Problem of a not historical but ideal genesis of the idea of strict science[[1]](#footnote-1)

Consideration on a natural method that, from the awakening theoretical interest (interest of knowledge), becomes the universal world interest, the interest in the rational structural universalities of the world; how furthermore the vague natural cognition with its vague universalities is the first, but how then the idea of the unconditional universality is awakened, and guiding the new idea of the truth, as of a truth <being raised> above all contingent normality and freed from all occasionality (relativity). – “Return to the natural world concept” – what is that? Something historical? Etc.

What could we place first as the formal original concept of philosophy?

1. Cognition from pure theoretical interest – cognition as such? But not without further ado any contingent singular cognition, like that this tree is an oak-tree. Cognition that <is> not yet known, is not at hand; not a merely experiencing cognizance, neither a contingent unknown cognition – any contingent conclusion; not the answering of any contingent question – to something singularly not experienced, but lying in the circle of the available sphere of experience.
2. General cognition, related to the whole world with all its realities: how everything has developed, from what, and what it therefore implies originally, [what it] is in itself; how every developing has emerged, what shows itself in all developing and has to show, how all persisting being springs from the harmony of the contrasts, how a necessary rule reigns everywhere, [289] reason governs everywhere, without which the world would be chaos and not a unitary world.

General traits going through all worldly being and happening or seem to show themselves everywhere, become interesting; they try <to bring> this universality simply to that complete universality, the way it lies within the natural trait of empirical thinking, by grasping it inductively and viewing it as a strict universality. <Thus> they give an “explanation” for it, an interpretation, at first in a half mythical way – as air, as ἄπειρον, as love and hate -, and then in attempted interpretation through personal principles – through the νοῦς. Here they try to make it generally understandable. Or they try to exhibit a composition of firm elements and a firm rule of the happening, lying behind the appearances and through which the course of the appearances becomes explicable as the result. A simpler basic regulation according to the form deductively explains the many, manifold occurrences of the appearances.

Science aims at the universal going through all world happenings and things, it explains lower universalities from higher ones, singular happenings as single cases from general rules, it eventually explains the total course of all happening and the general being thus of this world from one or multiple principles of the being, from a being that is thus and is related to the world in such a way that the being thus of the world becomes understandable. <That is> finally a reason, a god, a personal or person-analogous principle: we understand why something is that way if it comes from the positioning of a purpose and the actualization of a purpose. This is where the explanation of the being finally aims at. –

The universe in its endlessness, an unknown horizon never to be delimited, in which no final thing is conceivable, beyond which nothing else would be conceivable, possible – how do we gain a cognition of the world?

Universalities going through the world that is sensuously experienced first of all: “Realms of the world” – the world of stars, of the “eternal” stars, the sky of stars and the earth; the world of the animals and of the plants, of men; the realm of the lifeless, of the most deepest steps of real being. Interest in universalities – in open infinities, what is to be cognized universally for each of such endless realms: [290] classification, development, most general forms of composition, etc. In men, the kinds of their soul abilities, of the efficiencies or virtues, the kinds of their social connections, the kinds of their customs, their education, their decline, etc. The realms of culture. The realm of the spatial shapes, the realm of numbers, the realm of rhythms, of melodies. –

The mundane universe is the total one, encompassing manifold allnesses, endless realms with universal peculiarities – universal questions.

The intention towards the lasting being, towards that, which remains identical in the change – in the change of subjective “appearances”. What is the being? The identity of the real thing demands identical predicates, truths that state in an eternally valid way, what the being is. This What must be an identical and self-enclosed content of predicates of the “lasting essence”.

Intention towards the true being is that towards some definite truth, and a self-enclosed one, for every true being.

Stream of appearances, stream of the sensuous, the empirically-relative truths: How can that, which is experienced as the same only in the constant change, and as the same with predicates that are now accepted and then not, are accepted by me and not by others, are judged, truly “be” – how can it be a theme of truths in itself? If it is that – how can I know it, how can I cognize, ground such truths?

