Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation

Three Guides to the Philosophy of Orientation

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Courageous Beginnings:
25 Situations of New Orientations
in the History of Philosophy

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Contents

*** *Sections to follow in a Second Edition* ***

Introduction

All thinking has a prehistory. The prehistory of the philosophy of orientation is the history of Western philosophy. Most often this history is portrayed as a progress in increasing and justifying knowledge. However, acquiring knowledge is only one among other means of human orientation. Orientation is the attempt to, time and again, find one's way in a world that changes continually. Knowledge requires orientation, and philosophy has always looked beyond the mere increase and justification of knowledge. In new historical situations, philosophy has repeatedly re-oriented itself. The following sketch outlines instances of fundamental philosophical reorientation and realignment, which have been efficacious down to the present day: as paths leading to a philosophy of orientation in the world of today.

If one looks back on history, one does so from the perspective of the present, inevitably. At the beginning of the 19th century, the pinnacle of German idealism, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, was the first to draft a *philosophical* history of philosophy. He wanted to substantiate that philosophy, as he comprehended it in his day, also evolved in history. Thereby Hegel tried to catch up with the course of time and to retrieve it in the present: philosophy was supposed to proceed consequently from its beginnings in Greek antiquity until the present without any hazards, surprises, or contingency. But this effort, too, had its time: in the course of the 19th century, one learned to observe how history factually occurred, and by the end of the 19th century, most of all Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Nietzsche radically questioned philosophical systems like Hegel's: history could be interpreted in many ways, and the future appeared to be open again. By and large, this is still the case in the 21st century, even though the history of philosophy has remained a battlefield of ideologies and ideological criticism. History itself as well as historiography have turned into an *open-ended process of orientation*.

History, however, is interesting and relevant for the present day only if the ongoing process of orientation can be described as well; otherwise, history is nothing but the collection of pieces of dead knowledge. We are here trying to provide a

brief synopsis of turning points in the history of Western philosophy. This synopsis is the historical counterpart to *Fearless Findings:* 25 *Footholds for the Philosophy of Orientation*; yet correlations cannot be traced item by item. Instead, we highlight *alternative orientation decisions in the history of Western philosophy.*

These alternative decisions appear already in early Greek philosophy, first of all in the defining contrast between the thinking of Parmenides and the thinking of Heraclitus in the 6th century BC – the alternative of either excluding time or putting everything under its command. In elaborating on this alternative, that which has been called 'philosophy' since the time of Socrates and Plato, has formed the unity of an academic discipline and refined itself according to its own standards. However, these standards have never been without alternative ones; on the contrary, the fact that alternative standards have always been possible provoked self-reflection and self-criticism, thereby coercing philosophy to develop further, though this has not always happened in a consistent manner. This survey marks those orienting decisions that have led to additional self-reflection and self-criticism in the history of philosophy. The alternative to count on such decisions would be to disregard the conditions of orientation and to insist on fixed truths in the form of metaphysics.

As it is neither intended nor possible to elaborate on the history of philosophy in detail, the survey at hand is not comprehensive. The history and the present of philosophy is like the sea: one can easily get lost. For this reason, we try to steer the course and stay on target by limiting ourselves to 25 situations of orienting decisions, which seem to belong to the most important ones in the history of Western philosophy. Of course, other choices are possible, too.

Great reorientations in philosophy are strikingly often connected with new forms of philosophical writing. If one conforms to traditional genres such as dialogue, treatise, confession or meditation, one risks adopting unrecognized conditions of orientation and losing a critical distance to one's predecessors. With the help of new forms of writing one can – if one succeeds – create new plausibility standards. That which is new in the history of philosophy can often only be expressed in new forms. This aspect will be another foothold in the following account.

Our presentation is oriented to the state of recent research on the history of philosophy, without that its results can be presented and discussed here. The outline is intended to be accessible to laypeople, too. We presuppose only a certain familiarity with essential features of the history of philosophy, which can be acquired

through handbooks or the internet, e.g. through Wikipedia. Yet, since we develop this survey of the history of (Western) philosophy in light of major instances of reorientation, the following might in some respects be surprising even for experts.

I. Antiquity and Middle Ages

The Need for an Overview – Competing Orientations

In Greek antiquity, the maritime trade and at the same time the contact with foreign cultures had expanded since the 8th century BC; more and more cities and colonies were founded in the Mediterranean world. This increased the need for a wide-ranging geographic orientation in the Greek settlement area. The consciousness of a shared Hellenism was preserved across the sea, and the need for a common intellectual orientation helped democracy to advance and create the expectation of a reliable social orientation. At the beginning, single 'wise men' at the periphery of the Greek world offered competing overviews of what was happening in the world; later Athens became the political and intellectual center. Instead of referring to the unobservable and uncontrollable intervention of manifold deities with confusing personal relations to each other, one then created order through concepts like 'the element,' 'the infinite,' and 'number' in order to create an overview of occurrences in the world.

Yet, the needs for overview, for observation, and for reliability are fulfilled in different ways, and therefore the new orientation remained problematic from the very start. Thus, new philosophical orientations are forced to orient themselves to each other and to reflect upon the very process of orientation. Self-reflexive philosophical orientation, which persisted next to the faith in gods, consolidates in the course of time, becomes exemplary, and leads to the emergence of diverging schools.

From the early Greek philosophers before Plato, only few fragmentary testimonies are conveyed in the form of quotes from later authors, and these fragments are open to many interpretations. We understand them as sources that testify to philosophical reorientations.

1. Alternative Limitations of the Infinite: Anaximander and Pythagoras

In the age-old sea trade city Miletus, which was destroyed several times and rebuilt in Ionia (Minor Asia), which was ruled by the Persian king, THALES (ca. 624/23-548/44 BC) dared to conceive of the first great philosophical thesis that *everything emerges from one element*, namely water. Thales was credible because of his mathematical discoveries, astronomical predictions, and economic and political success. Soon the element water was confronted with other elements (earth, air, fire), which also seemed plausible as the origin of all things.

This was not satisfactory for Thales' presumable disciple ANAXIMANDER of Miletus (ca. 610-547 BC). He is reported to have drafted a map of the inhabited world, construed a *sphaira*, a celestial globe and model of the cosmos, and perhaps also created a detailed description of all peoples living on the earth. If the reports are true, he strived after an orientation as we understand it today, first of all after a *geographic orientation*. Furthermore, he attempted the most courageous philosophical beginning ever: he did not presuppose limits or limitations of some sort, not even between apparent elements, but rather assumed *something principally unlimited and limitless*, which defines itself in the generation and corruption of things, thereby forming temporary configurations (*Ordnungen*). Accordingly, Anaximander is quoted to have said the following: "But from where things have their origin, into that too their passing away occurs according as it is proper; for they pay recompense and penalty to one another for their recklessness, according to the order of time."

