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Chapter One

Kant's Chief Doctrines and Chief Mistakes

Manches Urteil wird aus gewohnheit
angenommen oder durch Neigung
geknüpft; weil aber keine Ueberlegung
vohergeht oder wenigstens critisch darauf
folgt, so gilt es für ein solches, das im
Verstande seine Ursprung erhalten hat.
(Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A 260-1/B
317-7)

Our task is to separate the genuine content of Kant's doctrine from the impure dross. In order to do this, it is above all necessary that we remind ourselves of the primary points of his reasoning in their connection to one another; and we must therefore ask permission to present the reader in short, compact words something once more with which he has long been familiar. Let us put ourselves as one does in epics immediately *in medias res*! The following are the primary doctrines, the quintessence, of the critique of pure reason.

* * *

All our representing consists in intuiting and thinking, and each representation is intuitive or abstract. But all intuiting takes place in space and time and cannot take place outside of them. All thinking, further, can in itself (as a function of the intelligible subject) only occur in time and is always related to something given in intuition (thus, in space and time). *Therefore, space and time are forms and conditions of all representing.*

Space and time are not abstracted from intuitions since they must rather already be present if any intuition is to be subjectively or objectively possible. Hence, although we could remove in thought everything existing in space and time, we absolutely could not remove space and time. For if we could, both the empirical world and even our self (our “I”) would be eliminated, and the self would have removed itself in thought, which is impossible.¹ Further, mathematical

¹ Herbart claims (*Psychology as Science*, § 114) that the *Kantian* proof rests on a *quaternio terminorum*. Kant argues as follows:

What experience teaches never contains the mark of necessity.

Space and time are necessary representations.

Therefore, space and time are not learned from experience.

According to Herbart, “necessity” has a different meaning in each of the premises. Space and time are necessary only insofar as one cannot think them away; but this is true only because they are what first make the *corporeal world* possible, which is actual for us, and because one must always represent that which is the condition of the possibility of something actual as necessary. But for this reason, the major premise is false. For in *this* sense *experience* certainly teaches us something *necessary*. In response to this objection, one should reply as follows. First, that one *declares* the conditions of the possibility of something we recognize as actual as *necessary* is not something experience *teaches* us, but rather something *we demand according to the subjective laws of thought*. Second, space and time are not necessary only because the corporeal world would be impossible without them but *primarily* because our *own intelligence, the subject of cognition, my own ego* would be impossible without them. We cannot only not represent *Nothing* without space and time; we cannot represent *at all* without them; they are perpetually present in all mental activities, etc. In short, if one wants to bring the Kantian argumentation into the form of a syllogism, it would be the following:

Everything that I cannot not think away from the subject of cognition without simultaneously destroying the subject is essential to it, that is, *a priori*.

I cannot think away space and time from the subject of cognition without simultaneously destroying it.

propositions only express determinations of space and time that are not acquired from experience (cognized *a posteriori*) but that are rather independent of experience and purely in virtue of the laws of our intellect (*a priori*) are declared to be incontrovertibly certain, that is, absolutely *universal* and *necessary*. Finally, space and time are not discursive but intuitive representations, for they relate to representations subordinate to them (different spaces and times) not as a genus does to a species but as a whole does to its parts. *Therefore, space and time are necessary, pure a priori intuitions. (Functions of the intellect)*

Space and time are, however, only necessary to the extent that they are “conditions of the possibility of all internal and external experience”. If we abstract from experience and representing in general, then space and time are nothing; that is, *space and time have empirical reality and transcendental ideality.*

* * *

This is the content of the “Transcendental Aesthetic”, which contains the proper foundation and what is truly new and epoch-making in the Kantian philosophy. – As regards the content of the subsequent “Transcendental Analytic”, as the first part of the “Transcendental Logic”, we want to note that the table of categories as well as other things are both in need and capable of significant

Therefore, etc.

Since this entire doctrine has recently been attacked by *Kirchmann (Philosophy of Knowledge, vol. 1, pp. 418-420)*, and *H. Lotze (Microcosm: Ideas for a Natural History and History of Mankind. Vol. 3, p. 485)* is at least not satisfied with the proof, we now refer to the argument that one finds on p. 24 and 31 of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This should destroy any doubt.

simplification. Without going into the unessential particulars of this portion of the *Critique*, therefore, we now present the essentially universal elements.

* * *

The manifold of elements of experience given in space and time (the matter of representing) can only become genuine experience or present itself to consciousness as a connected world of intuitive objects when it is connected to our intellect (categories) by means of certain syntheses. We cannot, as Hume rightly noted, acquire these syntheses from experience since experience only provides us with a multiplicity of *successive and coexisting* impressions of (internal and external) sense but never a *necessary connection* of these impressions. *Therefore, just as space and time are functions of the cognizing subject², so too are the categories; that is, they are necessary a priori representations.* And since they can only be thought in space and time, they relate only to spatial and temporal objects; that is, they have validity only within our intellect.³

* * *

Accordingly, the following reciprocal relationship exists with certainty:

- 1) *Our intellect only cognizes the elements of experience that are given in space and time and connected by the categories as an object.*⁴

² *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 253. We always cite according to the *first edition*.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 246

⁴ p. 48, 49, 246, 253.

- 2) *Everything that is given in space and time, that is, everything to which the categories are applicable, has validity only in relation to the intellect and is therefore nothing if independent of the intellect.*⁵

The situation, therefore, is as follows:

The external sensible world of corporeal things, as well as the inner world of our mental properties and abilities (thus the objects of inner and outer experience, i.e., everything given in space and time) is in no way robbed of its existence and reality (empirical reality); rather, it exists just as surely as I, the representing subject, exist.⁶ But just as certain as this fact is that the material and mental world disappears when I annihilate this subject with its intellectual functions (space, time, and the categories) because it only exists in and through the forms of the intellect.⁷ This means, therefore, that the subject and object of cognition are connected so intimately and necessarily by these transcendental forms of existence common to both of them, that they can only exist *with* each other, are necessary correlates, and stand or fall together. — But since I, the cognizing subject, do not stand supreme over these two inseparable factors of the world that is in fact represented (that is, the empirical world), but rather, eternally confined to the limits of my subjective intellect, am identical to one of these factors, I express the dependency of both factors of cognition in such a way that I attribute unconditional dependence on the existence of my intellect

⁵ p. 42. Cf. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783), p. 62.

⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 370, 371, 379.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 383.

(transcendental ideality) to the empirical world (the object of experience) despite its factive existence (empirical reality).⁸

By following this train of thought with the closest attention, we find everything developed into its parts with such exacting, ruthless consistency and such deep clarity of thought that it can only convince us, that as it were the scales fall from our eyes and we feel like the world after the discoveries of *Columbus* and *Copernicus*. From the transcendental ideality of space and time and the limitation of the categories to the data, given in both, of internal and external experience follows the thorough-going dependence of the actual, empirically-real world on the cognizing subject and *vice versa*. The standpoint of transcendental idealism, which involves empirical realism *de facto*, is developed completely validly; and up to this point, *Kant's* philosophy is irrefutable. Of course, in order to extract the pure gold of truth we have already had to strip and throw away a good deal of impure dross along the path we have followed. To this extent, we have taken an independent course since we have separated thoughts in this divorce that are unified in *Kant's* work. We have looked only at the truth and turned our backs to falsehood. – Now we must identify the inconsistency that, while it was omitted in our presentation, is combined with the truth almost at the beginning in *Kant*. This unfortunate inconsistency which is already a disruptive presence in the opening cords of the critical philosophy rises to a screeching, unbearable dissonance in its further development and all but destroys the in-itself grand and sublime impression of the whole work. It will be our task not only to lay bare and eliminate this lamentable mistake but also to examine the conditions from which it was able to grow. –

It has long been known that *Kant* did not stay completely true to his original doctrine. And this fact has been more generally noticed since *Author Schopenhauer* carefully identified the

⁸ p. 371. 378

differences between the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and all subsequent editions, *Rosenkranz* presented them to the public in his synoptic edition, and *Kuno Fischer* addressed them in such a brilliant and beautiful manner.⁹ But while a kind of infidelity to himself certainly lies in the changed deduction of the categories and the critique of idealism¹⁰ patched into the second and subsequent editions, something much worse that has lain hidden in the *first form* of Kant's doctrine, like a worm in fruit, has been almost entirely overlooked. It entered because he made a concession to dogmatic philosophy and in so doing brought into question the existence of his own philosophy. In general, the inconsistency consists in this: Although it *follows necessarily* from the Transcendental Aesthetic and the fact, emphasized and often repeated by Kant himself, that the theoretical intellect may only cognize within its forms of cognition—that is, by means of its functions—and that anything whatsoever that is thought to exist outside and be independent of them can be nothing to the intellect, that something extra-spatial and extra-temporal absolutely cannot be represented or thought, Kant agrees from the beginning to recognize such an object that is emancipated from the forms of cognition and thus irrational; that is, he agrees to represent something that cannot be represented—a wooden piece of iron. He does this *gradatim* in an order that is just as interesting to observe more closely as it is useful for the completion of our task.