The being of the thinking, of the νοεῖν is the alone actually and truly being, not that of the appearance; but how can it be determined? Does the time, does the space, the motion, the size and number, the change belong to it? How can the being as something appearing, as something spatio-temporally given, qualitatively, changing itself, etc., still be “saved”, keep a right? How is this right to be determined, if the sensuous as such is merely subjective, changing itself in the change of subjective opinion?

All real things are spatio-temporal and changing, show themselves as causally determined, and at the same time as dependent on the subjectivity of the cognizing subject, his bodiliness and the mood of his soul, etc.

Some of these universalities [291] only enter the human horizon of cognition under certain conditions; thus the universality of human culture, the universality of human history, nay, already the national history, even more so the universality of science itself.

Of course the earth itself is a universality at that: it is individual, but an object implying many kinds of realms as realms of infinity – simply the just mentioned ones (and at first at least those to be related to the earth).

Such universes demand general sentences for the cognition – cognitions of a general sense that are not the summation of single experiences and single explications of the objects of experience. Infinity is only cognizable through universality. But infinity does not designate any mathematical thing here but the endlessness in the process of “possible” experience, without an end, some final thing, being able to be given through experience in advance.

Thus exploring the world is exploring all universes of the world, and exploring their unity, their intermingling. Or: The natural articulation of the world into “world realms” (regions of the world, but not in the philosophical sense yet) – the articulation of the “natural concept of the world” – determines a natural course of “science”.

How do I get on now? I think of men, the way I am, or we are, but prior to all that, which has already now been determined for us as science in the world perception and imposes scientific meanings on it, coming from sciences. I consider them, the way we are, as men having a sensuously-intuitional world from a univocal course of experience, otherwise loaded with many kinds of changing meanings, apperceived according to the formation of their experience that may however differ from ours. Mythical potencies may be experiences for them, as divine intuitions, revelations, wonders still are for men of our surrounding world, with the sense content of our religions. But whatever may be the differences (and how ever they may be provable in the fact from the science of culture and history in special shapes), they are men as we are – the same in that sense, in which we communicate with Xhosa and Tibetans, and experience an identical [292] surrounding world. However much this identical [world] may be apperceived in a different way by us and by them, the natural world concept is still the same for all of us, with its natural separation in regions – at most we may doubt, whether not a special region of gods and demons exists for them, co-experienced in their experience, that we do not accept, and for which we do not have any experience.

The practical man in the natural life in his practical surrounding world – the practical cognizing – change into the theoretical attitude.

If we now consider that men as such, in a surrounding world of experience, and in one articulated in regions, are in the situation of an awakening and spreading interest of knowledge, then the formation of cognition of this kind of knowledge will be at first essentially the same kind as the formation of the cognition of the practical life. How this exceeds the individual experiencing in empirically-inductive anticipations and gains general convictions without any theoretical interest (motivated in a purely practical way) – on wind and weather, on the causal behavior of things, on the personal behavior of men and the like -, thus as well the judging one in the theoretical interest. Such a way of judging is not without any “evidence”; there are on this level of cognition a good and a bad cognizing as well. They fight in practical life on truth and wrongness, on actuality and illusion, on reason and folly. And they agree on the basis of evidence, namely in going back to the represented experiences, to regularities of co-existence and succession motivating the judgment, through a “clear consideration of the facts” and the degree of the analogy, etc. And if they do that, then it is “clear” as well that afterwards the respective cognition, and accordingly the general cognition, is “well grounded”, that it is “reasonable” to “preview” in this way, to conclude, or rather, that it is unreasonable, because what we have as experiences is not able to sustain, or that which we thought as related by essence, is not and mutually sounds <only> from contingent reasons, etc.