Anaximander understands the always newly emerging and vanishing limits within the unlimited (*tò ápeiron* – a word that possibly stems from Aristotle) as 'knots,' 'holders,' 'points of attachment and transition' (*peírata*), that is, as a kind of *footholds*, and the *ápeiron* in contrast to them as the *unstable changing of limits.* In the Greek epic poems, the earth and the sea were regarded as *ápeiron*, as their limits were not in sight and could be reached only by the gods. The archaic poet HESIOD (before 700 BC) also called the immeasurable depth of the subterranean abyss, in which one cannot even hit ground after falling down for a whole year, *tò ápeiron*.

In the above quote, Anaximander ethically justifies the unlimited (in a very broad sense): in the length of time, according to him, all limitation is unfair. He seems not to distinguish something like thinking, neither in relation to the world

process nor as part of the process itself. Thus, his disciple ANAXIMENES interprets *tò ápeiron* as matter, though the lightest and most versatile matter, namely air that can condense and dilute and, in this way, constantly displace its limits.

PYTHAGORAS (570-510 BC), who lived and taught on the other side of the Hellenistic world, in Lower Italy, and already established a school, seeks to capture the limits within the unlimited as numbers, thereby bringing them into a well-structured and calculable *system of ordering*. Numbers, too, set limits – but according to pregiven rules; and numbers can also be continued *ad infinitum*. Pythagoras is able to make this numbered order plausible by showing relations in whole numbers that are valid both in music and in the orbits of the planets; thus, he deduces a harmony of the spheres, which, however, only is heard by him alone. Possibly this harmony is not so much based on mathematics but rather on numerical symbolism. Nonetheless, Pythagoras creates a highly successful model of how the world process as a whole can be surveyed with the help of mathematics.

> *The philosophy of orientation – like Anaximander – keeps time infinitely open for the becoming and passing away of things. It relies on orderliness and arrangements of things sorting themselves out over time. But this process can in many cases – as Pythagoras first assumed – be clarified mathematically.*

2. The Alternative of either Excluding Time or Getting Involved with It: Parmenides and Heraclitus

PARMENIDES (ca. 540-470 BC), who lived at the opposite coast of Lower Italy, in Elea, began to refer to his (not explicitly mentioned) precursors and contemporaries and their proposals of how one orients oneself – only to reject them explicitly. He presses for a *radical reorientation*: he degrades everything observable, which changes incessantly, to mere appearance in order to find an absolute hold in the non-observable, a *being*, which is accessible to pure thinking alone. Parmenides' reorientation becomes the most fateful in the history of Western philosophy.

In order to make his philosophical reorientation plausible, he outlines a great *scenario of orientation* (which, again, is explicable in many ways): from Hesiod, he adopts the venerable form of the didactic poem about the fate of gods and human

beings, and has sun maids drive a young man to a nameless goddess whom he invents himself. The goddess gives him the choice between two ways: one leading to previous opinions, the other one to the truth, in front of which, however, lies a yawning chasm, symbol of total disorientation. The mythical goddess shall authorize the new, unprecedented path of thought, which is praised as the only one that is trustworthy, tenable and reliable.

One only has *signs* or *clues* (*sáemata*) for this new path, but like strong shackles, they delimit and define a clear *leeway*. The truth, which emerges within this space, is not supported with reasons by Parmenides (for if he could justify the truth, another truth would precede it and lead its way). In his view, it is self-evident that only being (*tò eón*) can be, while non-being cannot be. This implies that, according to Parmenides, everything temporal belongs to *non*-being because the temporal is *not* yet or *not* anymore. Therefore, time must be excluded from the being of that which truly is being.

Consequently, that which truly is being must be non-temporal. It has not come into being and cannot perish; it must be indivisible and immovable. As such, it is *an absolutely stable and durable foothold of human orientation*. It is not an individual being next to other things, but rather that which all things have in common: being itself (*tò eînai*). Being itself must be conceived without any empirically observable reference points, and to this end, one must think up pure thought that cannot be observed and that is not dependent on concrete reference points. This thinking thinks nothing but being itself. In this sense, then, thinking and being are the same (*tò gàr autò voeîn estín kaí eînai*), as Parmenides has it. Subsequent philosophers have taken up Parmenides' account of 'pure being' and 'pure thinking' so appreciatively that it is often taken for granted up to the present day without question. It has become a new plausibility standard, which is formulated in the most differentiated way by Hegel (sec. 14 and 15).

However, HERACLITUS of Ephesus in Iona (ca. 550-480 BC) shows that there is an alternative to this approach. Heraclitus, too, uses the metaphor of the two ways, yet without leading us to predefined goals: one does not reach limits, he says, even though one follows each way inquiringly. He adheres much more closely to the *everyday experience of orientation*, the characteristic behavior of the human being, as he calls it: *âethos anthróopoo daímoon* (character is human destiny). He formulates different kinds of short and concise sayings, yet without clarifying their factual connec-

tion. He likewise pointedly dismisses other suggestions regarding human orientation; however, it is unclear whether he therein refers to Parmenides (and Parmenides to him). Both of them speak authoritatively: they claim a decisive superiority to their audience in matters of orientation, and this attitude becomes a standard for philosophers that would appeal particularly to Nietzsche.

Heraclitus' language is regarded as dark, but he looks for orientation precisely in the darkness of language. For example is it possible to *speak* of non-being, even though there 'is' no non-being. Neither Heraclitus nor Parmenides eschew the *paradoxality* of the being of a non-being; only Aristotle states the principle of excluded contradiction. The *lógos*, Heraclitus' expression for ordered relations in the cosmos, which can be discovered by thought, and for thinking itself, remains hidden in signs and can only be extrapolated from signs: Heraclitus orients himself by signs, being well aware of the leeways of interpretation that they open up. Furthermore, he uses images and similes. He does not create concepts for pure thought or for theories conceived by pure thought.

As Heraclitus demonstrates, the *lógos* discriminates things according to contrasts, while both extremes are of equal value, not asymmetrical like Parmenides' distinction between being and the semblance of being where this very distinction predetermines what is to be preferred. Instead, the contrasts persist in a reverse harmony (*palíntropos harmoníae*) where the one extreme holds onto the other. For this reason, everything can always be regarded from different angles, and it depends on one's perspective how one defines that which is before one's eyes.

Thus, *all knowledge is dependent on decisions*. There is no pregiven primal or superior unity; all separate things can become one thing, and one is connected with all others through certain ties or links (*synápseis*). All ordered structures arise through the conflict or 'war' between all things (*pólemos pántoon patáer*); and it is the course of time (*aióon*) that – just as a child at play – creates expectable, yet also surprising and unfathomable connections. However, there are various degrees of insight into these processes; the less insightful can agree with the more insightful, yet one cannot force anyone to agree.

Obviously, it is Heraclitus' greatest concern to move between both sides of polar opposites. He is well aware of the *decidability of all knowledge*, which helps to better understand reality and to orient oneself in it. Hence, orientation always 'flows.' Water that diffuses and collects everything, waves approaching and depart-

ing, and the river that already has changed when one wants to step into it again (so that one cannot step twice into the same river), is Heraclitus' most powerful image for the flux of all things, and this image has survived until today.