First, he calls the manifold data of internal and external experience given in space and time *appearances*. How does he arrive at this? What justifies him to do so? The world may and, indeed, must disallow this title; for through it she will suffer the loss of her dignity, her already

⁹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 3rd. edition vol. 1, p. 515; Fischer, *History of Recent Philosophy*, vol. 3, preface p. XIV, p. 278. Cf. Ueberweg, *De priore et posteriori forma Kantianea criticae rationis purae* (Berdini: Typis Mittler et Filil, 1862)

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition p. 274.

acknowledged empirical reality, that is, her actuality. It would obviously lie in the title *appearance* that something is presupposed that *appears*—namely something that appears as the empirical world. But if everything that is given in space and time is “appearance”, then that which appears, the ostensible substrate of appearance, must *not* be in space and time. And since space and time are necessary forms of the intellect, this would be something that our intellect was not able to grasp and about which it could therefore not speak. A thing that lies outside of space and time is, once and for all, *nonsense*. Even if the spatial-temporal world were only “appearance”, it would not be so *for the intellect* since it is absolutely unable to compare the world in space and time with anything else because this world is precisely *everything*. *Consequently, it cannot be given the title “appearance”*.

Let us take notice of this and proceed further!

We already find the consequence of this *proton pseudos* in the Transcendental Aesthetic. For there a “thing in itself” enters at the appropriate time that “*may ground the things in themselves*”¹¹. Now this should be precisely the extra-spatial and extra-temporal substrate of the world whose impending arrival has already been quietly announced to us in the unjustified title “appearance”.

Da seht, dass Ihr tiefsinnig erfasst.

Was in des Menschen Hirn nicht passt. (Faust I, lines 1950-1)

¹¹ p. 49 [Liebmann’s emphasis]

Concerning this superfluous appendage it is later said on page 286 and 290: *it is problematic, indeed it is something about which we can neither say it is possible or impossible*. Now I indeed want to know how one can talk at all about a thing when one isn't even sure about its possibility or impossibility. To speak clearly, this is a problematic something without content about which we can know absolutely nothing, that is, only an obscure phrase in place of the simple, honest "nothing".

Unconcerned by this, he speaks on page 358 of the "thing in itself" as something that "is the ground of appearance" and on page 538 "must be the ground". We thus see how the stranger that was at first quietly tolerated has the impudence to push forward from the sphere of the *problematic* through the sphere of the *assertoric* to *apodictic* validity.¹² What a parasite!

In the *Prolegomena* and the later writings, the necessary existence of the "thing in itself" is assumed as a fact that is known and raised above all doubt. (*Prolegomena*, p. 104, 141). And to top it all off, it is ultimately "not wanting to assume things in themselves is declared an absurdity" (p.163).– This is now the worst one can imagine; the parasite has now become indispensable. *Honny soit qui mal y pense!* –

But with this the *critical philosophy* is indeed taken to its grave and *dogmatism* triumphs. Now consider that between these expressions the same man includes expressions such as: "the character of something's existence cannot be found in the mere concept of a thing".¹³ (But perhaps in the *non-concept* ?) Further, "One cannot sense anything outside of oneself but only in oneself,

¹² Kant clearly becomes *transcendent* in this passage (p. 539) as well by applying the category of causality, which according to his own utterly correct explanation is only applicable to spatial and temporal objects, to this unrepresentable, supersensible, "thing in itself" or noumenon.

¹³ *Critique*, p. 225 and p. 272 in the second edition.

and the whole of self-consciousness therefore provides nothing other than merely our own determinations”¹⁴ Indeed, in the second and subsequent editions these expressions remain quietly standing next to those, *toto coelo* contrary expressions. – One might ironically call this “the antinomy of Kantian reason”. –

With this the clear, naked inconsistency is brought to light as a fact. If we were malicious, or opponents of Kant, we close the books here with “*Sapienti sat!*” and leave the cart stuck in the mud. But since we, in the first place, greatly esteem and recognize with unfeigned reverence what is grand, pure, and true in the master’s doctrine and, further, have begun this entire investigation not to criticize him but to understand the systems of his successors on the basis of his correctly-understood principles and consistently-developed thoughts and, in this way, to find the path to further advancement of science, we cannot be satisfied with this state of affairs but must instead direct the following question to ourselves.

What caused Kant to make such an obvious mistake? What brought him to incorporate a “thing in itself” into his philosophy, which leaves no place for such a thing? For we certainly require an explanation of why such an (it appears) easily avoidable mistake could have gotten by such a master in the field of speculative thought. The answer to this question will be a kind of deduction of the thing in itself; not an objective one (in which the validity of this concept would be demonstrated) but rather a subjective one (in which the possibility that and how such a thought could occur in this system will be presented). Such a deduction, which resembles in its essentials the astronomical explanation of an eclipse by calculating an existing constellation, can begin from different points. In particular, one either proceeds psychologically by identifying the conditions of the human mind under which he could have fallen into the said mistake; or, by working from the

¹⁴ p. 378.

prior developmental process of philosophy, one emphasizes historically the doctrines of previous systems that appear to be antecedents, forefathers, or ancestors of the “thing in itself”. One could call the former a biography or a deduction *a priori*, the latter a genealogy or a deduction *a posteriori* of the “thing in itself”. – It is obvious that these two considerations do not stand without connection next to one another but internally complement, condition, and explain one another and therefore that the deduction will only be complete when we take both into consideration; and this will also happen. But when, despite belonging together, we separate these considerations, beginning with the historical and only after further intermediary investigations allowing the psychological to follow, there is good reason for this since in our opinion Kant himself was aware of the first but not the second and since the second, more thoroughgoing consideration will also contain our final, objective judgment concerning the entire issue. –

In proceeding now with this historical deduction, we must allow ourselves to reach back further than we might otherwise; for what is most important to us is to be convincing, which it not possible in the present case without being detailed.

All philosophy is, according to its essence, a consideration of the world as a whole – that is, a consideration of the world in its material and spiritual parts; its object is the *cosmos*, and, in particular, the *macrocosm* that we extend far beyond all fixed stars and nebulae, and the *microcosm* in our own self that we pursue into the obscure regions of anticipation and feeling, what *Herbart* called “the threshold of consciousness” and *Leibniz* “petites perceptions”. As different as the successive and simultaneously arising systems of all thinkers, peoples, and times have been in their principles and inferences, their fundamental ideas and their execution, they have all addressed this object. Philosophy will not passively accept the object of cognition and representation or let itself be dictated to, as does the common human understanding; it wants to *comprehend* this object,

grapple with it and only then let it be regarded as comprehended. Just as the general end, the fundamental idea, of all philosophers is shared, so too in a certain sense is their means or organon. But what is this means? How does philosophy pursue its end, to achieve a comprehensible reproduction of the cosmos? Poets, painters, and composers also press into the depths of nature and the human soul and make both comprehensible by reproducing them. But how does the comprehension of an artist differ from that of a philosopher? What is the specific difference between artistic and philosophical reproduction? – This difference is decisive.

The artist grasps his object in imagination and reproduces it as something intuitively beautiful; the philosopher comprehends it in reason and thinks it as an abstract truth – He who is unable to remain with the multiplicity of sensible particular things understood as individuals that is forced upon us but is rather driven by a desire for knowledge and seeks the unity in multiplicity, the condition of the conditioned, the cosmos in nature, he philosophizes. But this is only possible if one forms general representations. In forming these, I must look away from what is not homogenous, and thus relatively indifferent, in a number of objects; I must *abstract*. *Abstract representation* is the means, the organon of *philosophical* cognition, as opposed to the *intuitive* cognition of the *artist*.

