reasoning that proceeds as follows: The naive person believes that objects, just as he perceives them, also exist outside his consciousness. Physics, physiology, and psychology, however, seem to teach that our organization is necessary for our perceptions; consequently, we can know nothing other than what our organization conveys to us about things. Our perceptions are thus modifications of our organism, not things in themselves. *Eduard von Hartmann* has in fact characterized the line of reasoning indicated here as the one that must lead to the conviction that we can have direct knowledge only of our ideas (see his "Grundproblem der Erkenntnistheorie," pp. 16–40). Because we find vibrations of bodies and air outside our organism that present themselves to us as sound, it is concluded that what we call sound is nothing more than a subjective reaction of our organism to those movements in the external world. In the same way , it is argued that color and warmth are merely modifications of our organism. Specifically, it is held that these two types of perception are evoked in us by the effect of processes in the external world that are entirely distinct from what constitutes the experience of warmth or the experience of color. When such processes stimulate the cutaneous nerves of my body, I have the subjective perception of warmth; when such processes affect the optic nerve, I perceive light and color. Light, color, and warmth are thus the responses with which my sensory nerves react to external stimuli. Nor does the sense of touch provide me with the objects of the external world, but only with my own states. In the sense of modern physics, one might think, for example, that bodies consist of infinitely small parts—molecules—and that these molecules do not immediately adjoin one another but are separated by certain distances. There is thus empty space between them. Through this space, they interact with one another by means of attractive and repulsive forces. When I bring my hand close to a body, the molecules of my hand do not directly touch those of the body; rather, a certain distance remains between the body and my hand, and what I perceive as the body's resistance is nothing more than the effect of the repulsive force that its molecules exert on my hand. I am entirely outside the body and perceive only its effect on my organism.

Complementing these considerations is the theory of so-called specific sensory energies, which was formulated by *J. Müller* (1801–1858). It holds that each sense has the characteristic of responding to all external stimuli only in a specific way. When an effect is exerted on the optic nerve, light perception arises, regardless of whether the stimulation is caused by what we call light, or whether mechanical pressure or an electric current acts on the nerve. On the other hand, the same external stimuli evoke different perceptions in different senses. It seems to follow from this that our senses can convey only what takes place within them, but nothing from the external world. They determine perceptions according to their nature.

Physiology shows that there can be no question of direct knowledge of what objects effect in our sense organs. As the physiologist traces the processes within our own bodies, he finds that the effects of external movement are already altered in the most diverse ways within the sense organs themselves. We see this most clearly in the eye and the ear. Both are highly complex organs that significantly alter the external stimulus before transmitting it to the corresponding nerve. From the peripheral end of the nerve, the already altered stimulus is then transmitted onward to the brain. It is only here that the central organs must once again be stimulated. From this, it is concluded that the external process has undergone a series of transformations before it reaches consciousness. What takes place in the brain is linked to the

external process through so many intermediate processes that any resemblance to the latter can no longer be conceived. What the brain ultimately conveys to the soul are neither external processes nor processes in the sense organs, but only those within the brain itself. Yet even these latter processes are not yet perceived directly by the soul. What we ultimately have in consciousness are not brain processes at all, but *sensations*. My sensation of *red* bears no resemblance whatsoever to the process that takes place in the brain when I perceive red. The latter reappears only as an effect in the soul and is caused solely by the brain process. That is why *Hartmann* says (Grundproblem der Erkenntnistheorie, 3. 37):

> "What the subject perceives, then, are always only modifications of its own mental states and nothing else."

When I have these sensations, however, they are still far from being grouped into what I perceive as things. After all, only individual sensations can be conveyed to me through the brain. The sensations of hardness and softness are conveyed to me through the sense of touch, while the sensations of color and light are conveyed through the sense of sight. Yet these sensations are found united in one and the same object. This unification must therefore first be brought about by the soul itself. That is to say, the soul assembles the individual sensations conveyed by the brain into bodies. My brain conveys to me, individually, the sensations of sight, touch, and hearing—and does so through entirely different pathways—which the soul then assembles into the mental image of a trumpet. This final link (the representation of the trumpet) in a process is what is given to my consciousness first and foremost. In it, there is nothing left of what lies outside of me and originally made an impression on my senses. The external object has been completely lost on its way to the brain and through the brain to the soul.

It would be difficult to find a second body of thought in the history of human intellectual life that has been assembled with greater acumen and that, upon closer examination, does not fall apart. Let us take a closer look at how this comes about. One begins with what is given to naive consciousness—the perceived object. Then one demonstrates that everything found in this object would not be there for us if we had no senses. No eye: no color. Thus, color is not yet present in what acts upon the eye. It arises only through the interaction of the eye with the object. The object is therefore colorless. But color is not present in the eye either; for there is a chemical or physical process taking place there that is first transmitted via the nerve to the brain, where it triggers another. This is still not color. It is only brought about by the mental process in the soul. Even then, it still does not enter my consciousness, but is only transferred outward to a body by the soul. It is on this body that I finally believe I perceive it. We have completed a full cycle. We have become conscious of a colored body. That is the first step. Now the mental process begins. If I had no eyes, the body would be colorless to me. I cannot, therefore, attribute color to the body. I set out in search of it. I look for it in the eye: in vain; in the nerve: in vain; in the brain: just as in vain; in the soul: here I do find it, but not connected to the body. I find the colored body again only where I started. The circle is complete. I believe I recognize as a product of my soul what the naive person imagines to exist out there in space.

As long as one stops there, everything seems perfectly fine. But the matter must be taken up again from the beginning. Up until now, I have been dealing with one thing: external perception, about which I, as a naive person, used to have a completely mistaken view. I was of the opinion that it had an objective existence just as I perceive it. Now I realize that it vanishes with my imagination, that it is merely a modification of my mental states. Do I even still have the right to take it as my starting point in my reflections? Can I say that it affects my mind? From now on, I must treat the table—which I previously believed acted upon me and produced an idea of itself within me—as an idea in and of itself. Consequently, however, my sense organs and the processes occurring within them are also merely subjective. I have no right to speak of a real eye, but only of my mental image of the eye. The same applies to nerve conduction and brain processes, and no less so to the process within the mind itself through which things are to be constructed out of the chaos of manifold sensations. If, assuming the correctness of the first line of reasoning, I go through the stages of my act of cognition once more, the latter reveals itself to be a web of representations that, as such, cannot interact with one another. I cannot say: my representation of the object acts upon my representation of the eye, and from this interaction the representation of color arises. But I do not need to do so. For as soon as it becomes clear to me that my sense organs and their activities, my nervous and mental processes, can be given to me only through perception, the line of thought described above reveals itself to be entirely impossible. It is true: for me, there is no perception without the corresponding sense organ. But neither is there a sense organ without perception. I can move from my perception of the table to the eye that sees it, to the skin nerves that

touch it; but what goes on within them, I can again only learn from perception. And there I soon notice that the process taking place in the eye bears not a trace of similarity to what I perceive as color. I cannot destroy my perception of color by pointing out the process in the eye that takes place there during this perception. Nor do I find the color again in the nervous and brain processes; I merely connect new perceptions within my organism to the first one, which the naive person locates outside his organism. I merely move from one perception to another.