> *The philosophy of orientation recognizes – following Parmenides – the need for a firm foothold, yet without looking for it in a being per se, which is accessible only to an alleged 'pure' thought. At the same time, the philosophy of orientation follows Heraclitus in regarding everything as being mediated by signs and antagonisms in thought, which comprise orienting decisions. All knowledge is dependent on such decisions and thus remains in flux.*

3. Alternative Designs of the Temporal Blending and Decomposition of Matters in Preserving the One Timeless Being: Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Democritus

The last generation of the great early Greek, pre-Socratic or pre-Platonic philosophers tries to unite the insights of their ancestors in new and widely differing designs. With Parmenides, they cling to the imperishable, everlasting being, but they pluralize it, and as a result, they can conceive of movement and change.

EMPEDOCLES of Akragas, a Greek city in Sicily, is enveloped in myth. His dates of birth and death are unclear. He wanted to have traveled around as a god reborn in human shape, accompanied by many followers. Just like Parmenides, he also created epic didactic poetry, but he assumed manifold sources or roots (*rhizómata*) to which he gave the names of gods. They are not supposed to merge into each other, but rather to again and again become intermingled and separated from each other by the opposed forces of love and hate. Next to the elements, these *interrelating forces* are essential for him. For the first time, the world does not so much appear as an accumulation of materials or things, but rather as a *web of relationships*. Therein love is to create calm (the All becomes spherical, a *sphaîros*), while hate creates unsettlement (stirring up the All). Corresponding to our ordinary orientation, the *distinction between calm and unsettlement* precedes the distinction between truth and error or lie. For Empedocles, both of it blazes the trail for a theory of biogenesis, the workings of the senses and a psychology and anthropology that makes *soul and body*

closely dependent on each other. As Empedocles assumes that the universe is infinite in regard to time, but finite in regard to space, he also becomes a pioneer of the thought of an eternal recurrence of the same.

ANAXAGORAS (ca. 500-425 BC), who went from Clazomenae in Iona to Athens, met a warm reception from the illustrious circle around PERICLES (ca. 490-429 BC), but was charged of impiety (even before Socrates). Anaxagoras contributes to the *idea of the aggregation and disruption* of an indeterminable number of infinitely divisible matters that intermix and interpenetrate, so that one contains many, and all of them is in everything (*pánta en pantì*), being part of everything. *Unity and multiplicity are not fixed per se*. It is reason (*nûs*) that takes care of connections and disconnections. For Anaxagoras, reason is the finest matter that interweaves everything, causes rotating whirls in which entities develop (*synkrisis*), grow, solidify, and differentiate (*apókrisis, diákrisis*). That way, *always new worlds* become possible.

DEMOCRITUS of Abdera in Thrace (ca. 460-380 BC) extends the doctrines of later little-known LEUCIPPUS and brings them to Athens, without people there knowing him or wanting to know him. Democritus does not let the divisibility of the intermixing and separating elements go endlessly; he stops this division assuming smallest indivisible and impenetrable elements (*átoma*), which amount to formations that can be perceived when they clash or collapse. Instead of interfusing each other in a complex manner, the atoms are thought to cohere and form a great sum. Thus, Democritus' atomism offers a *firm but unobservable footing in the confusing mixture of the world*. The perceiving senses, too, are formations of atoms that interact with the perceived so that *nothing can be perceived as it may be in itself* – all entities perceived become questionable. Democritus hypothesizes the void (*tò kenón*) as being around the atoms in order to make their spatial movement conceivable. Therefore, the void must be penetrable. As a consequence, the concept of a compact being that prevailed since Parmenides becomes risky.

> *The philosophy of orientation admits various classifications of the world's process according to materials, elements, forces, etc., in so far as they make intelligible the flexibility, alterability, and temporality of the world's structures. In whatever way one chooses concepts and classifications, they do not refer to pregiven entities, but constitute calming abbreviations, which can be connected to each other in different ways, thereby forming different worlds. The abbrevia-*

tions or short cuts themselves belong to the respective worlds through which they are formed.

4. The Alternative of Relying on Individual Abilities of Orientation in Decision Situations or on a Common Reason and a Shared Truth Independent of Situations: The Sophists and Socrates

The stepwise transition from aristocracy to democracy in the heyday of Athens enforced strong educational efforts for the citizens wanting to convince each other with their arguments in the decretory popular assemblies. That is how the profession of wisdom teachers (sophists) emerged. In most cases they came to Athens from other places, had no civil rights and did not join the fray. Instead, against payment of a fee, they helped citizens to acquire a virtue or capacity (*aretáe*) through which they could distinguish themselves, above all an enhanced ability to orient oneself, to judge and decide. Thereby the sophists freed their clients from helplessness and perplexity (*amaechanía*) in their communication with others, and they became able to master the actual situation in the popular assemblies. The aforementioned virtue was praised as the power to bring forward specious arguments. In fact, the sophists were something like *professional teachers of orientation*, without this notion having existed at the time, some of them with high earnings and corresponding self-confidence. Men like Pericles and Alcibiades were greatly influenced by them.

The sophists coming from outside were migratory teachers, moved from city to city, became acquainted with different opinions and morals and learned to deal with them in a superior manner. They not only wrote speeches for others, but also entered the public stage for their own purposes. From a markedly critical distance they developed first philosophies of cognition and knowledge, of language and communication, of law and morals, thereby exploring *the societal and political dimension of all knowledge*. They set aside the question of the origin and order of the world's process and its true being, or they treated it ironically with the argument that such a true being is neither identifiable nor communicable.

In order to showcase the *perspectivity of all assertions*, they ostentatiously took up different or even antithetical positions. Competing with each other, they did

not commit themselves to common stands and teachings, but rather preserved their personal sovereignty. Particularly PROTAGORAS of Abdera in Thrace (ca. 490-411 BC) became famous for making all assessments of things and persons dependent on the viewpoint and situation of the human being as such and the respective *standpoints of single individuals*. GORGIAS of Leontinoi in Sicily (between 490 and 485 until after 396 BC) did *not accept statements and valuations equally binding everyone*; instead, he erected a golden statue for himself in Delphi. PRODICOS of Ceos (between 470 and 460 until after 399 BC) advocated the thesis that *gods are invented for the sake of one's individual needs and desires*. At the same time, he was well-known for his meticulous distinctions of concepts. Furthermore, Prodicos is said to have purported the story about Heracles at the crossroads, which became the paradigm of decisions on *moral orientation*.