It is in this way that different philosophers on the path of abstract thinking attempted to come closer to the essence or ground of the world. Whether they preferred to begin as empiricists with the material data of experience or as rationalists with mental data, they followed *this* goal with *these* means. But not only the means and end but also (what may seem stranger) the *results* of all different systems agree, despite their sharp differences, in one *essential determination*; and this is precisely what is significant for us. – Let them namely begin from ever so different principles, seek the ground of the world on ever so different paths; in the end they all end up *on*

one point, where thinking stops; they hit upon a very general something, whether of mental or material nature, which they declare cannot be investigated further and is therefore the ultimate ground or inner essence of the world. The entire manifoldness of the world is then reduced to or deduced from this final essence or ultimate ground; and then – the curtain falls. Whether this final and highest thing is the fluid element, as Thales thinks, or as Spinoza asserts, substance, or as Hegel claims, the dialectic of absolute spirit – *this* is common to them all: that they stop with this kind of most general something, do not analyze it further, and claim to explain *everything* from just this *one thing*. Even those philosophers like Democritus, Leibniz, and Herbart who seek the ultimate ground of the world not in a unity but in a multiplicity agree with them that they must stop with such an ultimate ground (consisting of a multiplicity). – If we allow each his respective ultimate ground, it may be that everything in the world can be strictly and consistently deduced from it, and everything may appear quite beautiful and uplifting. Reason has done its part, and reason can – go to bed. But that unfortunately is nothing! For we can always find curious questioners who would gladly like to know more, unwilling to recognize that ultimate ground as something final, and are even spiteful enough to call sleeping reason a *ratio ignava* and the ultimate ground a *asylum ignorantiae*.

Usually one quickly finds relevant responders for these questioners, who refer the general something that previously passed as the ultimate ground back to something yet more general and thereby believe they have found the deeper ground and then rest on their laurels as well. In so doing they have obviously forgotten to note that they have *further extended* the boarder *but not eliminated* it, that their gain is completely relative, and that they will therefore quickly have to repeat the same process of questioning and answering. – This is equally true, as I have said, of all approaches to philosophy, of transcendental idealism as well as materialism. The latter, for

example, regards its doctrine as quite plausible because it begins with *matter* as the most solid basis that everyone can grasp with his hands. But one only needs to ask “Yes, but what is this matter?” and materialism is already at the end of its wisdom; for it becomes apparent that it only knows the *predicates* of matter, the sensible relations, while the subject (i.e. matter), which is supposed to be the ground for all sensory impressions as *ekmageion*, is in fact nothing but a completely unknown ultimate ground, an empty, thoroughly-relative, concept, in short an empty shell. –

Because this process in the development of philosophy repeated itself again and again, human reason appeared to be like a child that would like to run through a rainbow and is astonished that he will never succeed in doing so. It in fact appeared increasingly, as Jacobi rightly noted, that “instead of approaching human beings, truth was fleeing us”¹⁵. Taken aback by this appearance, men (skeptics) have often arisen who want to bring philosophy to its senses (i.e. to reason) by telling it that it will never achieve its goal. These men are like those who tell the child “the rainbow is too far”. – In response to this, the child will certainly give up his effort, but it will not be persuaded of the impracticality of its enterprise. It could only become convinced when an expert informed it that the colored phenomenon is not something solid, not some curved figure affixed to the vaulted arch of the sky, but rather the reflection of the sun’s rays in raindrops falling in front of them and that it must always escape us as long as the wall of rain hovers *in front of* our eyes and the sun stands *behind* us in the sky, etc.. Given this information, a clever child would abandon its fruitless endeavors because it would then see that they are foolish and without success and that the object yearned for is something completely different from that for which it was held to be (namely, something solid, palpable) but is instead merely a visible relation. – Such an intelligent

¹⁵ F.H. Jacobi, *David Hume: A Dialogue* (Breslau: Gottl. Loewe, 1787), p.79.

and informative man has now been found for the philosophical human spirit; unfortunately, he has admittedly not informed this spirit completely but only in part and thus not completely eradicated the foolishness, but he has given us a considerable piece of pure, genuine truth. This man is *Immanuel Kant*. –

Kant was first engaged with the *Leibniz-Wolffian* philosophy. In this philosophy, as in all previous ones, there is also something final and most universal that is not further justified. It treats this something, presupposing the principles of logic, under the heading “Ontology” and calls it “thing” (*ens*). By turning first to the Leibniz-Wolffians in order to teach them, he was naturally forced to speak their language to be intelligible to them, and he was also (and indeed primarily) forced to address the “thing”. But because he was forced, in conformity with his principles, to explain each and every object as a correlate of a subject and the Wolffians understood by “thing” not such a correlate but something absolutely independent, general, and also empty, he called it the “thing in itself” in order to express this alleged independence even from a subject of cognition and its universal and necessary forms. Now in the beginning he tolerated this “thing in itself” as a doctrine foreign in his philosophy. But after he had, in the initial sketches of his great thoughts, exhausted that boldness of thought that does not shy away from seeming paradoxical and is not afraid to say something that is a slap in the face to general opinion in order to triumph in the end, he initially lets the “thing in itself” run along in the background but subsequently (as we have seen on pages 28 and 29) concedes increasingly more validity to it instead of repudiating and forgetting it in accordance with Seneca’s motto:

Etiam oblivisci interfum expedit.

Instead of this he rather expels it with increasing inconsistency from the forms of our intellect (space, time, and the categories) and in the process falls into the contradiction of representing the unrepresentable. This concept or rather the non-concept is once fixed by the word, and now the wooden piece of iron is has been taken into the graces of the theory more and more for benefit of dear dogmatic humdrum until it at last became indispensable and reached apodictic certainty. In doing this Kant took the final, ultimate step in denying the critical philosophy, just as Galileo denied the Copernican system of the world. – For not only was a false and unthinkable concept incorporated into his doctrine through the “thing in itself”, but it also brought into question the insight reached in the Transcendental Aesthetic concerning universality and necessity, that is, the apriority of the forms of all intuition, space and time, which was really the epoch-making thought of his magnificent world view. He thereby abandons his most important thought and confirms the words of Demosthenes: πολλάκις δοκεῖ τὸ φυλάξαι τὰγαθὰ τοῦ κτήσασθαι χαλεπώτερον εἶναι.¹⁶

Everything he says about this non-concept he has smuggled in is obscure and contradictory. First it is “neither possible, nor impossible,” then something that “must be thought”, then “an X about which one can say nothing”, etc.. One can already conclude from this vacillating and unclear way of speaking that Kant has something on his conscious when it comes to this point:

Ce que l'on conçoit bien, s'énonce clairement

- Roileau

¹⁶ Demosthenes, *Olynthiac*, I.23

But now he has to wear it like a dogmatic pigtail, one that always annoys and brushes up against him, is always the subject of argument, and can never be argued away:

He turns right, he turns left

But the pigtail, it always hangs behind him.

And despite all this, none of Kant's successors has seen that this "thing in itself" is a foreign drop of blood in the critical philosophy¹⁷, which would not have even been *mentioned* if its given principles had been developed consistently. *Fichte*, for example, eliminates it from his science of knowledge although it is only moved to another place. *Schopenhauer* believes that it is "a correct conclusion from false premises" that was only introduced in an illegitimate way, although it

¹⁷ Schleiermacher, in a most interesting little essay on the Spinozistic system ("A Short Account of the Spinozistic System", in *History of Philosophy*. Berlin: Reimer, 1839, p. 283 ff.) comes close to what has been proven by us here but does not completely reach it. In particular, in comparing *Spinoza* with *Kant*, he comes to the conclusion that the noumenon or thing in itself arose because of "an inconsistent residue of old dogmatism" in the critical philosophy. But this apt, justified scolding is not pursued far enough to provide occasion to lay bare the truly critical foundational thoughts and to repudiate the fundamentally false and misleading views that, unfortunately, from this mistake of Kant's that like weeds have overgrown the sprouting seed of truth and threaten to suffocate it. Schleiermacher was afraid to grasp the dangerous nestle forcefully, suffocate them, pull them out, and throw them away as we have now done. He was satisfied to explain "that *Kant* in this piece is *mutatis mutandis* Spinozist", but while the nagging inconsistency of the critical philosophy is touched by this, it is certainly neither explained nor rejected. Thus, the attacks lacks its force and the weapon its point.

appears to be precisely the opposite: a false conclusion from two premises each of which taken by itself is correct.¹⁸ The inference is the following:

Everything conditioned is connected to something external to it as its cause.