Moreover, the entire line of reasoning contains a leap. I am able to trace the processes in my organism all the way to the processes in my brain, even though my assumptions become increasingly hypothetical the closer I get to the central processes of the brain. The path of *external* observation ends with the process in my brain—specifically, the one I would perceive if I could examine the brain using physical, chemical, and other such tools and methods. The path of *internal* observation begins with sensation and extends to the construction of things from the material of sensation. At the transition from the brain process to sensation, the path of observation is interrupted.

The characterized mode of thought, which, in contrast to the standpoint of naive consciousness—which it calls naive realism—designates itself as critical idealism, makes the mistake of characterizing *one* type of perception as a representation, but accepting the other precisely in the same sense as the naive realism it appears to have refuted. It seeks to prove the representational character of perceptions by naively accepting the perceptions of its own organism as objectively valid facts, and on top of that, it fails to recognize that it is conflating two domains of observation between which it cannot find a mediation.

Critical idealism can refute naive realism only if it itself, in a naive-realist manner, assumes that its own organism exists objectively. The very moment it becomes aware of the complete similarity between the perceptions of its own organism and those assumed by naive realism to exist objectively, it can no longer rely on the former as a secure foundation. It would also have to regard its subjective organization as a mere complex of ideas. But this would eliminate the possibility of conceiving the content of the perceived world as brought about by the mental organization. One would have to assume that the concept of “color” is merely a modification of the concept of “eye.” So-called critical idealism cannot be proven without borrowing from naive realism. The latter is refuted only by allowing its own presuppositions to remain unchallenged in another domain.

This much is certain: critical idealism cannot be proven through investigations within the realm of perception; thus, perception cannot be stripped of its objective character. Even less, however, should the statement, *“The perceived world is my representation,”* be presented as self-evident and in need of no proof. *Schopenhauer* begins his magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation*, with the words:

> “The world is my representation”—this is a truth that applies to every living and cognizing being; although only man can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness; and if he truly does so, then philosophical prudence has taken hold of him. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he knows neither the sun nor the earth; but always only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world surrounding him exists only as a representation, that is, entirely only in relation to something else—the representing entity, which is himself. - “If any truth can be stated a priori, it is this one: for it is the expression of that form of all possible and conceivable experience which is more general than all others—such as time, space, and causality—since all of these already presuppose that very form…”

The entire proposition fails because of the circumstance I have already cited above, namely, that the eye and the hand are no less perceptions than the sun and the earth. And one could, in the spirit of Schopenhauer and drawing on his manner of expression, counter his propositions by saying: My eye, which sees the sun, and my hand, which feels the earth, are my representations just as much as the sun and the earth themselves. But it is immediately clear that in doing so I negate the statement once again. For only my real eye and my real hand could have the representations of the sun and the earth as their modifications in themselves, but not my representations of the eye and the hand. Yet critical idealism may speak only of *these*.

Critical idealism is entirely unsuited to forming a view of the relationship between perception and representation. It cannot make the distinction, hinted at on page 66 ff., between what happens to perception during the act of perceiving and what must already be present in it before it is perceived. Therefore, a different approach must be taken.

I.7. Are there limits to cognition?

We have observed that the elements needed to explain reality are to be found in the two spheres: perception and thought. As we have seen, our constitution necessitates that full, total reality—including our own subject—appears to us initially as a duality. Cognition overcomes this duality by synthesizing the whole thing from the two elements of reality: perception and the concept formed through thought. Let us call the way in which the world presents itself to us—before it has assumed its true form through cognition—the world of appearance, in contrast to the essence that is uniformly composed of perception and concept. Then we can say: The world is given to us as a duality (dualistic), and cognition transforms it into a unity (monistic). A philosophy based on this fundamental principle can be called monistic philosophy or *monism*. Opposed to it is the theory of two worlds, or *dualism*. The latter does not assume two aspects of a unified reality that are merely distinguished by our mental organization, but rather two worlds that are absolutely distinct from one another. It then seeks explanatory principles for one world in the other.

Dualism is based on a false conception of what we call knowledge. It divides all of existence into two realms, each of which has its own laws, and places these realms in external opposition to one another.

It is from such dualism that the distinction between the object of perception and the "thing-in-itself"—introduced into science by Kant and never since eliminated—arises. According to our arguments, it is in the nature of our mental organization that a particular thing can only be given as a perception. Thinking then overcomes this particularization by assigning each perception its lawful place within the totality of the world. As long as the separate parts of the totality of the world are determined as perceptions, we are simply following a law of our subjectivity in this distinction. But if we regard the sum of all perceptions as one part and then set a second part against it in the "things-in-themselves," we are philosophizing into thin air. We are then dealing with a mere play on concepts. We construct an artificial opposition, but cannot derive any content for the second term of this opposition, for such content can be drawn for a particular thing only from perception. Any kind of being that is posited outside the realm of perception and concept must be relegated to the sphere of unwarranted hypotheses. The "thing-in-itself" belongs to this category. It is only natural that the dualist thinker cannot find the connection between the hypothetically assumed world principle and what is given through experience. Content can be derived for the hypothetical world principle only if one borrows it from the world of experience and deludes oneself about this fact. Otherwise, it remains a concept devoid of content, a non-concept that possesses only the form of a concept. The dualist then usually asserts that the content of this concept is inaccessible to our knowledge; we can only know *that* such content exists, not *what* it is. In both cases, overcoming dualism is impossible. Even if one incorporates a few abstract elements from the world of experience into the concept of the thing-in-itself, it remains impossible to reduce the rich, concrete life of experience to a few properties that are themselves derived solely from this perception. *Du Bois-Reymond* believes that the imperceptible atoms of matter produce sensation and feeling through their position and motion, only to conclude: We can never arrive at a satisfactory explanation of how matter and motion produce sensation and feeling, for

> "it is simply and forever incomprehensible that a number of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, etc., atoms should not be indifferent to how they are arranged and move, how they were arranged and moved, and how they will be arranged and move. There is no way to understand how consciousness could arise from their interaction."

This conclusion is characteristic of the entire school of thought. From the rich world of perceptions, two elements are isolated: position and motion. These are transferred to the imagined world of atoms. Then comes the astonishment that one cannot unraveler concrete life from this self-constructed principle, borrowed from the world of perception.