SOCRATES (ca. 469-399 BC), too, was in his day regarded as a sophist competing with others sophists, though with the unique feature that he did not take money for his interlocutions and thus set the example of unselfish philosophizing that is committed to the morally good. According to the few pieces of information we have about him, he was undemanding in his life with his (perhaps two) wives and his three sons. He stemmed from Athens and practiced his civic rights and duties, among them to go to war, where he proved himself outstandingly, and to play his part in the law courts, where he insisted on strict law-abidance. He respected the laws of his hometown even when he was sentenced to death, although the verdict appeared clearly unjust to him.

However, he seems to be as sure of the good as Parmenides was of being. And like Parmenides, Socrates is therein supported by his godlike *daimonion*, which prevents him from evil, but does not positively bring the good to his knowledge. Coming from a poor background and being unhandsome by Greek standards, he nonetheless knows to fascinate the best and most beautiful young aristocrats as no other philosopher, despite the fact that he does *not* offer them knowledge. However, after the oracle in Delphi has proclaimed that no one is wiser than Socrates, he dares to check this sentence on the grounds of the paradoxical premise that he, Socrates, knows that he knows nothing. Hence, he questions everyone who pretends to be knowledgeable or whom he presumes to be knowledgeable, in order to find out whether this knowledge proves true in a discussion.

Socrates is successful in his superior moderation of the disputes by leading everyone into irresolvable internal contradiction (*aporía*) or disorientation. He irritates and fascinates his audience at the same time. Thereby he creates a *reflexive and paradoxical orientation through disorientation*: one knows more if one knows that one knows nothing.

The result is most often that the young men want to continue the conversation with him. For, although it does not produce true knowledge, the conversation must always be guided by a concerted truth and be conducted on the ground of a common reason – of which one likewise cannot know anything.

Since Plato has turned Socrates into the protagonist of his dialogues and confronted him with the other sophists, discrediting them severely, Socrates has become the ideal type of the philosopher, and his *ethos of incessant self-examination* has become the role model of all proponents of the Enlightenment.

> *The philosophy of orientation feels close to the sophists including Socrates, as they proceed from the mere statement of putatively true knowledge to argumentative disputes about inquiry and scholarly research in a sense that is still in force today. Socrates' premise of a common reason and a concerted truth supports orientation significantly – provided that one shares his knowledge that, ultimately, the promise of true knowledge cannot be proved.*

5. Alternative Conceptual Framings of Being, Becoming, and Evaluating: Plato and Aristotle

While Socrates knows that he knows nothing and is constantly involved in an aporetic communication of that which is and should be, PLATO (428/427-348/347 BC) partly renders, partly invents his dialogues. maintaining that he will not write down his own teaching. Plato's work consists of dialogues in which he himself is absent; once he excuses his absence by referring to sickness. His work is the first that survives on a large scale. *Plato's dialogues perform and demonstrate how opinions are bound to individuals, how distinctions are introduced, and how one decides for or against them.* In letting others speak, Plato avoids professing truths on his own, too. The irony of the Platonic Socrates lies precisely in the fact that one does *not* know

when he speaks ironically. Through the mouth of his protagonists, Plato nonetheless speaks with superior authority, yet without taking a theoretical standpoint 'above' things. At places where positive doctrines are expected, Plato's protagonists make do with unverified narrations (*mythoi*) including the famous parables. Here, too, there remain wide spaces for diverging interpretations.

Thus, Plato's introduction of *ideas* that he puts into Socrates' mouth can be understood as part of a comprehensive theory of principles, which shall only be accessible to Plato's own school. But it can also be understood as a mere means to make conceivable the compatibility of perspectival orientations in the apprehension of objects: as freely selectable points of view, which can be kept for a time, for instance the time of a dialogue. There is evidence for the latter approach, since Plato has Socrates introduce the ideas in different dialogues, i.e. in different situations of communication between different people and in different ways. Thereby, he shows that Socrates wants to convince each dialogue partner in a specific way, yet without it being clear whether he always wants to convey one and the same message.

In so far as the young Socrates follows Parmenides in attributing a being *per se* to the ideas, Plato lets the old Parmenides in the same-named dialogue consider this as being untenable, encouraging Socrates to rehearse the *use* of ideas. Instead of affirming a consistent and sustainable doctrine of the ideas, what the mature Socrates brings to proof in Plato is the always convincing use of ideas. Thus, it seems to be their *orienting use* that is crucial for Plato. Consequently, the highest idea of the good would then, according to the Platonic Socrates, be the idea of the good use of ideas, i.e. of a good orientation.

In times when democracy is constantly threated from outside by wars and from inside by power struggles, philosophy establishes itself in the form of schools into which it withdraws. Plato's huge political experiment of, together with the ruler of Syracuse, creating a state governed by ideas fails spectacularly. Philosophical schools like, for example, the Pythagorean school develop theories concerned with completeness, complexity, and internal consistency. Plato's critical student ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC) creates the most impressive and influential theory of this kind.

While Plato descended from a highbred, upscale family in Athens, Aristotle came from elsewhere, namely from Stagira on the peninsula Chalkidiki. Later, Aristotle assumed the responsibility for the education of Alexander at the royal court of

Philip II of Macedon, who in 338 annexed Athens and other Greek cities to his kingdom. During Aristotle's lifetime, Philip's son, Alexander the Great, created his great empire, while Aristotle founded his own school in Athens and developed it as a proper research academy.

For his own theory and his academy, Aristotle invents the literary genre of the *treatise*, which has a determining influence on science: the sober, purely fact-bound and lucid roundup of thoroughly investigated truths, published in one's own name in an ongoing calibration with other doctrines and the scientific consensus. Though individual, the treatise shall no longer be regarded as a purely individual intellectual product. Rather, it is supposed to allow for clearly identifiable, unequivocal boundaries, not least in the *question of becoming*, which had been controversial since Parmenides and Heraclitus and was still notoriously contested in Plato. Against Anaximander, Aristotle maintains that everything that 'is' must be something limited, for otherwise it cannot be comprehended. For this reason, Aristotle also discards Plato's ideas as a means of determining being and becoming. For if ideas are rules determining how to see things, one in turn needs rules for the application of these rules. This leads into an infinite regress, which, for Aristotle, is an indication of their wrongness. Thinking, by contrast, must be a determination of limits (*horismós*) where it stops (*anánkae stâenai*). In Aristotle's view, philosophy's primary task is *this determination of limits or of processes coming to a standstill*. He thereby presupposes nature as a cosmos that is internally limited and well-guarded in such a way that all thinking, as well as the thinking of thinking, is part of it.

Aristotle solves the problem of becoming in distinguishing between abiding being and shifting qualities. Thereby he captures the *relativity of movement,* one of the most important footholds of everyday orientation until today; when change, movement or fluctuation is observed, it must be compared to something in relation to which it changes, moves, or fluctuates. However, Aristotle at the same time draws *fast* boundaries: he isolates that which abides during the apprehension of the movement as a non-temporal substance (*ousía*) from temporally alternating attributes, which he devaluates as being only accidental (*symbebaekóta*) and thus unessential. In doing so, he establishes an asymmetry between that which abides and that which changes. In ranking the abiding substance above the changing attributes, he introduces a *valuing distinction*, where the higher value, i.e. the higher-ranking substance, is regarded as providing sufficient foothold for orientation.