But on the other hand such generalizations of the practical life are [293] not a serious cognition of the strictly general truths, and as a rule they are not meant as such in life; it suffices for the practice that here is a rule of expectation, according to which a similar happening may be expected in the new case – as a probability that is well-grounded from experience and habit. If the further course of experience is once wrong, then the rule has thereby not been abandoned, although its force, if often contradicted by experience, would vanish.

Thus the natural practical life has got no unconditionally valid cognition, it only knows the unconditional in the form of religious and, intertwined with that, moral demands. These themselves are thereby not necessarily thought in an unconditional acceptance of the demand for every man as such, they may be limited according to family, tribe, nation. The scientific interest though is directed to the widest horizons, to the whole world and to the allnesses implied in it. To stretch inductions over these, as inductions of the experientia vaga, this may lead to no good: adapted to the narrow horizons of the current life experience, life‘s general rules of expectation loose their value for the allnesses, which simply is only a practical value of life. But how does science simply arrive at the conception of the idea of the unconditional allness, and how does it arrive at sustainable inductions, even where it performs a universal induction?

That the first attempts to arrive at statements of universal acceptance are made in the way of vague induction (experientia vaga), and that they lead to cognitions that satisfy the single subject at the very best, but are denied by those who tend to increase other rules to universal generality, and who now arrive at other results, is understandable.

But the act of cognition of any kind is directed to “truth”; this is accepted for every cognizing, in which historical context ever man may be. But truth in the sense of the pre-scientific and extra-scientific life – let us say of the naturally-practical life – gains, as we will see, a new meaning, notwithstanding a common element, justifying the identical naming, <when it [294] becomes scientific truth; a meaning on the other hand,> having its source in the pre-scientific one. Let us therefore first consider this one.

1. The striving for cognition designates a striving to exhibit that, “which is”, or <to> answer the question, what is, possibly already whether something is there or not, also in the frame of the natural practice of life, where it does not serve the theoretical but the practical interest. Every decision here stands within a motivation pointing to possible experience and insight, it is subject to critique, performing its agreement or disagreement in the recourse to “evidence”, i.e. simply to the actual exhibition of the fact in the experience or to the actual exhibition of the inducing reasons and the “preview” actually occurring through it. The source of all decision on the right of opinions and decisions made lies in the view of the experience, in the insight into the grounding situation (the discerned reason for discerned results), in the preview of that, which is “to be expected” as coming in the current situation, and the right designates the rightfulness, the appropriateness for that, which “exhibits itself” in the evidence. It is presupposed as natural without reflection that every decision, having thus proved its right, is final, that everybody can gain the same evidence with the identical result. Every new going back to “the thing itself”, the reasons themselves and what they effect cannot result in anything else, but ever again only in the same.

In the naturally-practical life the cognizing subject stands with his siblings in a horizon of situation, in a horizon of experience that is common as a whole, in which everyone can “convince” himself of everyone and everything that anyone “cognizes”, in a way that is averagely sufficient for the practice. Those who communicate with one another are generally “normal” men in a sensuous and mental way, they have a surrounding world that is common for these normal subjects without further ado, they have made the same experiences, stand in a corresponding tradition, have formed corresponding concepts (situation), have arrived at the same previews or may arrive at them and mediate them to one another by appealing to a common [295] experience. All that creates a milieu of almost the same, it all rests on the same “experience” with the same or matching apperceptions and anticipations – a similarity that is a typical one eventually resting on empirics according to the expectation. The abnormal is extinguished as wrong, as deviating from the rule of expectation, not counting since it is an exception, which does not cause much harm to the rule, if it does not verify it. Original experience is thereby perception, and perception is consciousness of the grasping the object itself - it may have many components of a traditional apprehension at that, which is indeed verified on the basis of the actually experienced as well.

The correctness, validity that is strived at and claimed for under the title truth is that of an empirical evidence, which is to be normally produced among normal ones in the normal circle of experience – but also <in> the situation that is silently presumed, known, recognized.