The fact that the dualist, who works with a concept of "in itself" that is completely devoid of content, cannot arrive at an explanation of the world already follows from the definition of his principle given above.

In any case, the dualist finds himself compelled to impose insurmountable barriers on our cognitive faculties. The adherent of a monistic worldview knows that everything he needs to explain a given phenomenon of the world must lie within the realm of the latter. The only things that prevent him from

achieving this can be accidental temporal or spatial barriers or deficiencies in his own organization—and not in human organization in general, but only in his own particular, individual organization.

It follows from the concept of cognition, as we have defined it, that one cannot speak of limits to knowledge. Cognition is not a general matter of the world, but a matter that each person must settle for themselves. Things do not require an explanation. They exist and interact with one another according to laws that can be discovered through thought. They exist in inseparable unity with these laws. Our "I" confronts them and initially grasps only that which we have termed "perception." But within this "I" lies the power to discover the other part of reality as well. Only when the "I" has united the two elements of reality—which are inseparably linked in the world—within itself has cognitive satisfaction been achieved: the "I" has once again arrived at reality.

The preconditions for the emergence of cognition are thus *through* and for the "I." The latter sets the questions of cognition for itself. And it derives them from the element of thought, which is completely clear and transparent within itself. If we ask ourselves questions that we cannot answer, then the content of the question cannot be clear and distinct in all its parts. It is not the world that poses the questions to us, but we ourselves who pose them.

I can imagine that I lack any possibility of answering a question that I find written down somewhere without knowing the sphere from which the content of the question is drawn.

Our cognition involves questions that are posed to us by the fact that a sphere of perception—conditioned by place, time, and subjective organization—is juxtaposed with a sphere of concepts pointing to the totality of the world. My task consists in reconciling these two spheres, both of which are well known to me. There can be no talk of a limit to knowledge here. At any given time, this or that may remain unexplained because the context of our lives prevents us from perceiving the factors at play. But what is not found today may be found tomorrow. The barriers resulting from this are merely temporary and can be overcome with the advancement of perception and thought.

Dualism commits the error of transferring the opposition between object and subject—which has meaning only within the realm of perception—to purely imagined entities outside of it. But since the things distinguished within the horizon of perception remain distinct only as long as the perceiver refrains from the kind of thinking that abolishes all distinction and reveals it as merely subjectively conditioned, the dualist applies definitions to entities beyond perceptions that have no absolute, but only a relative validity even for those perceptions. He thereby thereby divides the two factors relevant to the cognitive process—perception and concept—into four: 1. the object in itself; 2. the perception that the subject has of the object; 3. the subject; 4. the concept that relates the perception to the object in itself. The relationship between the object and the subject is a *real* one*;* the subject is truly (dynamically) influenced by the object. This real process is not supposed to enter our consciousness. But it is supposed to elicit in the subject a counter-effect to the effect emanating from the object. The result of this counter-effect is supposed to be perception. It is perception that first enters consciousness. The object has an objective (subject-independent) reality, while perception has a subjective reality. This subjective reality relates the subject to the object. The latter relationship is an ideal one. Dualism thus divides the cognitive process into two parts. It leaves one part—the generation of the object of perception from the "thing-in-itself"—*outside consciousness, while* the other part—the connection of perception with the concept and its relation to the object—takes place *within consciousness*. Under these premises, it is clear that the dualist believes he can gain, in his concepts, only subjective representations of what lies *outside* his consciousness. The objectively- ly real process within the subject through which perception comes about—and all the more so the objective relationships of the "things-in-themselves"—remain directly unknowable to such a dualist; in his view, human beings can acquire only conceptual representations of the objectively real. The bond of unity among things—which connects them to one another and objectively to our individual mind (as a "thing-in-itself")—lies beyond consciousness in a being-in-itself, of which we could likewise have only a conceptual representation in our consciousness.

Dualism believes it reduces the entire world to an abstract conceptual schema unless it posits real connections alongside the conceptual connections between objects. In other words: to the dualist, the

ideal principles discoverable through thought seem too ethereal, and he seeks real principles upon which they can be grounded.

Let us take a closer look at these real principles. The naive person (naive realist) regards the objects of external experience as realities. The fact that he can grasp these things with his hands and see them with his eyes serves as proof of their reality to him. “Nothing exists that cannot be perceived” can be regarded as the very first axiom of the naive person, which is just as readily accepted in its inverse form: “Everything that can be perceived exists.” The best proof of this assertion is the naive person’s belief in immortality and ghosts. He imagines the soul as a subtle, sensory substance that, under certain conditions, can even become visible to the ordinary person (naive belief in ghosts).

For the naive realist, everything other than his real world—namely, the world of ideas—is unreal, “merely ideal.” What we add to objects in our thoughts is merely a thought *about* things. Thought adds nothing real to perception.

But the naive person regards sensory perception as the sole evidence of reality not only with respect to the existence of things, but also with respect to events. In his view, one thing can only act upon another if a force—perceptible to the senses—emanates from the former and seizes the latter. Early physics believed that very fine substances emanate from bodies and penetrate the soul through our sensory organs. The actual perception of these substances is impossible only because of the coarseness of our senses in relation to the purity of these substances. In principle, substances were acknowledged as real for the same reason that objects in the sensory world are acknowledged as real—namely, because of their form of being, which was conceived as analogous to that of sensory reality.

To the naive mind, the self-contained essence of what can be experienced ideally is not regarded as real in the same sense as what can be experienced through the senses. An object conceived as a “mere idea” is regarded as a mere chimera until sensory perception can provide confirmation of its reality. To put it briefly, the naive person demands, in addition to the ideal testimony of their thinking, the real testimony of the senses. This need of the naive person is the basis for the emergence of primitive forms of revelational faith. The God who is given through thought remains, for naive consciousness, always only a *“conceived”* God. Naive consciousness demands manifestation through means accessible to sensory perception. God must appear in the flesh, and little weight is given to the testimony of thought—only, for example, to the fact that divinity is demonstrated by the transformation of water into wine, which can be ascertained through the senses.

Even cognition itself is conceived by the naive person as a process analogous to sensory processes. Things make an *impression* on the soul, or they send out images that penetrate through the senses, and so on.

The naive person considers whatever he can perceive with the senses to be real, and whatever he has no such perception of (God, the soul, cognition, etc.), he conceives of as analogous to what is perceived.

If naive realism seeks to establish a science, it can see such a science only in a precise *description* of the content of perception. Concepts are merely means to an end for it. They exist to create mental counterparts for perceptions. They have no significance for the things themselves. For the naive realist, only individual tulips that are seen—or can be seen—are considered re ; the idea of the tulip is regarded as an abstraction, as the unreal mental image that the soul has constructed from the characteristics common to all tulips.