In order to grasp the substance as independent (*chooristón*) from the change of its environment, Aristotle furthermore determines it as the underlying cause (*hypokeímenon*) of the change of its attributes. This under-lying substance (Latin: standing-beneath: *sub-stantia*), however, turns out to be explicable in multiple ways: (a) as mere matter that can adopt ever new forms, itself being infinitely changeable; (b) as material that is formed to individual things that abide, while their attributes change, with the goal of their formation already being intrinsic in them (*entelécheia*); (c) as the form itself that shapes matter (*morpháe, eîdos*) and that becomes visible in a biological species that remains the same regardless of individuals being born and dying away; (d) as the ultimate ground of this formation, which Aristotle in his later compilated books of his later so-called 'metaphysics' defines as the divine unmoved mover. The changing determinations of the abiding substance show that, paradoxically, the very determination remains in flux: it is itself *fluctuant*.

Aristotle connects his *metaphysics* with his *logic*, which likewise has remained relevant through the millennia. Here thinking is limited by an interrelated order of forms according to which one concept can be deduced from another and, through gradual abstraction of contents, be piled up to neatly arranged pyramids of concepts derived from each other. Substances enter as subjects into propositions in which characteristics are attributed to them as predicates. That one cannot attribute antithetical attributes to them at the same time (*háma*) in the same respect, this principle is Aristotle's most solid ground of thinking (*bebaiotátae tôon archôon*), which excludes Heraclitus' approach to orientation. However, one can attribute opposite characteristics to one and the same substance – at different points of time; for instance, something can rest right now, then move. But in things changing their positions and becoming different, the problem of time returns. Yet, according to Aristotle's metaphysics and logic, time in turn is to be conceived only paradoxically: time is, as Aristotle himself discovers, simultaneously abiding and changing; the 'Now' is always the same and always another. Thus, the principle of non-contradiction only applies when time is excluded.

As human action is performed in time and in changing situations, Aristotle's point of departure is expressly different from his approach in epistemology. In defining the virtues, he does not, like Plato, start with an ideal, but rather with the habitual behavior (*éthos*) common in a society shaped by male aristocrats, and observes how a man is able to excel in it. Thereby, Aristotle differentiates between typical sit-

uations of action, for instance war, appearing on the scene of assemblies, dealing with lust, with money, with the truth, and behaving on social occasions. Here Aristotle works methodically with leeways of action instead of abstract norms. The ethical leeways are limited at both sides by bad extremes, between which one has to find the right middle. Aristotle describes the *process of ethical orientation in shifting situations* in a way that is plausible until today.

> *The philosophy of orientation works – like Plato's Socrates in his dialogues – with ideas as common points of view that can be chosen and used for the determination of that which is and shall be in a given situation, without an independent being belonging to the ideas. Further, the philosophy of orientation starts out from Aristotle's theoretical insight in the relativity of movement, yet without bringing the movement to a standstill through substance metaphysics. Aristotle's own attempts to determine the concept of substance demonstrate that the content of this concept, too, is fluctuant. In his practical philosophy, Aristotle provides a model of how one can think in leeways.*

6. Alternatives in the Art of Living: Hellenistic Schools

In the time of originally the Greco-Macedonian, then of the Roman Empire, philosophy continued to consolidate in schools. Schools are the expression for the fact that philosophical orientations are shared by many and are handed down through many generations. The Hellenistic schools of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism had held their ground for centuries in which the Roman Empire steadily grew; it also remained stable during internal political fights for its leadership, and for this reason, it was experienced as a guarantor of order. Yet, although philosophy never organized itself as clearly and was never as popular as it became in the time of Hellenism – philosophy reached the tops of society up to an emperor of the Roman Empire, MARCUS AURELIUS (121-180) – no doctrine emerges that would be the only valid one; rather, the schools continued to compete with each other.

Only late and quasi out of competition PLOTINUS (ca. 204-270 AD) dared to develop a new philosophical great design. He combines Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic doctrines in his idea of an all-encompassing One and Good whose overabundance

emanates progressively, flows into harmonious forms of spirit and matter, and solidifies in them. This is one more large-scale comprehension suspending the contrast between Parmenides and Heraclitus, now presupposing Plato's metaphysically defined ideas and obfuscating all material texture. On the basis of this Neoplatonism, Christianity can ally to philosophy.

In Hellenism (from the 3rd century BC until the 4th century AD), philosophy, which was well-established at that time, differentiated in a series of specialized sciences, among them mathematics and medicine, grammar and philology. Great libraries were set up. Unity was sought less in a last ground but more in compilation and overview. Most notably, philosophy turned into an *art of living*, and the art of living was a part of *the art of orientation*. While a rationality pervading the world could be presumed just as it could be contested, a common focus, which was emphasized especially by the Roman citizen CICERO (106-43 AD), was the question of how philosophy can contribute to the life orientation of the single individual in times when faith in the divine declines.

> *The philosophy of orientation is closer to the Epicurean and Skeptical Hellenistic schools than to Stoicism. The Stoic assumption that reason presides over the world is no longer plausible today, but the Stoic distinction between that which is beneficial and that which is detrimental in appropriating the world is still trustworthy, and so is the Stoic criterion of reassurance versus disturbance.*
>
> *Following Epicureanism, for the time being the philosophy of orientation holds to the observable and thereby keeps open leeways for building and using concepts differently. In an Epicurean manner, the everyday routines of orientation deal with peacefulness and the avoidance of trouble. But orientation always begins with 'skepticism,' which literally means 'to look around' for relevant footholds in a situation, which one gauges and to which one first commits oneself when one is urged to act. Skepticism with its 'tropes', i.e. 'turns of cognition,' precisely reflects the situatedness and relativity of knowing. Considering the fact that there are multiple standpoints, that a situation can be interpreted in various ways, and that each person can rely on different footholds, orientation must also be skeptical in order to be successful.*

7. Alternative Philosophical Conclusions from Christian Faith: Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, William of Occam, and Nicholas of Cusa

Christianity that spread increasingly in the Roman Empire, organized itself as a church, formulated dogmas suitable for mission, established authorities, conferred holy orders, and canonized the Holy Scriptures, incorporated many thoughts from prior philosophers, in particular from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. However, it caused strong forward-looking realignments in philosophy as well. Through the belief in one almighty, omniscient and infinitely good God who is beyond doubt and therefore gives human beings absolute security, Christian philosophy is able to question all other footholds. In this way, it helps to *reorient philosophy as a whole*.