The empirical world of space and time is conditioned.

Thus, etc.

As long as one takes a *dogmatic* point of view, this syllogism is completely right. But when one has gained the *transcendental* insight that space and time are universal and necessary forms of intuition given *a priori* and that, therefore, nothing exists *outside* and *everything* exists *in* them, one notices the sophism of the *fallacia falsi medii*. The world in space and time is certainly “conditioned” but not by something *outside* of it (for there is nothing outside of it; it is everything) but rather by its *immanent* conditions and necessary forms: space, time, and the categories. Thus, had one defined the predicate “conditioned” more precisely, one would have noticed that it has a different sense in each of the premises and therefore that there is a *quaternion terminorum*. – By the way, Kant himself has expressed this (if we ignore the mode of expression already affected by his mistake) when he says “we are never justified in making a leap from one member of the empirical series, which ever it may be, outside of the connections of sensibility, just as if these members were things in themselves [etc.]”¹⁹ and “that the concepts of the understanding can never be of transcendental but always only of *empirical* use.”²⁰ –

¹⁸ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, p. 597

¹⁹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 563

²⁰ p. 246

The foregoing is the *historical* deduction, as we have called it above. Everyone is likely aware that the puzzle has not been solved by it and that we therefore cannot let ourselves be satisfied by it; and for this reason, we refer the reader to the *psychological* deduction, which should give us the key to and provide complete insight into the true origin of this remarkable mistake. Before we turn to these considerations, however, let us give ourselves a problem whose solution will be more important to our final goal than it may appear at first.

It is namely well known that not long after the emergence of the critical philosophy a series of dangerous attacks were undertaken against *Critique of Pure Reason*, which by mercilessly laying bare actual and alleged mistakes of Kant did not destroy his reputation but allowed the development of new philosophical doctrines and in so doing hampered a genuinely thorough examination of this excellent system. One of the most astute of Kant's opponents, G.E. Schulze, in his *Anesidemus* turned himself against the master and his apostle Reinhold simultaneously and, because he believed that in addition to Kant's real and chief mistake he had also destroyed doctrines that are irrefutable, is partially to blame for the fact that Kant was thought so precipitously to have been conquered.²¹ This has created a great deal of harm!

I will now endeavor to demonstrate that, to the extent they are of any importance, all of Anesidemus' attacks are directed against the consequences of the "thing in itself" and that they collapse into nothing when directed against the pure and genuine critical philosophy. Therefore, do not think that the following section is an arbitrary intermezzo. It is an organic part of our examination.

²¹ *Anesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von H. Prof. Reinhold in Jena Elementarphilosophie. Nebst einer Verteidigung des Skeptizismus gegen die Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik.* 1972

The relevant passage is *Anesidemus* page 108ff. The skeptic begins with a “Brief Account of Humean Skepticism.” As well he should! For Kant was, as he himself says, “awakened him from his dogmatic slumber” by Hume.²²

There we read (page 108):

If it is true, Hume says, that our representations originate either directly or indirectly from the affective power of existing objects on our minds or to a certain extent consist of copies of originals found outside us and that what is real in our representations is founded on them, then in order to be real, the concepts of cause, effect, [etc.] must arise *directly or indirectly* from the impressions *on us* of objects existing outside of us.

The form of this inference is *hypothetical*. If the presupposition does not stand, the inference is invalid. Concerning the *content* of the presupposition, we know (something that Hume, of course, did not consider) that external objects exist only to the extent that given sensations are combined in intuition by the intellect’s universal forms of combination (categories) and, in general, that everything objective is an inseparable correlate of the subject of cognition. Further, this connection of cause and effect is not a representation of an *object* but of a *relationship* among objects. Since the presupposition mentions the copies of *objects* in representations but not their connections and relations, the causal nexus does not belong here.

After it is required (page 109) that two things supposed to stand in the relation of cause and effect to each other, first, border and touch each other, second, are temporally contiguous to another and, third, stand in necessary connection to each other, we find (page 111) further: “But if we had cognition of the power of the object or, in other words, of that in virtue of which it is the

²² Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 13.

cause of certain effects, then it would have to be possible for us to pronounce and determine immediately upon observation of an object what would follow from it; for the cognition of an inner constitution includes that cognition of everything that necessarily belongs to and constitutes a component of it.” – In opposition to this, one must recall that the effect is not a “component” of the cause but is “determined” by it. As a pure concept, the causal nexus requires only *that* something follow; in order to know *what* will follow, we would have to have thoroughly complete cognition of all the governing conditions. Although it will be difficult for the latter ever to be the case, we are still convinced with each apprehended constellation of empirical conditions that something must proceed from it in the same way we are convinced that something must precede it as cause. This unconditional conviction, which we harbor whether we want to or not, is precisely what lends the causal nexus the character of a category. In assuming the universality and necessity of this relationship everywhere and always, although we only perceive the temporal succession, the *post hoc*, and never the necessity of succession, the *propter hoc*, we recognize that the casual nexus is supposed by and independent of all experience. – In conformity with the false supposition of existing objects independent of our representations we now find (pag. 115): “The necessary connection that belongs to the essence of cause and effect therefore does not exist in the objective objects but merely in the series of *our representations* of them.” But now it is precisely this summit of Humean doubt that is the point of departure for the triumph of the *critical philosophy*. For in proving that we can only speak of and know objects in representation but never those *outside of representation*, he restricts the use of the categories to the field of representation. – Bacon, who was certainly no idealist, still said: “Omnes perceptiones, tam Sensus quam Mentis, sunt ex analogia Hominis, non ex analogia Universi. Estque Intellectus humanus instar specula inaequalis ad radios

rerum, qui suam naturam Naturae rerum immiscent, eamque distorquet et inficit”²³. Thus, he at least recognizes the *collaboration* of our intellect in the development of representation of sensible objects. But I would still like to meet the man who had ever seen “originals” to the alleged “mirror images” in our intellects and could therefore verify that we are only given “copies” in representation and cognition. Indeed, he must have come to know this through a *supernatural revelation*, or he must have been successful in completing an action with respect to the mind that one in the popular way of speaking calls “going out of one’s skin”. –

In reference to the justification of the Humean views given on page 117-22, we can only repeat that the proposition “The category of causality is a synthetic judgment *a priori*” means exactly the same thing as “It is a necessary feature of my intellect to assume an effect for every cause and *vice versa*.” Both propositions are tautological. And it will be difficult for anyone to dispute the content of the latter proposition, once he has understood its sense. A person whose ears are boxed unexpectedly turns himself to the person who boxed them and responds appropriately. How would he be able to do this if he did not in accordance with category of causality and on the basis of the spatial proximity, gestures, etc. of the person standing next to him assume that he was the cause of affront he experienced? –

After partly ancillary and partly self-contained thoughts are presented on pages 118-130, the elaboration of the chief question begins on page 130: “Has the critique of reason really refuted Hume’s skepticism?”

“The answer to the question posed above will depend,” so it says on page 131, “chiefly on our enquiring whether the grounds that Mr. Kant gives for the claim that necessary synthetic judgments originate in the mind and the inner source of representations itself, and constitute the

²³ Bacon, *New Organon*, I, 41.

form of experiential cognition, are such that David Hume could have held them to be sufficient and compelling.” – We reply: It does not depend on whether David Hume by recognizing the arguments of his opponent, declares himself to be defeated (we are really quite indifferent to this) but on whether *Kant* has evidently *refuted* him to the extent that he in general *wants to refute* him. Further, all Kant wanted to say by demonstrating the existence of synthetic *a priori* judgments was that all empirical cognition or experience (also the inner, psychological experience) is held together by certain general connections (categories) that cannot be explained through experience itself; however, it did not occur to him to claim that the mind (subject) was the *cause* of these categories or that it brought them forth, which Fichte was the first to do. The categories are functions of the intellect by which the subject *as well as* the object of cognition are conditioned. The apriority of the categories can be most simply presented as follows.