Naive realism, with its principle that everything perceived is real, is refuted by experience, which teaches that the content of perceptions is transitory in nature. The tulip I see is real today; in a year, it will have vanished into nothingness. What has endured is the *genus* “tulip.” For naive realism, however, this genus is *“merely”* an *idea,* not reality. Thus, this worldview finds itself in the position of seeing its realities come and go, while what it considers unreal stands its ground against the real. Naive realism must therefore acknowledge not only perceptions but also something ideal. It must incorporate entities that it cannot perceive with the senses. It reconciles itself to this by conceiving their form of existence as analogous to that of sensory objects. Such hypothetically assumed realities are the invisible forces through which

sensually perceptible things interact with one another. One such thing is heredity, which continues to exert its influence beyond the individual and is the reason why a new individual, similar to the original, develops from it, thereby preserving the species. Another such thing is the life principle permeating the organic body—the soul—for which one always finds, in naive consciousness, a concept formed by analogy with sensory realities; and finally, it is the divine essence of the naive human being. This divine essence is conceived as active in a manner that corresponds entirely to what can be *perceived* as the mode of action of human beings themselves: anthropomorphically.

Modern physics attributes sensory perceptions to processes occurring in the tiniest particles of bodies and in an infinitely fine substance—the ether—or something similar. What we perceive as heat, for example, is the motion of the particles within the space occupied by the body that generates the heat. Here, too, something imperceptible is conceived by analogy with the perceptible. The sensory analogue of the concept of "body" in this sense is, for example, the interior of a space closed on all sides, within which elastic spheres move in all directions, colliding with one another, striking the walls, and rebounding from them, and so on.

Without such assumptions, the world would, for naive realism, disintegrate into a disjointed aggregate of perceptions without mutual relationships, which do not coalesce into a single unity. It is clear, however, that naive realism can arrive at this assumption only through an inconsistency. If it wishes to remain true to its principle—that only what is perceived is real—then it must not assume anything real where it perceives nothing. The imperceptible forces acting from perceptible things are, in fact, unwarranted hypotheses from the standpoint of naive realism. And because it knows of no other realities, it endows its hypothetical forces with perceptual content. It thus applies a form of being (perceptual existence) to a realm where it lacks the means that alone can make a statement about this form of being: sensory perception.

This internally contradictory worldview leads to metaphysical realism. Metaphysical realism constructs, alongside perceptible reality, an imperceptible one, which it conceives analogously to the former. Metaphysical realism is therefore necessarily dualism.

Where metaphysical realism perceives a relationship between perceptible things (approach through movement, becoming aware of an objective entity, etc.), it posits a reality. However, it can express the relationship it perceives only through thought, not through perception. The ideal relationship is arbitrarily made to resemble the perceptible. Thus, for this school of thought, the real world is composed of perceptual objects—which are in a state of eternal becoming, appearing and disappearing—and of imperceptible forces, from which the perceptual objects are produced and which are the enduring elements. Metaphysical realism is a contradictory mixture of naive realism and idealism. Its hypothetical forces are imperceptible entities with perceptual qualities. It has decided to acknowledge, in addition to the realm of the world—for whose form of existence it has a means of knowledge in perception—another realm in which this means fails and which can be ascertained only through thought. However, it cannot at the same time resolve to recognize the form of being conveyed to it by thought— —namely, the concept (the idea)—as an equally valid factor alongside perception. If one wishes to avoid the contradiction of "unperceivable perception," one must concede that, for the relationships between perceptions mediated by thought, there is no form of existence for us other than that of the concept. The world presents itself as the sum of perceptions and their conceptual (ideal) relationships once one discards the unjustified element from metaphysical realism. Thus, metaphysical realism converges into a worldview that demands the principle of perceptibility for perception and the principle of thinkability for the relationships among perceptions. This worldview cannot admit a third realm of the world alongside the worlds of perception and concepts, in which both principles—the so-called real principle and the ideal principle—apply simultaneously.

If metaphysical realism asserts that, in addition to the ideal relationship between the object of perception and its perceiving subject, there must also be a real relationship between the "thing-in-itself" of perception and the "thing-in-itself" of the perceivable subject (the so-called individual mind), then this claim is based on the false assumption of a non-perceptible process of being analogous to the processes of the sensory world. Furthermore, when metaphysical realism states: "I enter into a conscious, ideal relationship with my world of perception; with the real world, however, I can only enter into a dynamic

(force) relationship"—it commits no less the error already criticized. A relationship of forces can only be spoken of within the world of perception (the realm of the sense of touch), but not outside of it.

Let us call the worldview characterized above—into which metaphysical realism ultimately flows when it sheds its contradictory elements—*monism*, because it unites one-sided realism with idealism into a higher unity.

For naive realism, the real world is a sum of objects of perception; for metaphysical realism, reality extends beyond perceptions to include imperceptible forces as well; monism replaces these forces with the ideal connections it derives through thought. Such connections, however, are the *laws of nature*. A law of nature is, after all, nothing other than the conceptual expression of the relationship between certain perceptions.

Monism is not even in a position to seek other explanatory principles of reality beyond perception and concept. It knows that there is *no cause* for doing so in the entire realm of reality. It regards the world of perception, as it immediately presents itself to perception, as half-real; in the union of this world with the world of concepts, it finds full reality. The metaphysical realist may object to the monist: It may be that, for your particular constitution, your knowledge is complete in itself, with no missing link; but you do not know how the world is reflected in an intelligence organized differently from your own. The monist's reply will be: If there are intelligences other than human ones, if their perceptions take a different form than ours, then the only thing that matters to me is what reaches me from them through perception and concept. Through my perception—and specifically through this uniquely human perception—I, as a subject, am set in opposition to the object. The connection between things is thereby severed. The subject restores this connection through thought. In doing so, it has reintegrated itself into the totality of the world. Since it is only through our subject that this totality appears severed at the point between our perception and our concept, true knowledge is also given in the union of these two. For beings with a different perceptual world (for example, with twice the number of sense organs), the connection would appear to be severed at a different point, and its restoration would therefore also have to take a form specific to these beings. Only for naive and metaphysical realism—both of which see in the content of the soul merely an ideal representation of the world—does the question of the limits of cognition arise. For them, what exists outside the subject is an Absolute, something that rests in itself, and the content of the subject is an image of it that stands entirely outside this Absolute. The perfection of knowledge depends on the greater or lesser similarity of the image to the absolute object. A being with fewer senses than humans will perceive less of the world, while one with more senses will perceive more. The former will therefore have a less perfect knowledge than the latter.