Its point of departure is the *self-humiliation of the human being before God*: determined by Him and dependent on Him in everything, human beings are sinners before God and cannot live up to His commandments. Nothing is concealed from Him, but He is concealed from them; all truth is thanks to Him, but nobody can understand His truth. Christian philosophy starts from the paradox that everything is to be comprehended in and through God without Himself being comprehensible. Christian philosophy shows *how to make paradoxes fruitful*. Among them is the paradox that Christian knowledge is revealed to faith and yet is to be verified through reason and logic: as the source of revelation, the Bible contains a number of obvious contradictions; thus, human reason must decide about the veracity of divine revelation. The new intertwinement of faith and knowledge opens up unforeseen paths of thought.

Humble faith, however, questions human knowledge altogether and, ultimately, itself. Faith must leave it open whether human beings can speak adequately about God and everything coming from him, whether human beings can speak adequately about true reality at all in human terms, and whether one would not rather do justice to God if one negated one's concepts of him, speaking about him only through a negative theology or remaining silent about him. In the certainty of faith, knowledge becomes uncertain, including the knowledge of one's own faith; one has to mistrust not only one's knowledge – much more radically than in skepticism – but also one's

faith, and one has to abstain from concluding judgments about it. Expressed in the language of orientation: one can only have clues, hints, indicatos, signs, or, as we call them, *footholds* of God's being, essence, work, and of the right faith in Him. All Christian philosophy and all theology move within the leeways of these footholds.

In the second and third century after Christ, the movement that later was called GNOSTICISM, which fed on multifarious sources, combined a highly speculative knowledge of God and his secrets in a comparatively unwarped manner. Then AUGUSTINE (354-430 AD), son of a patrician of the old style, later bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa and one of the church fathers, reflected in an exemplary way his route to Christian faith through the philosophical approaches that were well-established in those days, but disappointed Augustine, so he delineated the long *process of his own reorientation*. To this end, he created the new literary form of *Confessiones*: paradoxically, he confesses his sinful aberrations, which he now recognizes as such, to God who, of course, already knows everything.

The investigation of his sinfulness forces Augustine to turn away from the 'external' world and its footholds, which are equally observable by everyone, and instead to conceive of that which since then is called 'the inward.' This inside of which we until today speak until today as if it were a matter of course is a paradoxical place and non-place at the same time: it cannot be localized. But an inner being is now attributed to every human being. It is regarded as something which you can only observe yourself: you experience it as the scene of your feelings, your consciousness, your will, and your conscience. Consciousness, will, and conscience, which are accessible only to yourself, become leading points of reference for philosophy in modernity*: the orientation in the world open for all is deepened by the orientation by one's own inner being*.

Yet, for Augustine, ever new abysses of instability open up. For him, human inwardness is the – always questionable – locus of faith: only here can God be found, only here can one speak to Him, only here He will respond. However, the human inside is only given in memory (*memoria*), and this means that, basically, I am the one who remembers and whom I remember (*ego sum, qui memini*). My memory, though, is idiosyncratic and unfathomable: something can come into my mind or not, and sometimes I remember it in one way, sometimes in another way. This has reasons in life orientation: according to Augustine, *memoria* is like a stomach that digests one's experiences such that one in new situations can live with it in the best possible way.

By this means, further self-examination can lead me to inner caves that are more and more concealed (*caveae abditiores*), and as a consequence, I never reach a stable and concluding concept of myself (*nec ego ipse capio totum, quod sum*). *The (sinful) inward withdraws just like the horizons of my orientation when I try to approach them*. Hence, before God I become a question to myself (*mihi quaestio factus sum*).

The lack of footing intensifies in regard to time. In exploring *memoria,* Augustine realizes that the past and the future are accessible only in the present (as that which is remembered or expected), but the present itself is only the transition from the past to the future. Thus, *time itself is without any firm foothold*, which Aristotle still found in the eternal orbital movement of the stars. Augustine conceives of time in relation to the human interior, which, being itself subjected to time, 'extends' time (*distentio*). Thus, one cannot say what time is – and yet one can handle it without any problems (*Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio*). In his *Confessions* before God, Augustine discovers *an orientation ability that is independent of conceptual knowledge*. As he trusts in the incomprehensible God, he can trust in his own orientation – by God's grace. The unfathomable and merciful God meets him as voice (*vox*) and countenance (*facies*); he speaks with Him in love. Love entails communication beyond concepts. In his face to face communication with God, Augustine discovers *love as the condition for successful communication between individuals.*

Many centuries later, the strongest alternative philosophical conclusion from Christian faith followed in a form comparable to the one Augustine had chosen, namely the form of prayer. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (ca. 1033-1109 AD), who also in person turns to God, conceives of God – paradoxically again – as "a being beyond which nothing greater can be conceived" (*aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest*). With the help of nothing but this concept, which also was prepared by Augustine, Anselm demonstrates that God really exists – if 'real being' is something greater (*maius*) than just 'being-thought.' Thus, one can build faith in God based on conceptual thinking – and vice versa. Down to the present day, it is not finally settled whether Anselm's so-called ontological argument for God's existence is tenable or not. It could be logically correct but nonetheless misleading.

In the co-called *universals controversy*, concepts and 'the general' as such became doubtful. Those involved in the controversy continued to ask ontological questions: do universals exist independently of the particulars exemplifying them (real-

ism), or only as concepts within the mind (conceptualism), or are universals only names, only words invented by human beings (nominalism)? All options were thinkable within the framework of God's creation, and this controversy is neither settled to date. *Everyone who seeks a firm foothold of orientation in universals* – be it concepts, laws, methods, norms, or values – *will still tend to realism*, but only then.

The most ponderous representatives of so-called *scholasticism,* the scholastic or didactic clarification and concatenation of the guiding concepts of Christian faith, namely ALBERTUS MAGNUS (ca. 1206-1280 AD) and THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274 AD), adopt a conciliatory position in the universals controversy: universals are, in their view, ontologically at the same time in the divine intellect before creation and the existence of particulars (*ante rem*); they may be within the things of this world (*in re*), or in human thought subsequent to the existence of particulars (*post rem*). Especially Thomas counts on the philosophy of Aristotle, which was handed down and worked through by Islamic translators and commentators. Aristotle also provides the logical means for the coupling of concepts. In Aristotle, Thomas finds the deepest and most broadly elaborated knowledge of ancient philosophy. In this way, he creates the hitherto *most comprehensive and tenable orientation that enables philosophical thinking on the basis of both faith and knowledge.* His system of orientation can be taught at the blooming universities as standardized basic knowledge, which the Catholic Church of the 19th century adopts as the basis of its dogmatics. Thus, heresies can be clearly marked off, while deviating observations have to be matched with it. To this end, scholasticism creates a new special literary form, the *quaestio*, which includes the coherent weighting of arguments for or against a specific issue, and the *summa*, i.e. the exhaustive and self-consistent compilation of *quaestiones* – a genre which Thomas perfected.