It is a fact and, indeed, as Anesidemus page 122 expressly emphasizes, an *undeniable* fact that we have experiences. But experience would be impossible without the syntheses of cause and effect, etc. (categories). Consequently, the *existence* of categories is *at least* an *undeniable* fact too. Further, these categories can arise either from experience (internal or external), that is, be given *a posteriori* or not arise from experience but be presupposed by it as its conditions, that is, be given *a priori*. They do not arise from experience, as *Hume* was completely right to claim and *Anesidemus* notes page 110. Consequently, *the categories are given a priori*. QED

Anesidemus is perpetually caught up in the mistake that “given *a priori*” means the same as “brought forth by the mind (subject)”. This is why he now argues against Kant that while he presents human reason as “the source or real ground” of necessary synthetic judgments in our experience, “we merely *think* that the faculty of representation is the ground of these judgments but cannot infer from this that it really is this ground”. All these attacks are punches in the air

because the presupposition from which one begins is completely false and a misunderstanding of Kant's doctrine. –

Kant calls these forms of cognition, that are in fact present in all cognition, and without whose presence and existence all cognition and representing in general would fall apart and, indeed, be destroyed, and that therefore must be assumed in all experience, without in any way being able to know from whence it arises – *Cognitions a priori*. There can be no talk of their *origin* or *real ground*. For *they are already there, given* as soon as we represent or cognize something. The intelligible I or subject of cognition moves perpetually in them, as in its element, like a fish in water. If it were at all possible that this subject of cognition could inexplicably come out of these intellectual forms (space, time, and the categories) like the fish comes out of the water into air, then that which somehow remained would be as completely foreign and unintelligible for the intellect as rays of light broken by air are to a fish. But *omne simili claudicate*. Such a metamorphosis, such an emergence of the subject from its intellectual forms is an impossible case about which we should not even speak since it contradicts and insults the actual laws of our reason.

Although Anesidemus stands far below the level of Kant's perspective on the world, he always presupposes that *Kant* wants to thoroughly refute *Hume* and demands on page 133 that the critique of reason should either prove the opposite of Hume's claims or reduce them to absurdity. But the critique of reason will not think to do this at all since it is of course in agreement with the best of Hume's claims. Hume says namely: "The necessary connection between cause and effect is not derived from experience". – "Entirely correct", Kant replies. – "Thus," Hume continues, "this connection is without meaning and must be denied in the object". "Absolutely not," replies the critique of reason. The causal nexus would be something merely subjective and without application to objects only if we acknowledged objects *outside* of our representations, as you have

assumed in your *petitio principii*. But since it is really a contradiction to speak of objects besides those that are given in representation, your inferences does not follow”. –

Further, when Kant is in general criticized for applying the categories in his thought in his discovery of them, this is just as absurd as if one wanted to criticize an optician for using his optic nerve, retina, pupils, etc. in his investigations.²⁴ Such an objection is only possible when one misinterprets Kant’s doctrines in an empirical way and has no understanding of its *transcendental* perspective. And that the latter is indeed the case for *Anesidemus* can be seen clearly first in the syllogism on page 140 that is alleged to be the summation of the critique of reason, which shows no recognition that for Kant “being empirical” and “being a representation” are the same and that cognitions *a priori* are the presupposition of all representing. This ignorance comes out almost comically in the naïve comment (page 182) “that indeed something which *at the present stage of culture* can only be thought in this one way (apriority of the categories), *might be able to be explained differently at a different later stag of culture*”.

The extent to which Anesidemus is not up to the task of comprehending the Kantian depths can be seen further from the following passage (page 143): “It is incorrect that, as it is supposed in the critique of reason, the *consciousness of necessity* that accompanies certain synthetic propositions constitutes an *infallible* indication of its origin *a priori* from the mind. Notwithstanding their empirical origin, there is a consciousness of necessity connected with the real impressions of the external senses, e.g. those that even according to the critical philosophy are

²⁴ Here the place for Hegelian comparison of Kant with a scholastic philosopher who “sets about to learn how to *swim before he dares to go in the water*” (Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. 1827, Introduction, §10). This false, utterly inaccurate analogy has already been given its due by a competent person. Cf. Kuno Fischer, *History of Recent Philosophy*, vol. 3, p. 21.

not supposed to arise from the mind with respect to their matter but from things outside of us. When an impression is present in us, we must recognize it has present”. – Again the admonished misunderstanding of “*a priori*”. For this “must be recognized as present” of the impression present in us is not an expression of metaphysical necessity and universality but of empirical compulsion. But what compels us to do this? Have we perceived something compelling us? No! Rather, in accordance with the category of causality we presuppose an object that is the cause of the present impression in us and arrive in this way at the empirical necessity of compulsion. But what would remain from this “must”, from this empirical necessity if our representing were not governed and directed by this category, i.e. if we removed the metaphysical necessity of the *nexus causalis*? Nothing but the proposition: “As long as an impression is present to our consciousness, it is present to it”. A sentence that with regard to its content is an empty, superfluous tautology and with regard to its form is *assertoric* but not *apodictic*. – When the mathematician says, “All plane triangles that have ever existed, exist now, and will ever exist must have interior angles equal to two right angles, and the contrary is unthinkable” or the philosopher says, “All events in the world must have a cause and would be impossible without one”, they carry within themselves with these propositions that inner conviction of the necessity of the same that cannot be taken from experience but must be given *a priori*. But the individual impressions, e.g. the impression of the piece of paper lying before me, could fall away completely or be exchanged with others without thereby altering the nature of our consciousness and our intellect. This is the difference between cognitions *a posteriori*, whose content is not valid for the laws of cognition, and cognitions *a priori*, which cannot be thought away without simultaneously destroying the intellect—a difference that Kant discovered and Anesidemus did not comprehend. –

Until now the skeptic has been completely mistaken because he directed his attacks against the incontrovertible truths of the critical philosophy. But he henceforth turns against the “think in itself” and what he says against this is so correct and on target that we can even endorse it. “When,” as it says in page 286, “the discussion concerns *things in themselves*, one understands by that in general a Something that is supposed to exist *realiter* outside of our representations, does not first arise with our representations or cease to exist with them, but would rather be there if we were not there at all. If one asks, e.g. whether a thing in itself is the ground of the representation of a tree that one sees while awake and in healthy mental condition, the question is not whether among the many other marks that, taken together, make up the representation of the tree, there is also the mark of a relation and a relationship of the representation to an object found outside of us or whether we do not have to represent the tree as something that is independent from us; but rather whether something is objectively present that stands in connection with the intuition of the tree and has determined the content of the intuition in such a way that if this Something were not as it is in itself and real outside of us (in the same way the representation of the tree is real in us) and did not stand in a real connection with our mind, we would not have any representation of the tree. The critical philosophy certainly claims that such things in themselves exist objectively and that they are the real ground of the content of our cognitions of experience. *However, it claims this without any justification and has through its doctrines concerning the nature and determination of the principles of pure reason completely destroyed any attempt to prove these claims.* For while it is true, as the critical philosophy claims to have proven apodictically, that cognition of the thing in itself completely outstrips all the abilities of our faculty of representation and that this thing is completely unknown to us with respect to what it objectively is, *the claim of this philosophy that this thing is a condition under which where are able to possess all cognitions of experience simply*

makes no sense because, in order to be able to claim that things in themselves are the ground of the representations in our minds, one must at least know that things in themselves exist realiter and that they can be the cause of something. When one supposes further that the principle of causality may not be applied to things in themselves but has validity only in relation to that which as experience is merely subjectively present in us (as the critical philosophy claims to have completely shown), the possibility of presenting the connection of certain parts of our cognition with things that do not belong to this is thereby given up; *and if the principle of causality is invalid beyond experience, it is a misuse of the laws of the understanding when one applies the concept of cause to something that is supposed to be beyond our experience and completely independent of it.* Therefore, although the critical philosophy does not explicitly deny that things in themselves exist and are causes of the matter of empirical cognition, *it must, in virtue of its own principles, actually deny all reality and truth to the supposition of such a transcendental cause of the matter of our empirical cognition; and not only the origin of the matter of empirical cognition but also the [transcendental] reality of this cognition (or its actual relationship to something beyond our representations) are, according to its own principles, completely uncertain and for us = x."* The last words of this passage (which, although we cannot approve of its *tendency*, we adopt completely with respect to its *content*) should have been formulated more sharply by writing "unthinkable and absurd" in place of "uncertain and for us = x". –

The goal of this episode (if one wants to call it that) has herewith been accomplished. We now pick up the thread of our earlier investigation again. –

If it is clear from what has gone before that Kant contradicted the true spirit of his own doctrine by supposing a thing in itself that existed outside of the boundaries (that is, the necessary

and universal forms) of our intellect (space, time and the categories); and if we have further seen the historical conditions, the antecedents in the order of development of philosophical systems, to which the this “thing in itself” owes its illegitimate existence; and if we have finally come to the conviction that this non-concept has above all others given justified cause for attacks against the Kantian philosophy and that, when it is removed, this philosophy stands unrefuted and irrefutable in its chief propositions – a last question still remains, the answer to which will be of essential interest to us and at the same time, through consideration of the entire problem, provide us with a deep insight into our mental nature. This question is:

What are the subjective psychic conditions under which Kant was able to arrive at the supposition of his “thing in itself”?