For monism, the situation is different. The structure is determined by the organization of the perceiving being, where the coherence of the world appears to be torn apart into subject and object. The object is not absolute, but only relative—in relation to this particular subject. Bridging this opposition can therefore only take place in the very specific way that is unique to the human subject. As soon as the "I," which is separated from the world in perception, reintegrates itself into the context of the world through thoughtful contemplation, all further questions—which were merely a consequence of the separation—cease.

A being of a different nature would have a different kind of knowledge. Ours is sufficient to answer the questions raised by our own nature.

Metaphysical realism must ask: By what means is that which is given as perception given; by what means is the subject affected?

For monism, perception is determined by the subject. But the subject also possesses, in thought, the means to suspend the determinacy it has itself brought about.

Metaphysical realism faces a further difficulty when it seeks to explain the similarity of the worldviews of different human individuals. It must ask itself: How is it that the worldview I construct from my subjectively determined perception and my concepts corresponds to the one that another human individual constructs from the same two subjective factors? How can I even infer another person's worldview from my own subjective one? The metaphysical realist believes he can deduce the similarity of

their subjective worldviews from the fact that people get along with one another in practice. From the similarity of these worldviews, he then further concludes that the individual minds underlying the individual human perceiving subjects—or the "I in itself" underlying the subjects—are identical.

This conclusion is thus one drawn from a sum of effects regarding the nature of their underlying causes. We believe that, based on a sufficiently large number of cases, we can recognize the facts in such a way that we know how the inferred causes will behave in other cases. We call such a conclusion an inductive inference. We will be compelled to modify the results of such an inference if something unexpected arises in a subsequent observation, because the nature of the result is determined solely by the individual form of the observations that have taken place. However, the metaphysical realist asserts that this conditional knowledge of the causes is entirely sufficient for practical life.

Inductive reasoning is the methodological foundation of modern metaphysical realism. There was a time when people believed they could derive from concepts something that was no longer a concept. It was believed that one could recognize, from concepts, the metaphysical real entities that metaphysical realism requires. This kind of philosophizing is now a thing of the past. Instead, however, it is believed that one can infer, from a sufficiently large number of perceptual facts, the nature of the thing-in-itself that underlies these facts. Just as one once sought to extract the metaphysical from concepts, so today one believes one can extract it from perceptions. Since concepts are held before one's eyes with transparent clarity, one believed one could also deduce the metaphysical from them with absolute certainty. Perceptions, however, do not present themselves with the same transparent clarity. Each subsequent perception presents itself somewhat differently from the similar ones that preceded it. Fundamentally, therefore, what was deduced from the preceding perceptions is somewhat modified by each subsequent one. The conception of the metaphysical that is gained in this way can therefore be called only relatively correct; it is subject to correction by future cases. The metaphysics of Eduard von Hartmann bears the mark of this methodological principle; he placed the following motto on the title page of his first major work: "Speculative Results Based on the Inductive Scientific Method."

The form that the metaphysical realist currently ascribes to things-in-themselves is one derived from inductive inferences. He is convinced, through reflections on the process of cognition, of the existence of an objectively real structure of the world alongside the "subjective" one that is cognizable through perception and concepts. He believes he can determine the nature of this objective reality through inductive inferences drawn from his perceptions.

Addendum to the New Edition (1918).
For the unbiased observation of experience in perception and concept, as has been attempted to be described in the preceding discussion, certain ideas arising from the study of nature will repeatedly prove to be a hindrance. Standing on this ground, one tells oneself that the eye perceives colors in the light spectrum ranging from red to violet. But beyond violet, in the radiation region of the spectrum, there are forces to which the eye has no color perception, though they do correspond to a chemical effect; similarly, beyond the limit of red's effectiveness, there are radiations that have only thermal effects. Reflections focused on such and similar phenomena lead one to the view that the scope of the human world of perception is determined by the scope of human senses, and that a person would perceive an entirely different world if they possessed other senses in addition to their own—or if they had any other senses at all. Anyone who indulges in the wild fantasies—for which, in this vein, the brilliant discoveries of modern natural science in particular provide a rather tempting incentive—may well come to the conclusion that only that which is capable of acting upon the senses shaped by human organization falls within the scope of human observation. He has no right to regard this perceived reality—limited by his own constitution—as in any way authoritative for reality. Every new sense would present him with a different picture of reality. —All of this, considered within the appropriate limits, is a thoroughly justified opinion. But if anyone allows this view to mislead them in the unbiased observation of the relationship between perception and concept as asserted in these remarks, they block their own path to a knowledge of the world and of humanity rooted in reality. The experience of the essence of thought—that is, the active development of the world of concepts—is something entirely different from the experience of the perceptible through the senses. No matter what other senses a person might possess, none of them would provide him with reality unless he mentally interwove the perceived phenomena mediated through them with concepts; and every sense, whatever its nature, when thus interwoven, gives a person the

possibility of living within reality. The question of how a person stands in the real world has nothing to do with the imagination's conception of a potentially entirely different perceptual image that might arise through other senses. One must simply recognize that *every* perceptual image derives its form from the organization of the perceiving being, but that the perceptual image interwoven with the experience of thoughtful contemplation leads a person into reality. It is not the fanciful speculation about how a world might appear differently to senses other than the human ones that can prompt a person to seek knowledge about their relationship to the world, but rather the insight that *every* perception provides only a part of the reality inherent in , and that it thus leads away from its *own reality*. This insight is then accompanied by another: that thinking leads into the part of reality that is hidden from perception by perception itself. The unimpeded observation of the relationship between perception and concepts developed through thinking, as described here, can also be disrupted when, in the realm of physical experience, it becomes necessary to speak not at all of elements that are immediately and vividly perceptible, but rather of non-intuitive quantities such as electric or magnetic lines of force, and so on. It may *seem* as though the elements of reality of which physics speaks have nothing to do with either the perceptible or with the concept developed through active thinking. Yet such an opinion would be based on self-deception. First of all, it is essential that *everything* developed in physics—insofar as it does not constitute unfounded hypotheses that should be ruled out—is derived from perception and concept. What appears to be abstract content is, through the physicist's sound cognitive instinct, firmly situated within the realm of perception, and it is conceived in terms used in that realm. The intensities of force in the electric and magnetic fields, and so on, are*, in essence,* derived through no other cognitive process than that which takes place between perception and concept.