Few generations later, WILLIAM OF OCCAM (1280/5-1347/8 AD) continues to hold on to both faith and Aristotelian logic, which, for him, pertains to God's thinking. Yet, he concedes that God could also have willed to create the world differently. As an alternative to the 'old way' of orientation (*via antiqua*), Occam confesses the *contingency of the world* as part of the 'modern way' (*via moderna*). Logic, then, is no longer a means of justifying the Aristotelian order of the world, but rather becomes a criterion to assess contingent possible worlds; *concepts turn into naked names for the purpose of appellation*, which say nothing about the essence of things. William also refrains from principles: he introduces *the methodical principle of renouncing*

the multiplication of content-related principles, which were prevailing in scholasticism. Thereby he courageously opens up new, even then much-noticed but equally combated ways that a contemporary philosophy of orientation still cannot tread without oppositions. William already fights for the separation of ecclesial and imperial power. Already during his lifetime, the university of Paris prohibits his doctrines.

In the light of Christian faith, NICHOLAS OF CUSA (1401-1464 AD) also questions logic in so far as it is used as a criterion for the contents of belief. As he likewise does not hope to recognize God in the order of the world, he draws upon the sources of Neoplatonism, mysticism, and mathematics – and thereby works forcefully with *paradoxes.* He was not only a well-versed, accomplished scientist and university professor, but also an undogmatic spiritual diplomat, a significant church politician and reformer, who for a time bravely antagonized the Pope, a bishop who had to fight for the survival of his diocese also militarily; he had to subsist on it (and many other benefices he knew to make available for himself). Intermediately he was a Curial Cardinal. He knew the world well, also in political and economic respects.

Philosophically, he starts from the premise that every creature in the world is other (*aliud*) than all other creatures, and that there is, in the final analysis, no sameness, which is why one can discern only similarities. This is possible through distinctions or contrasts, which at some point touch each other: a polygon whose nooks are multiplied more and more draws closer to a circle, and the more it increases in size, the periphery of the circle converges to a straight line. In a coincidence of opposites, human extremes collapse in infinity, beyond this world, in God (*coincidentia oppositorum*). Our knowledge is learned ignorance (*docta ignorantia*). The finite can be determined by human reason (*ratio*) only by keeping away the infinite. With the help of paradoxes, however, the intellect (*intellectus*) might not be able to comprehend the infinite (and, consequently, God), but at least border on it; thereby, the intellect can 'fold' the world into God (*complicatio*) and 'unfold' it from Him (*explicatio*); and in performing this activity, human cognition itself can become creative.

It has taken many centuries until one learned to think in this way again. Nicholas of Cusa already employed the *imagery of orientation:* the human spirit is described as a 'cosmograph' that, in our language, drafts maps of the world on the ba-

sis of footholds which it grasps in order to orientate itself in the world. Complex geographic maps were later called "Cusanus-maps."

The philosophy of orientation finds strong impulses in the medieval philosophy which often is unjustly by-passed. The Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages has vigorously expanded the possibilities of human orientation: it demands no longer just to grasp the incomprehensible starting from the comprehensible, but at the same time to grasp the only seemingly comprehensible proceeding from the incomprehensible, which is personalized as God. With this double move, one's own comprehension is comprehended in its decidability.

On the ground of a largely unquestioned faith, medieval philosophy could, on the one hand, construct a basic orientation that for many people is still acceptable; on the other hand, medieval philosophy could also radically question this basic orientation: Augustine discovers or creates 'the inward' of the human being as the (non-)place of that which we call consciousness, will, and conscience. The universals controversy shows that one can decide on the status of the general and universal. William of Occam opens the orientation of the believers for the contingency of the world and the methodological economy in dealing with metaphysical principles. Nicholas of Cusa allows for a creative work with paradoxes. In general, human orientation remains reliant on faith even where "faith in the Christian God has become incredible" (Nietzsche). It needs kinds of faith in order to enjoy sufficient certainties for acting in the world and shaping the world despite all uncertainties of the world and even of the scientific knowledge about it.

II. Modernity

Towards the end of the 15th century, a *pathos of complete reorientation* emerged, of a fresh start both in the conceptualization of knowledge and in the styling and conduct of human life. One did not turn against Christian belief, but broke resolutely away from its meanwhile highly controversial precepts for philosophizing. The scholastic knowledge was by many regarded as obsolete and outdated. Proceeding from Italy, one orientated oneself afresh in the name of the human being (humanism) and wanted to regain the image of the human, also in the shape of bodily beauty, from antiquity, the time preceding Christianity. The worldly conditions of the human being and, in addition to nature, also history and language gained center stage together with the individual. The individual orienting him- or herself became the middle of his or her respective world and pursued the ideal of self-perfection (*uomo universale*) irrespective of corporatist and clerical orders.

Manifold discoveries, inventions, and designs stirred and promoted a comprehensive reorientation, first and foremost

• the discovery of America and the circumnavigation of the Earth, which became possible with the help of the (re-)invention of the compass (which was formerly known in China): it opened new horizons for *geographic orientation*;

• the rearrangement of center and periphery in the *astronomical orientation*: for the sake of an easier mathematical calculation of the orbits of the planets and the stars, COPERNICUS moved the earth away from the middle of the world and made it to a mere standpoint in the universe;

• the development of perspectival painting, i.e. the geometrical reconstruction of natural seeing: the seemingly natural impression in the perception of spaces, which is important for *sensory orientation*, was then produced by calculable illusions;

• the invention of printing enabled the dissemination of knowledge of all kind – independent of chanceries and churches, on anonymous markets, for an ever-growing audience: everyone who learns to read (initially only very few) can expand his or her *intellectual orientation* as desired, *ad libitum*;

• Protestantism including one's own *religious orientation* by the Bible, which everyone could read in his or her own language instead of bowing down to ecclesial doctrines;

• the beginning capitalist organization of global trade, the *economic orientation* guided by markets;

• the *political orientation* to dominion as such, without any moral and religious guidelines;

• the momentous invention of gun powder with its consequences for *military orientation*;

• the design of utopia, of lifeworlds and *worlds of orientation as a whole*, which have ancient predecessors, for instance in Plato, yet were presented tentatively, playfully, sometimes satirically as a 'non-place,' as deliberate, though hardly practicable alternatives to the existing world; THOMAS MORE (1478-1535), who reinvented the literary form, transferred his vision of the "best state of a republic" to a "new island."

The *new scientific knowledge* is now no longer based on essential determinations, as it was in Aristotle, but rather on mere observations and calculations. In experiments, one combines both, wherever this is possible. As GALILEO GALILEI (1564-1642) has shown, observations under clearly defined circumstances (i.e. under purposeful exclusion of situational conditions) allow for accurate measurements and mathematical calculations. Instead of relying on religious and metaphysical assumptions about the world as a whole, one methodically places one's reliance upon own selection of parameters for experiments and construed physical values in functional dependency from each other. With the help of the unambiguous language of mathematical symbols, limited certainties are created in demarcated respects, which can always be superseded by new theories and new experiments.