The answer to this question will contain the previously promised (p. 31 and 39) deduction *a priori* of the “thing in itself”. –

On the basis of the principles of the critical philosophy developed at the beginning of the chapter, we came to the following results: The subject and object of cognition stand in thoroughgoing relation to each other and are inseparable factors and necessary correlates of cognition.²⁵ Therefore, there is neither something independently subjective (I in itself), nor is there something independently objective (thing in itself). Subject and object are connected to each other through the universal and necessary forms of representing and cognizing: space, time, and the categories. It is within the domain of these forms that the intellect moves and the world, the cosmos, develops; a *different* domain is not only *unknown* but also *unthinkable*. How, we ask, is it

²⁵ See above pages 23 and 24.

still possible that an intellect so constituted strives to go beyond its necessary forms, given that it cannot at all represent any others? This is the question or rather the puzzle. Here too we will begin with the most universal, simple, and general facts as Kant and Socrates are in the habit of doing.²⁶

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If you go walking with a child in the fresh air, the child will direct this and that question to you about the many objects it notices. For to him the vast, manifold world is not yet, as it is to us, an old acquaintance whose peculiarities one has, if not become acquainted with, at least learned to observe neutrally through many years of interaction. For example, the child sees the great disk of the full-moon gleaming red just over the horizon. Since it has never perceived this appearance, it will ask: “What is that?”. You will answer, “That is the moon”, and it will accept this instruction with child-like wonder. — Or someone rides quickly across a stone path in front you in such a way that the impact of the horse’s hooves make sparks fly up from the stone. The child asks, “Whence does that arise?”, and you will answer, “That arises because iron sprays glowing pieces when it is stuck on stone”. — In response to these questions, the following happens in the soul of the child: the low-hanging, larger than usual, red moon is identified with the high-hanging, smaller, silver moon through the common name. Thus “the moon” has acquired a wider meaning for the child and has become the common owner of the state previously known to him as well as the one he now perceives, a substance which partakes in or is capable of different and changing properties. In short, the *category of substantiality is applied* in the soul of the child to the moon in relation to those different appearances or states. — In the second case it has learned a universal rule that sparks arise from the meeting of stone and iron, that the stone and iron are related to the sparks as a cause

²⁶ “ὅποτε δὲ αὐτός τι τῷ λόγῳ διεξίῃ, διὰ τῶν μάλιστα ὁμολογουμένων ἐπορεύετο, νομίζων ταύτην τὴν ἀσφάλειαν εἶναι λόγου,” Xenophon. *Memorabilia* IV. 6.15

is to its effect, that is, that the *category of causality has come into application* in relation to this event. Now the more awakened the child becomes, the less is it be satisfied by these initial answers. It will, for example, confused about the different ways the moon appears, further ask what grounds these differences or even what the moon really is. Or in the other case, it will want to know how it happens that the iron is able to strike off glowing pieces of stone and what kind of hidden essential parts and properties lie hidden in the stone and iron, etc. – By considering these mental activities in the soul of the child, you are able to take a look into your own intellectual past, to the genesis of your own level of mental development, and become aware *that you have reached the height of your current state of knowledge by means of a step-wise increasing exchange of interrelated questions and answers*. Certainly, a person at our level of development tends with age to ask fewer questions (whose *actual goal is instruction*) to other people but seeks answers all the more in books, his *own understanding* of the *immediate objects of nature and art*. But all mental development is at its core nothing more than that exchange of questions and the finding of answers²⁷, and the more quickly, tenaciously, eclectically, and tirelessly this asking of questions and finding of answers occurs in a subject, the more intelligent that person should be regarded.

We should now note that, on analogy with the child's two previous questions (as long as we are dealing exclusively with *objective certainty* and *theoretical cognition*), two things are always asked: "What is that?" and "Whence does it come?". Translated into the philosophical manner of speaking, this means *that the human intellect moves perpetually in the categories of*

²⁷ One only needs consider Plato's *Theaetetus*, so important for the theory of knowledge, which will not become outdated as long as people think. There we find the following noteworthy passage: [GREEK Theaetetus 189e-190 p. 55 of German version] Cf. *Sophists*, 263

substantiality and causality.²⁸ I am here prepared for the objection that one cannot introduce necessary and universal forms of the understanding (synthetic *a priori* judgments) by empirical-inductive means. However, it is not at all our intention to provide a *justification of the doctrine of the categories*. The question of the categories is here, as we will see, of secondary interest; it is only a means to lead us to an answer to our primary question.²⁹ What interests us here is only this: (1) that the categories, as universal synthetic forms of cognition, are not extended without motivation from the subject to the object, but rather that they are first set in motion, at first unconsciously, by the need for cognition and knowledge, and then brought concretely to consciousness only gradually by practice and habit, until they are finally separated and grasped as abstract concepts from live representation; (2) that regardless of the motive perused by the question they come to intuitive validity in the answer; but (3) that abstract cognition is not the first fact of the mind but rather that it is awakened and brought forth from the domain of immediate representation, the ineffable sensation.

²⁸ A third question is “To what end?”. The answer to this contains the concept of a purpose. But because this is a category that belongs in the domain of the practical, we will set it aside.

²⁹ A deduction or justification of the categories lies entirely outside the domain of this essay, which has only a critical goal. Parenthetically, this goal is the following. What Kant understood as apriority is the conviction of necessity of these universal syntheses given independently of experience, and what gives them this character has already been noted. But all synthesis rests on intuitions. Now space and time are given as universal forms of intuition. Inert coexistence lies in the character of space, and in time lies restless, flowing succession. In their combination, the following cases are the most common: I seek either something spatial that persists necessarily through temporal change – *substantiality*; or I seek the necessary temporal succession in what persists spatially – *causality*.

The question therefore is prior to the act of cognition that gives us the answer. In what does this question consist? When someone directs a question to us about some point, we must presuppose that he is uncertain about the point and further that he finds this uncertainty uncomfortable and wishes to drive it out with certainty. If he formulated the result of these subjective feelings in abstract representations, in words, the question arises with which he turns to the place where he expects an answer, regardless of whether it is a human being, a physical experiment or some other thing. It is not important where he turns but that in all cases of cognition a question is advanced that is then followed by an answer that satisfies it. – When we isolate and conceptually analyze this psychic process that should be regarded as the immediate ground of cognition, the following elements emerge:

- (1) The feeling of uncertainty (Socratic *agnoia*)
- (2) Uneasiness about this (Platonic *thaumazein*)
- (3) Striving for elimination of the cause of uneasiness by attainment of knowledge (*philosophia*)

From these arise the formulated *question*. *This is the source of all cognition.*

Now this manner of cognition, which one tends to call philosophy, has the peculiar feature that the object that it asks for and strives to cognize are the most universal ideas and not relatively indifferent particulars; further that it aims for the inner unity of the world-whole, the cosmos, and that therefore the aforementioned psychic process occurs on a large scale. – This is the one truth, which I do not at all pretend to have presented for the first time; but no one has yet to clearly and concisely grasp, think, express, and analyze it in all its conceptual particulars. Plato said, “μάλᾳ

γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν³⁰; *Kant* gave practical reason “primacy” in relationship to theoretical reason or the intellect; *Fichte*, *Schelling*, and *Schopenhauer* regard the intellect a something secondary. In all of these, the truth resonates darkly, one-sidedly, and in half measure like an incomplete echo; but nowhere has this been followed to its ground; nowhere has it been shown how it is that the mind proceeds from the immediate and dumb quite of intuitive representing to cognition in general, to abstraction and thought. But we have seen that the occasion for this development is given by the aforementioned psychic process, the immediate expression of which is the *question*. No answer (e.g. cognition) is possible without a proceeding question; and without it the entire manifoldness of inner and outer experience (microcosm and macrocosm) would pass us by indifferently, as on a mirror that reflects nothing; indeed, we would not even, as can easily be shown, be able to be self-consciousness. – The *maieutike technē* of Socrates in his philosophical conversations and Plato’s entire dialogical representation, in particular the metaphorical claim that all learning is recollection (*mathesis anamnesis*), are also founded on this. By expecting everyone to ask himself in thought the questions directed to him, the sage in these dialogues takes over the role of the questioner and promotes the thought process of the student (which, as we have said, consists of a series of questions and answers strung together into a monologue) by using an appropriate sequence of questions to neither let him tire as time passes nor lose his direction so that the obtuseness and obscurity of thought are simultaneously eliminated and it is demonstrated to the student *ad oculos*, how he is able to produce thoughts from within himself of which he previously had not the slightest inkling by purposeful and persistent exercise of his monologue in thought. –

³⁰ *Theaetetus* 155d. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2: “διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν”.

If we set aside the, relatively indifferent, questions of daily life, which for the most part arise not from speculative but from practical motives and are of ephemeral interest, and consider only those that are asked purely for the sake of cognition and knowledge and answered in science, we discover that there are only two most universal (purely theoretical) questions, which have already been directed to us by the simplicity of a childlike mind, namely:

(1) What is that?

(2) Whence does it come?

By trying to answer these questions completely, theoretical reason will be driven from level to level, from particular to universal; it seeks an ever-higher “what” and an ever deepening “whence”. It is precisely this that Kant expresses as follows: “When the condition is given, so too is the entire series of conditions subordinated to one another,” and “the proper principle of reason in general is: to find the unconditioned of the conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which the unity of the understanding is made complete”.³¹ It is in precisely this respect that *Schopenhauer* neither understood the *Kantian philosophy* nor explained nor even improved it but rather unjustifiably scolded it.³²

³¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 307.

³² Author Schopenhauer claimed in his critique of Kantian philosophy that Kant was incorrect here and that “the principle of *sufficient* reason always demands only the completion of the next condition, *never the completion of the series*”. *World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, p. 572. This claim sounds more or less like someone who wanted to say: “In order to stand at this height above the ground, the architrave only needs a capital”. This is a short-sighted, or at least an incomplete manner of expression. The architrave and capital would both collapse if the latter were not supported by the pedestal and it again by the ground. One might formulate the above proposition of Kant’s better as follows: “It is a postulate of reason, that it *fully* find the series of

But what is characteristic of the theoretical intellect is that, when any domain of knowledge has been investigated and cognized by an exchange of questions of answers, it *ultimately does not stop with an answer but always with more questions*. – Let us observe this in an example. There is a tree in front of me. I first observe it simply as a sum of its sensible parts and properties from the side of “what” and as something developed entirely from dispositions and seeds from the side of the “whence”. But this will hardly satisfy me in the long run; I can ask further questions and investigate more deeply; I will be able to follow the physical, chemical vegetative laws, powers processes that are active in this product of nature and, in addition to the seed from which it arose, have been active in the incalculable past. But even if I were to succeed in attaining exhaustive insight into the elements and the inner workings, whose product and whole appear to me to be this tree – would I be able to satisfy myself with this? Would I here not rather, after the long exhausting scientific investigations, again fall precisely into that feeling of uncertainty, the *agnoia* and the *thaumazein*, which is the source of the question, the subjective motive of all cognition? Demanding that the mind stand still will not help here; it drives the mind onward from question to answer, and it would remain with a question even when it knew that no answer was to be expected. For the dictum of Bacon applies in this respect as well: *Incogitabile est, ut sit aliquid estrmum aut extimum Mendi, sed quasi necessario occurrit, ut sit aliquid ulterius*.³³ – It is obvious that my investigation will stop here with the question: “Yes, but what is the deeper ground, the higher unity that connects all of these physical, chemical vegetable powers, laws, and processes and that forces them to unite

other-conditioning states in a *regressus in indefinitum*, whose result is the present, to the extent it is able to extend its reach backwards”. But he who in accordance with Schopenhauer’s method would always be satisfied with the *next* condition would indeed be *unbelievably limited*, a *true monstrosity of small-mindedness*.

³³ *New Organon*, I.48.

for the production of this individual tree. How does it bear fruit out of which things identical to it can arise? – And finally – what is the whole, the unending, sublime nature, of which this tree is an unimportant part, and how does it act?” – If it is honest with itself, the theoretical intellect must here shrug its shoulders and admit: “*Non possumus!* I don’t know the answer!” –

It is this way throughout all intellectual pursuits and in the sciences in particular. Opticians, for example, assume certain undulations of aether as an explanation of the visible sensible qualities of light and colors. Here one must first consider that the undulations of the aether, even if they were proven, would not be *alone* sufficient to explain the existence of these qualities in sensation but that the *eye* as correlate must be added to this, without which the vibrations of the aether would never give rise to “color”. It is only from the cooperation of the eye and the vibrations of the aether that blue, red, light, dark, etc. would arise; and if one were to take away either the eye or the hypothetical vibration of the aether, these qualities would disappear into *nothing*. Let us proceed. These vibrations of parts of the aether and the aether itself, which one assumes as the correlate to the subjective organ, the eye, in visual appearances – *have I perceived them?* No! Rather, I have *added them in thought*. But suppose it would be possible at some higher stage of science to demonstrate the undulation of aether. What fundamentally would be gained? The question of the “what” and “whence” would immediately arise anew, and I would then endeavor to find a new hypothetical correlate as a possible answer to it. *The investigation would always end with a question*. Let us further consider the following: If instead of the eye, which is an organ for visual appearances, we had another organ with the ability to perceive *magnetic powers* in immediate sensation, that is, if we had a *magnetic eye* instead of a *light eye*, the sensible world would change entirely. Light and color qualities would disappear, and in their place a series of different sensations and qualities would appear, the nature of which we now have no conception. And so

we stand in the end again and again by the questions we asked in the beginning: “What is that really? Whence does this all arise?” In this way, the intellect digs and seeks increasingly deeper causes, more universal substrata, helps itself with hypotheses and endeavors to confirm them – and then:

Encheiresin naturae nennt’s die Chemie

Spotter ihrer selbst und weiss nicht wie. (Faust I, lines 1940-1)

But finally when we have now come with Kant to the deep insight that space, time, and the categories are functions of the intellect and that the entire world, this empirically-real world, is not something independent, but is rather the inseparable correlate of the subject of cognition, then this uncertainty, this astonishment will put the quickest and most embarrassing end to the question. The known world will then appear like a thoroughgoing puzzle to us; and it will seem to us, as *Author Schopenhauer* aptly puts it, that we are like “someone who, although he doesn’t know how, has come across a completely unknown group of people, whose members each present themselves as the friend and relative of the person they are next to and, in this way, introduce themselves sufficiently to him. In the meantime, as he assures he is pleased to meet the next person, the question is always on his lips: How the devil did I come across this group?”³⁴

In short, we see that *our knowledge can only end with an unanswered question*. Despite all the insight we have acquired, we find ourselves in the end, after so much and such long questioning, investigating, answering, cognizing, again and again in the place we began: in the *agnoia* or, as the astute theological skeptic *Nicholas of Cusa* aptly called it, in the “*docta ignorantia*”. The question is the end of knowledge, just as it was its beginning.

³⁴ Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, p. 117.