- An increase or transformation of the human senses would result in a different picture of perception, an enrichment or transformation of human experience; but true knowledge would also have to be gained from *this* experience through the interaction of concept and perception. The *deepening* of knowledge depends on the forces of intuition that unfold in thought (see page 95). This intuition can*,* within *the experience* that takes shape in thought, delve into deeper or shallower layers of reality. Through the expansion of the perceptual picture, this delving can receive impulses and be indirectly fostered in this way. However, this delving into the depths should *never* be confused—as the attainment of reality—with the contrast between broader and narrower perceptual images, in which only a half-reality, as conditioned by the cognizing organism, is *ever* present. Those who do not lose themselves in *abstractions* will realize how the fact that, in physics, elements must be *accessed* within the field of perception for which no sense is immediately attuned—as is the case with color or sound—also comes into play for the understanding of the human being. The *concrete* nature of the human being is determined not only by what he confronts as immediate perception through his organism, but also by the fact that he excludes other things from this immediate perception. Just as the unconscious state of sleep is necessary to life alongside the conscious waking state, so too is a sphere—indeed, a much larger one—of elements not perceptible through the senses necessary to human self-experience, alongside the sphere of sensory perception, within the field from which sensory perceptions originate. All of this has already been indirectly expressed in the original presentation of this treatise. The author adds this expansion of the content here because he has found that some readers have not read carefully enough. —It should also be borne in mind that the concept of *perception,* as developed in this treatise, must not be confused with that of external sensory perception, which is merely a special case of it. It will become clear from what has already been said, but even more so from what will be discussed later, that everything that approaches human beings—*whether* sensually *or spiritually*—is understood here as perception before it is grasped by an actively formed concept. To have perceptions of a psychological or spiritual nature, senses in the commonly understood sense are not necessary. One might say that such an extension of ordinary linguistic usage is impermissible. Yet it is *absolutely necessary* if one does not wish to be constrained*,* in certain fields, by linguistic usage itself in the expansion of knowledge. Anyone who speaks of perception *only* in the sense of sensory perception will not, even through *this* sensory perception, arrive at a concept useful for knowledge. Sometimes one *must* expand a concept so that it acquires its proper meaning within a narrower field. One must also occasionally add something to what is initially conceived within a concept, so that what is thus conceived finds its justification or even correction. Thus, on page 107 of this book, it is stated: "The representation is therefore an individualized concept." In response to this, it was objected to me that this was an unusual use of language. But this usage is necessary if one wishes to get to the bottom of what a representation actually is. What would become of the progress of knowledge if one were to object to everyone who is compelled to correct concepts by saying, "That is an unusual use of language."

II.4 The Purpose of the World and the Purpose of Life

(The Purpose of Humanity)

Among the manifold currents in the spiritual life of humanity, one can trace a trend that might be called the overcoming of the concept of purpose in areas where it does not belong. *Purposefulness* is a certain pattern in the sequence of phenomena. Conformity to purpose is truly real only when—in contrast to the relationship of cause and effect, where the preceding event determines a later one—the subsequent event, conversely, exerts a determining influence on the earlier one. This is initially true only of human actions. A person performs an action that he or she *first* conceives in the mind and allows this conception to determine the action. The later event—the action—acts upon the earlier one—the acting person—with the aid of the conception. This detour through conception, however, is absolutely necessary for a purposeful connection.

In the process that breaks down into cause and effect, a distinction must be made between perception and concept. The perception of the cause precedes the perception of the effect; cause and effect would simply coexist side by side in our consciousness if we could not connect them through their corresponding concepts. The perception of the effect can only ever follow the perception of the cause. If the effect is to have a real influence on the cause, this can only be through the conceptual factor. For the perceptual factor of the effect simply does not exist prior to that of the cause. Anyone who claims that the flower is the purpose of the root—that is, that the former has an influence on the latter—can only assert this based on the factor in the flower that he establishes through his thinking about it. The factor of perception of the flower does not yet exist at the time the root comes into being. However, for a purposeful connection, it is not merely the ideal, lawful connection of the later with the earlier that is necessary; rather, the concept (the law) of the effect must actually influence the cause through a perceptible process. Yet we can observe a perceptible influence of a concept on something else only in human actions. Here, then, the concept of purpose alone is applicable. Naive consciousness, which accepts only what is perceptible, seeks—as we have repeatedly noted—to impose the perceptible even where only the ideal can be recognized. In perceptible events, it seeks perceptible connections; or, if it finds none, it *imagines* them into existence. The concept of purpose, as it applies to subjective action, is a suitable element for such imagined connections. The naive person knows how to bring about an event and concludes from this that nature will do the same. In the purely ideal connections of nature, he sees not only invisible forces but also imperceptible, real purposes. Humans design their tools to serve a purpose; following the same formula, the naive realist imagines the Creator constructing organisms. Only very gradually is this false concept of purpose disappearing from the sciences. In philosophy, it continues to wreak considerable havoc even today. There, questions are asked about the extra-worldly purpose of the world, about the extra-human destiny (and consequently also the purpose) of humankind, and so on.

Monism rejects the concept of purpose in all areas with the sole exception of human action. It seeks natural laws, but not natural purposes. *Natural purposes* are arbitrary assumptions, just like imperceptible forces (p. 120 ff.). But even purposes in life that humans do not set for themselves are, from the standpoint of monism, unjustified assumptions. Only that which humans have made purposeful is purposeful, for only through the realization of an idea does something purposeful come into being. However, the idea becomes effective in the realistic sense only within humans. Therefore, human life has only the purpose and destiny that humans give it. To the question: What is a person's task in life? Monism can only answer: the one that they set for themselves. My mission in the world is not predetermined; rather, it is whatever I choose for myself. I do not set out on my life's journey with a predetermined course.

Ideas are meaningfully realized only through human beings. It is therefore inadmissible to speak of the embodiment of ideas through history. All such expressions as "history is the development of humanity toward freedom," or the realization of the moral world order, and so on, are untenable from a monistic perspective.

Those who embrace the concept of purpose believe that, in doing so, they must simultaneously renounce all order and unity in the world. Consider, for example, *Robert Hamerling* (Atomistik des Willens, Vol. 11, p. 201):

> "As long as there are *drives* in nature, it is folly to deny the existence of *purposes* within it.
>
> —Just as the form of a *limb* of the human body is not determined and conditioned by an *idea* of that limb floating in the air, but by its connection to the larger whole—the body to which the limb belongs—so too is the form of every natural being, be it a plant, animal, or human, is not determined and conditioned by an *idea* of that being floating in the air, but by the formative principle of the larger whole of nature, which lives out and develops itself in a purposeful manner."

And on page 191 of the same volume:

> "The theory of purpose merely asserts that, *despite* the thousand inconveniences and torments of this creaturely life, a high degree of purposefulness and order is unmistakably present in the structures and developments of nature—a purposefulness and order, however, that is realized only within the laws of nature, and which cannot aim at a land of milk and honey in which life would face no death, and becoming no decay, with all the more or less unpleasant but utterly unavoidable intermediate stages."
>
> When opponents of the concept of purpose set against a world of wonders of purposefulness—as nature displays in all its realms—a painstakingly assembled heap of rubbish consisting of partial or complete, supposed or actual instances of purposelessness, I find that just as amusing."