1. Science – cognizes the relativity of the common surrounding world, its moment of the properly not experienced, its dependence on tradition, etc.; it searches for a definite truth that may completely be justified, and for the independency of contingent persons, peoples, prejudices of communities; <for truth that> may be justified as a truth in itself. Science at first increases the empirical concept of truth, in which the relativities remain unconsidered, into the absolute concept of truth, it gets into difficulties, and still wants to perform it. The prejudice of science is true being as being-in-itself, as a correlate of a truth existing in itself and definitely, and of a truth that can be cognized, can be grounded on its finiteness, can be characterized in this grounding in an artfully verbal way.

It is a prejudice that the world is and is definitely cognizable, definitely to be communicated, and that it is the sciences’ task to systematically realize the definite truth as definite logos for the world, or rather, for its corresponding world realms.

Science is the professional working out of truths as ever lasting mental goods of culture that may again be understood in an appropriate artful (technical) way in all future in an identical [296] sense, ever again be grounded by its likewise shaped groundings, ever again be seen, be actualized in their finiteness.

Certainly this conviction is subject to a certain change: the conviction of the attainability of the definite truth of the world, remaining unattainable only as a complete one, that is, approaching the idea of the all-encompassing theory in the progress of the build-up of definite truths and theories, becomes the conviction that the scientific theories only want to be approximations to the definite truth of the world, and that the progressing is not merely such in the completion, but in the approach, whereas only the methodical form of this progress is attainable, or rather, its predelineation in actually attainable definite truths.

Historically Plato and Aristotle have broken ground for this idea of a science directed to the definiteness of the grounding, and, in one with that, directed to a definite justification. Apart from the historical problem of motivation that this conviction has awakened, there is the problem of the ideal genesis, namely the problem to understand the necessities that were covertly determining in the historical, and that make it understandable why science of the preliminary step strived from its own consequence to such a new kind of purpose, that of absolute definiteness.

We have performed the historical following and understanding of the steps of the developing humanity from our historical present, that is, from our scientific world view, with our logic, etc.

On the one hand we immerse ourselves into the steps of mythical apperception, and the special apperceptions of special peoples (interpreting the reports), we perform apperceptions as well (expected of them, interpreted to them through interpretation of these reports) – but as “spectators”. We do not believe as well; we understand the motivations of this believe, and quasi believe as well, but not in truth. But do we not have constantly the contrast to our actual belief? Is not our kind of intuition and of the thinking linked to that [297] in constant “coincidence” with this supposed, and does this not designate constant critique as well?

On the other hand: we do not want to determine the truth, nay, we may say, such ways of objectivation are still far before the step of belief and the apperceptive step, allowing for a decision on truth and falseness. We only want to follow the becoming, the transformation of the apperceptions up until ours. But, that is <the> question when we have arrived at the “rational” step, is this accepted by us as one among others, or only differing through our current believing here?

The natural man lives in the belief. But in how far does he have a belief towards reasons, according to which he also justifies <his belief>? Is he even guided by a need for universal grounding, or rather, does he live in the need for a life from consequent reason?

Furthermore: in our historically illumining considerations we follow method. We describe, and the description is a “scientific” description. The life of the “natural men” and of the different steps of cultural men, of those who have been, is not considered in their language and way of thinking, but in ours, and not in that of a contingent man of our time but in that of our “science”.

If we now look for the way, in order to understand the rational development of the science, to show it from the grounding of the “natural world concept”, how the purpose idea of the science is to be launched from rational necessity and to be constructed according to its essential moments – what is the relation of that to the historical task? Do we have to historically determine any “world concept” of the “natural man”? <Or> as a necessary commonness of the comprehensible history until the emergence of science? What kind of abstraction is the one we create, by our constructing, or rather, describing a world experience and an experiential sense of the world prior to all scientific thinking – as a starting point?

1. Probably 1925. – Editor’s note. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)