But when we are not honest with ourselves, when we do not admit our inability to find ultimate answers and want to create for the questioner the illusion that we could identify something positive as the deepest ground of the cosmos acting and expanding in time and space, then our intellect creates a X that is not spatial, not temporal, not ordered and cognizable through the categories and is thus not capable of being represented at all by us, a thing that we do not recognize as a thing – in short, a “thing in itself”. –

There we have it! The “thing in itself” is nothing less than the absurdity that the intellect that terminates in questions dreams up for itself in the end, an empty, unending grasping for some fantasy that eternally retreats from the human spirit’s desire for knowledge, like the apple from the mouth of Tantalus.³⁵

In general one can make the absurdity of this empty pseudo-concept clear (to use a jocular analogy) by observing that by using the thought of the thing in itself as the condition of that through which the abstract intellect itself is first *kat energeion* conditioned, *the intellect emerges as its own grandfather*. But if we look closer at the conceptual elements of this, I ask myself: *What is one supposed to understand by something that is neither spatially extended, nor is found at any location; neither lasts for a period of time, nor is either present, past, or future; nor, finally, is either the effect of a cause, nor the cause of an effect?* Such a thing is nothing less than a *knife without a blade or handle*. That is, it is not an *empty* concept but *no concept at all*. –

Had Kant even begun to seriously analyze this pseudo-concept instead of always groping around it, he would have had to discard it as we have done here. In this way, he verifies what he himself

³⁵ Sensing this, the Platonic Socrates says: “τοῦτο μὲν δὴ καὶ παντάπασι μεγαλοπρεπῶς συνεχωρήσαμεν, οὐδ’ ἐπισκεψάμενοι τὸ ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἃ τις μὴ οἶδεν μηδαμῶς, ταῦτα εἰδέναι ἀμῶς γέ πως”. (Charmides, 175c)

said: “I note that it is not at all unusual, either in common discussion or in writings, when one compares the thoughts that an author has made concerning his work, to understand him even better than he himself did *because he did not sufficiently determine his concepts and hence at times spoke or thought contrary to his intentions*”³⁶ That fits perfectly! –

Incidentally, Kant was dimly aware that his doctrine was not on sure footing here. This is why it did not occur to him to deduce the *categorical imperative* from the “thing in itself”; rather he allows it to enter with a flash as a *deus ex machine* from the world of feeling without introduction. This is also why he calls the “thing in itself” a *negative* concept, a border concept, and at first acts as if he only wanted to use it “to limit the pretensions of sensibility”.³⁷ But apart from the fact that this “negative concept” subsequently contains a very positive one, *the final and ultimate goal of our intellect cannot be a concept at all but only an unanswered question, an unsolved puzzle*. From a *concept*, one can always move inferentially into the domain beyond; but not from a *question*. Indeed, strictly speaking, the intellect may not (one should say) even formulate a question when it stands on its eternal borders (space, time, and the categories) because it would have to be convinced *a priori* that the question is idle and unanswerable; it must remain in *agnoria* and *thaumazein*. In fact, this is what it does. It is Kant’s great, disastrous mistake that at this decisive point he has insulted the nature of the human intellect and his own doctrines. –

As one can see, the *historical* and *psychological* deduction of Kant’s great mistake meet in the end. In the former, we found inductively in all systems the concept of a final, most universal ground of the world that is always pushed further back and is for this reason empty, and deduced from this concept that the critical philosophy arrived at the *transcendental non-concept* of the

³⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.314 [Liebmann’s emphasis]

³⁷ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 255

“thing in itself” by supposing this *empty concept* after it had correctly fixed the final and ultimate limit of human cognition in cognition *a priori*. On the other hand, we have now inductively found the final subjective agent of cognition in the psychic process of questioning and deduced from it how the intellect, when it extends these questions transcendently beyond the borders of its ability, deceives itself with precisely this “thing in itself” as an alleged answer .

Our problem has now been solved. On the one hand, the conditions under which Kant arrived at this inconsistency have been completely developed; on the other, the *limit of a properly consistent critical philosophy* has been presented, and in this way the criterion for the evaluation of his predecessors has been provided. Nevertheless, we must not fail to add a few short remarks, which will complete our investigation insofar as they will to a certain extent identify the metaphysical location of the abstract intellect.

Cognition begins and ends with a question. Now for the abstract intellect a question is certainly something unsatisfying, unfinished, *even negative*. But the human mind consists so little in purely abstract cognition and reflection that something unmediated in objective sensation and subjective feeling must rather precede it before it can come to questions, cognition, and abstract knowledge. But when the final, transcendental border-question forces the abstract intellect to declare itself bankrupt, this painful confession is foreign to *feeling*. For because it provides the occasion for the question, even for the final, ultimate question, but is also *toto genere* different from abstract cognition, it can find for itself, in the place where thought must doubt its possibility, a concept as answer, a *surrogate*, and give as it were a *felt answer*, which it is of course impossible to capture or think in words. – Thought there tries to grasp

[...] was die Welt

Im Innerstens zusammenhält. (Faust I, lines 382-3)

But thought discovers that it is locked in time, space, and categories. *Feeling* in contrast finds inner contentment and reconciliation in something positive, ineffable, in something that cannot be thought or expressed but must be felt. Here it confronts, as it were, the *theos arretos* of the Gnostics, i.e. that Thing of what is it said:

Ich habe keinen Namen

Dafür! Gefühl ist Alles. (Faust I, lines 3455-6)

This is what is most proper and essential to human nature, the puzzle in our breast, the sanctum of our soul, that which finds its intelligible, symbolic expression in art and religion. It is the same thing that allows the abstract intellect to strive and wrestle for conceptual truth in philosophy that, on the other hand, always returns in the most glorious and profound works of art of the greatest minds. – It is that which in *Beethoven's* ninth symphony electrifies and invigorates our most inner being and – after the strained, desperate struggle for reconciliation has degenerated into a wild, fruitful dissonance in the last movement – first in quiet, deep tones forebodingly permeates us, then rising and growing in ever fuller cords lifts us up, until finally the struggling soul triumphantly and with titanic power shakes off the earthly burden and in limitless, heavenly, transcendent jubilation moves to the celebration of eternal world peace. – It is that which *Rafael*, after lifting the curtain before the needy gaze of humanity, allows to shine forth in the Sistine Madonna, in the glory of an anticipated beyond, in the holy, timid eyes of the virgin. It is that which *Goethe's* Faust *everywhere* seeks in vain, what he could find neither in the realm of thought nor in the lower

spheres of sensual pleasure, and what is finally, after a long life's struggle, sung to him in a calming and reconciliatory way:

Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichniß;
Das Unzulängliche
hier wird's Ereigniß
Das Unbeschreibliche
hier ist's getan. (Faust II, lines 12,104-9)

Here we can find what we seek: not in *concepts*, not by means of the *abstract intellect*. – When we deepen ourselves into one of these master pieces, the joyful, reconciliatory light appears to our inner gaze; – then the hasty curiosity of enjoyment fades and disappears in front of the deep, hallowed seriousness of understanding; aesthetic pleasure becomes ethical work. For we feel that this most deep something has been expressed, for which our most inner being longs, that comforts and lessens our longing, about which our abstract intellect investigates and queries in vain, because it is only something felt, not effable or even conceivable. It is precisely for this reason that we feel ourselves lifted after the enjoyment of such a master piece, or better still, more purified – and then subdued again – a mood of the soul that seems oddly to be a mixture of bliss and sorrow because we are on the one hand really internally satisfied but on the other feel painfully inhibited by our inability to *cognize* that which we enjoy, that is, to understand it by using the medium of the questioning intellect.

The abstract intellect must silence itself here. It stands there helpless with its question to the world-spirit. He has the question, but as for the answer, the world-spirit speaks a language different from his. Should it ever give him an intelligible answer, it would say:

Du gleichst dem Geist, den Du gegreifst,
Nicht mir! (Faust I, 512-3)

But one should certainly protect oneself from a so-called “philosophy of feeling” *à la Jacobi, Baader, etc.* Philosophy should *cognize* and *know*; and feeling is not the organon of cognition. Cognition has that as its object which can be represented abstractly, grasped with concepts, thought, therefore always something universal. Feeling will be satisfied by the ineffable, nameless, absolutely individual. But a “cognizing feeling” or a “philosophy of feeling” is analogous to a “listening eye” or a “seeing ear”. –

The Kantian “thing in itself” is the failed attempt of the abstract intellect to find a concept that would be the transcendental answer to an unanswerable question, where we can only be helped by another kind of satisfaction of feeling that eliminates the occasion for our question. When the intellect makes these attempts to realize this unthinkable idea, it falls into the contradiction of wanting to think the unthinkable – it commits a *metabasis eis allo genos* in the eminent sense. –

This is the significance and fate of the Kantian “thing in itself”.