What is meant here by "expediency"? The harmonization of perceptions into a whole. But since all perceptions are based on laws (ideas) that we discover through our thinking, the systematic harmonization of the elements of a perceptual whole is precisely the ideal harmonization of the elements of an ideal whole contained within that perceptual whole. When it is said that an animal or a human being is not determined by an *idea floating* in the *air,* this is a misstatement, and once the expression is corrected, the view in question automatically loses its absurd character. The animal is certainly not determined by an idea floating in the air, but rather by an idea innate to it and constituting its lawful essence. Precisely because the idea is not outside the thing but acts within it as its essence, one cannot speak of purposefulness. Precisely the one who denies that the natural being is determined from the outside (whether by an idea floating in the air or one existing *outside* the creature in the mind of a creator of the world is, in this regard, entirely irrelevant) must admit that this being is not determined purposefully and by design from the outside, but causally and according to law from within. I design a machine to be purposeful when I bring its parts into a relationship that they do not naturally possess. The purposefulness of the design then consists in the fact that I have based the machine's mode of operation on its idea. The machine has thereby become an object of perception with a corresponding idea. Natural beings are also such entities. Anyone who calls a thing purposeful because it is formed according to laws may just as well apply this designation to natural beings. However, this regularity must not be confused with that of subjective human action. For a purpose to exist, it is absolutely necessary that the active cause be a concept—namely, that of the effect. In nature, however, concepts cannot be identified as causes anywhere; the concept always proves to be merely the ideal connection between cause and effect. Causes exist in nature only in the form of perceptions.

Dualism can speak of cosmic and natural purposes. Where a lawful connection between cause and effect manifests itself to our perception, the dualist may assume that we are seeing only a pale reflection of a connection in which the absolute cosmic entity realized its purposes. For monism, with the absolute World Being—which cannot be experienced but can only be deduced hypothetically—the basis for assuming the existence of world and natural purposes also disappears.

Addendum to the 1918 New Edition.

If one thinks through what has been set forth here without prejudice, one cannot come to the conclusion that the author of this treatise, in his rejection of the concept of purpose as applied to non-human phenomena, stood on the same ground as those thinkers who, by rejecting this concept, create for themselves the possibility of conceiving everything outside human action—and then human action itself—as *merely* natural occurrences. The very fact that this book presents the thought process as a purely spiritual one should suffice to guard against such a conclusion. Even if the concept of purpose is rejected here for the *spiritual* world lying outside human action, it is because in that world a purpose *higher* than the one realized in humanity is revealed. And when a purposeful destiny for the human race—conceived according to the pattern of human purposefulness—is spoken of as an erroneous idea, what is meant is that the individual sets goals for himself, and from these the result of humanity's collective activity is composed. This result is then *higher* than its constituent parts, the human purposes.

Part III: The Ultimate Questions

1. The Consequences of Monism

The unified explanation of the world—or monism, as understood here—derives from human experience the principles it needs to explain the world. It likewise seeks the sources of action within the observable world—namely, in human nature as accessible to our self-knowledge, and specifically in the moral imagination. It rejects the idea of seeking, through abstract inferences, the ultimate reasons for the world as it presents itself to perception and thought outside of that world itself. For monism, the unity that brings experiential, thinking observation into harmony with the manifold diversity of perceptions is at the same time the unity demanded by the human need for knowledge, through which it seeks entry into the physical and spiritual realms. Anyone who seeks yet another unity beyond this one is thereby merely demonstrating that he fails to recognize the correspondence between what is discovered through thought and what is demanded by the drive for knowledge. The individual human being is not actually separated from the world. It is a part of the world, and there is a connection with the entirety of the cosmos in reality, which is interrupted only by our perception. For the time being, we see this part as an entity existing in and of itself, because we do not see the straps and ropes through which the movement of our wheel of life is brought about by the fundamental forces of the cosmos. Anyone who remains at this standpoint regards the part of a whole as a truly independently existing entity—as the monad—which receives information about the rest of the world in some way from the outside. The monism referred to here shows that independence can be believed in only as long as what is perceived is not woven into the web of the conceptual world through thought. When this happens, the partial existence reveals itself to be a mere illusion of perception. Human beings can find their self-contained, total existence within the universe only through intuitive thought. Thinking destroys the illusion of perception and integrates our individual existence into the life of the cosmos. The unity of the conceptual world, which contains objective perceptions, also encompasses the content of our subjective personality. Thinking reveals to us the true form of reality as a self-contained unity, whereas the diversity of perceptions is merely an illusion conditioned by our own organization (see p. 174 ff.). The recognition of the real as opposed to the illusion of perception has always been the goal of human thought. Science has sought to recognize perceptions as reality by uncovering the lawful connections within them. Where, however, it was believed that the connections determined by human thought had only subjective significance, the true basis of unity was sought in objects lying beyond our world of experience (a revealed God, Will, absolute Spirit, etc.). - And, based on this view, people strove to acquire, in addition to knowledge of the relationships discernible within experience, a second kind of knowledge that transcends experience and reveals the connection between these relationships and entities that can no longer be experienced (metaphysics derived not through experience but through reasoning). From this standpoint, the reason we comprehend the structure of the world through systematic thought was seen as the fact that a primordial being had constructed the world according to logical laws, and the basis for our actions was seen in the will of that primordial being. Yet it was not recognized that thought encompasses both the subjective and the objective, and that total reality is mediated in the union of perception and concept. Only as long as we consider the regularity that permeates and determines perception in the abstract form of the concept do we, in fact, have to do with something purely subjective. What is subjective, however, is not the content of the concept, which is gained through perception with the aid of thought. This content is not taken from the subject, but from reality. It is the part of reality that perception cannot reach. It is experience, but not experience mediated through perception. Anyone who cannot imagine that the concept is a reality is thinking only of the abstract form in which he holds it in his mind. But in such isolation, it exists solely through our mental organization, just as perception does. Even the tree that one perceives has no existence in isolation. It is merely a link within the great machinery of nature, and is possible only in real connection with it. An abstract concept has no reality in and of itself, any more than a perception does. Perception is the part of reality that is objective; the concept that which is given subjectively (through intuition; see p. 95 ff.). Our mental organization splits reality into these two factors. One factor appears to perception, the other to intuition. Only the connection between the two—perception, which is lawfully integrated into the universe—constitutes full reality. If we consider mere perception in and of itself, we have no reality, but rather a disjointed chaos; if we consider the regularity of perceptions in and of itself, then we are dealing merely with abstract concepts. It is not the abstract concept that contains reality; rather, it is thinking observation, which considers neither the concept nor perception in isolation, but rather the connection between the two.

Even the most orthodox subjective idealist will not deny that we live in reality (that our real existence is rooted in it). He will only dispute that, through our cognition, we also attain ideally what we actually experience. In contrast, monism shows that thought is neither subjective nor objective, but rather a principle that encompasses both sides of reality. When we observe through thought, we carry out a process that itself belongs to the realm of the real it belongs to what happens. By thinking within experience itself, we overcome the one-sidedness of mere perception. We cannot fathom the essence of reality through abstract, conceptual hypotheses (through purely conceptual reflection), but we live within reality by finding ideas that correspond to our perceptions. Monism does not seek anything unexperienceable (beyond the world) alongside experience, but rather sees reality in concept and perception. It does not spin a metaphysics out of mere abstract concepts, because it sees in the concept in itself only one side of reality—one that remains hidden from perception and has meaning only in connection with perception. It does, however, instill in human beings the conviction that they live in the world of reality and need not seek an unexperienceable higher reality outside their world. It discourages the search for the absolutely real anywhere other than in experience, because it recognizes the content of experience itself as reality. And it is satisfied with this reality because it knows that thought has the power to guarantee it. What dualism seeks only beyond the observable world, monism finds within it. Monism shows that through our cognition we grasp reality in its true form, not in a subjective image that interposes itself between human beings and reality. For monism, the conceptual content of the world is the same for all human individuals (see p. 89 ff.). According to monistic principles, one human individual regards another as his equal because it is the same world content that manifests itself in him. In the unified conceptual world, there are not as many concepts of the lion as there are individuals who conceive of a lion, but only one. And the concept that A adds to the perception of the lion is the same as that of B, merely apprehended by a different perceiving subject (see p. 90 ff.). Thinking leads all subjects of perception to the common ideal unity of all diversity. The single world of ideas manifests itself in them as in a multitude of individuals. As long as a person perceives himself merely through self-perception, he regards himself as this particular person; as soon as he looks upon the world of ideas that shines forth within him and encompasses all particularity, he sees the absolutely real shining forth vividly within himself. Dualism defines the divine primordial being as that which permeates all human beings and lives within them all. Monism finds this common divine life in reality itself. The conceptual content of another person is also my own, and I regard him as another only as long as I perceive; but no longer as soon as I think. Each person encompasses with his thinking only a part of the entire world of ideas, and to that extent, individuals also differ in the actual content of their thinking. But these contents are part of a self-contained whole that encompasses the contents of thought of all human beings. Thus, in his thinking, man grasps the common primordial being that permeates all human beings. Life in reality, filled with the content of thought, is at the same time life in God. The afterlife—which is merely deduced and cannot be experienced—is based on a misunderstanding on the part of those who believe that this world does not have the basis for its existence within itself. They fail to realize that through thought they find what they require to explain perception. For this reason, no speculation has yet brought to light any content that is not derived from the reality given to us. The God posited through abstract reasoning is merely man transposed into an afterlife; Schopenhauer's Will is the absolutized human willpower; Hartmann's unconscious primordial being, composed of idea and will, is a synthesis of two abstractions derived from experience. Exactly the same can be said of all other otherworldly principles based on unexperienced thought.

In truth, the human mind never transcends the reality in which we live, nor does it need to, since everything it needs to explain that reality is found within this world. If philosophers are ultimately satisfied with deriving the world from principles they borrow from experience and transpose into a hypothetical hereafter, then such satisfaction must also be possible if the same content is left within this world, where it belongs for experiential thought. Any transcendence of the world is merely apparent, and the principles placed outside the world do not explain the world any better than those lying within it. Self-understanding thought, however, does not call for such a transcendence at all, since the content of a thought must seek perceptual content only within the world, not outside it, with which it forms a reality. Even the objects of the imagination are merely contents that are justified only when they become representations that point to a content of perception. Through this content of perception, they become integrated into reality. A concept that is to be filled with a content said to lie outside the world given to us is an abstraction to which no reality corresponds. We can only conceive of the concepts of reality; to find reality itself,

perception is also required. A primordial being of the world, for which a content is conceived, is an impossible assumption for self-understanding thought. Monism does not deny the ideal; indeed, it does not regard even perceptual content for which the ideal counterpart is lacking as full reality; yet it finds nothing in the entire realm of thought that would necessitate stepping outside the experiential realm of thought by denying the objectively spiritual reality of thought. Monism regards a science that limits itself to describing perceptions without delving into their ideal supplements as incomplete. But it likewise regards as incomplete all abstract concepts that do not find their complement in perception and do not fit anywhere into the network of concepts encompassing the observable world. It therefore recognizes no ideas that point to an objective reality lying beyond our experience and that are intended to form the content of a merely hypothetical metaphysics. All such ideas that humanity has produced are, in its view, abstractions derived from experience, whose derivation from experience is simply overlooked by their creators.

Nor, according to monistic principles, can the goals of our actions be derived from a non-human hereafter. Insofar as they are conceived, they must stem from human intuition. Human beings do not adopt the purposes of an objective (otherworldly) primordial being as their individual purposes, but rather pursue their own, which are given to them by their moral imagination. Human beings detach the idea that is realized in an action from the unified world of ideas and make it the foundation of their will. Thus, it is not commandments implanted in this world from the hereafter that are lived out in human actions, but rather the human intuitions that belong to this world. Monism recognizes no such ruler of the world who, from outside ourselves, sets the goal and direction of our actions. Human beings find no such otherworldly source of existence whose decisions they could explore in order to learn from it the goals toward which they must direct their actions. They are left to rely on themselves. They themselves must give substance to their actions. If he seeks reasons for his volition outside the world in which he lives, he searches in vain. If he goes beyond the satisfaction of his natural instincts—for which Mother Nature has provided—he must seek them in his own moral imagination, unless he prefers the convenience of allowing himself to be guided by the moral imagination of others, that is, he must either refrain from all action or act according to motives that he derives for himself from the world of his ideas, or that others provide him from the same world. When he goes beyond his sensuous, instinctual life and beyond the execution of other people's commands, he is determined by nothing other than himself. He must act out of an impulse that he has set for himself and that is determined by nothing else. Ideally, this impulse is indeed determined within the realm of ideas; but in fact, it can only be derived from that realm by human beings and translated into reality. Monism can find the basis for the actual translation of an idea into reality by human beings only within human beings themselves. For an idea to become an action, a person must first will it before it can happen. Such a will therefore has its basis only in the person himself. Human beings are thus the ultimate determinants of their own actions. They are free.