8. Alternative Secularizations of Philosophy: Machiavelli, Bruno, Montaigne, Bacon, and Hobbes

Philosophy participates in this huge reorientation with different, but spectacular new approaches. Philosophy pans the spotlight in sweeping ways until it freshly focalizes and consolidates itself in the middle of the 16th century. All philosophers that will be mentioned in what follows bring new experiences from outside the universi-

ties along with themselves. All of them are (more or less) concerned with the new confessional conflicts in their day.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI (1469-1527) revolutionizes the *political orientation*, forced by the highly dynamic balances of power in Italy, where the popes also, without inhibition, act as worldly rulers. Machiavelli, who over decades has to represent the interests of the Republic of Florence which is one of the strongest and most risk-taking republics, follows as realistically as possible politics' own "law" in fighting for the preservation of dominion. Machiavelli makes the governance of the Republic autonomous in relation to morality and religion. Not only Cesare Borgia, the son of the Pope, but also Moses are his points of reference. Morality and religion themselves turn into functions of politics: one follows them only in so far as they – or their pretense – are useful in the struggle for power. Rulers do not shy away from lies, breach of promise, cruelty, and the fear of it; when they avoid immorality, then they do so not for moral, but rather for political reasons. However, dominion is established and stabilized most sustainably through respect for the ruled, from whatever source that respect may flow. Rulers are dependent on careful, farseeing orientation: they must constantly reckon with situations that may threaten their existence, the more so when they have recently acquired rulership. Machiavelli distinguishes between *situation and orientation* by means of the notions of *fortuna*, i.e. fortunate coincidence, and *virtù*, the ability to confidently master even the most difficult situations in bravely taking advantage of the opportunities presenting themselves.

Personally, Machiavelli stands up for a republic governed by free and effective councils. Subsequently, the autonomy of the secular state authority, which he demonstrated, is again based on divine, natural, or rational law; thereby the modern state under the rule of law comes to the fore. Once the state of law established itself in the course of the centuries, such rationales, which always remain disputable, can recede again. Then politics is entirely released to its autonomy.

GIORDANO BRUNO (1548-1600), who first was a monk, but several times shifted his denomination, gave lectures at many European universities and courts and was expelled again and again. He directly attacks traditional philosophical thinking and ecclesial doctrines resting upon it, and eventually, he is executed by the Roman Inquisition. By contrast, MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE (1533-1592) – who was raised a humanist and became urbane through appointments and many travels – manages to accomplish intermittent peace during the fierce confessional wars in France. He

does so through personal encounters with the involved kings and the Pope. This is possible since he takes up a skeptical stance towards every dogmatic philosophy and theology. Montaigne is the first "free spirit" in Nietzsche's sense. He unreservedly faces the uncertainty of all knowledge and the insecurity of human existence, but nonetheless, he shows how one can successfully find one's way around in the world and find footing in it: through *orientation to oneself*, to one's own life experience in all its facets (right up to Montaigne's torturing kidney stones). He assures himself of his orientation through *Essais* (attempts or experiments), whose literary form he invents especially for this purpose and which he renews constantly. In contrast to the medieval *summae* and to the later systems, essays let the mind meander without any predefined method or systematic order of thought. So, one unbiasedly discovers something new, which can then be developed methodically and ordered systematically. Montaigne lived the *ideal of a sovereign personal orientation*.

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626) made it far in his political career: he became the Lord Chancellor of the British Crown until he was overthrown because of his continuing accumulation of debt and accusations of bribery. He also resorted to the literary form of the essay, but parceled it in "aphorisms" that can be rearranged or extended *ad hoc*. Bacon regarded the *field of science* as *field of orientation*: an unfamiliar terrain through which one has to find ever-new ways that remain only preliminary. Bacon expressly assumed "the role of a guide" (*indicis tantummodo persona*) who shows a new "way" (*via*) to science as such and promises a "great renewal of the sciences" (*instauratio magna scientiarum*). Compared to Aristotelian logic and analytics, a "new tool" (*novum organon*) is needed. One no longer needs to deduce knowledge in a scholastic manner and thereby 'anticipate' the results of the exploration but rather follow the complexity of nature itself – Bacon speaks of its "subtlety" (*subtilitas*). This shall be done "empirically" and "inductively" in a tentative "interpretation," which generalizes observations carefully and progressively, and revises its generalizations again and again in regard to deviating cases. Generalizations can have different degrees of certainty. This means that one only has veritable "clues" or "indications" (*indicia vera*) as points of departure for one's interpretation of nature. This procedure can be hampered not only by conventional concepts, but also by mathematical calculations, while diverse approaches can support it. Through this cautiously and circumspectly *orienting method*, as we call it, science can, according to Bacon, gain real power over nature ("knowledge is power") and can help to grad-

ually improve human living conditions. Moreover, nature is defeated by obeying nature (*natura parendo vincitur*).

However, as orientation, this method has, according to Bacon, also its limits in the mind itself: (1) the *Idols of the Tribe*, i.e. logical fallacies which are due to the nature of the intellect and the senses of the human being preferring incorrect conclusions; (2) the *Idols of the Cave*, i.e. the state of every single human being including individual passions and ideologies; (3) the *Idols of the Marketplace*, i.e. the linguistic possibilities and problems of a society that can use words to mislead; and (4) the *Idols of the Theater,* i.e. the philosophical and scientific presuppositions of an era that are held onto like dogmas. Human orientation must always be aware of such constraints and constantly work against them in order to conquer its leeway for revealing the givens of nature and making them effective for one's own use. Bacon is the first to see that *both scientific and everyday orientation takes place in leeways*, in which ever new vital footholds (*signaturas atque impressiones*) are observed. Scientific theories and systems can then connect to these footholds.

THOMAS HOBBES (1588-1679) came from a modest background. He lived as a home tutor in a leading English noble family, and hence had the possibility to travel extensively. On some of these trips he got to know, among others, Galilei and Descartes. Temporarily he had to flee to France in order to escape persecutions because of his writings; however, he enjoyed the protection of the British Crown. His thought was influenced by the severe wars of his day. He combines the sober impulses of particularly Machiavelli and Bacon (whose secretary he was for a short time) in designing the first comprehensive philosophical system of modernity (*Elementa Philosophiae*), which he models on Euclid's work on the foundation of geometry, the *Elements* (Greek: *Stoicheîa*, Latin: *Elementa*). In his *Elementa Philosophiae,* Hobbes rebuilds philosophy from logic through to religion, now in a harsh and realistic, of his critics so-called 'materialist' spirit.

Concerning cognition and concepts, he adjoins nominalism, which is least demanding in terms of premises; concerning the determination of the human being, he assumes simple self-preservation. Concerning ethics, Hobbes dismisses the belief that one acts for the sake of the good itself; one does not desire something because it is good, as Socrates has postulated, but rather something appears to be good because one desires it. Thus, Hobbes *reverses the classic moral orientation*. In his realistic view, human beings are not good by nature, but are rather (more or less) in a

permanent war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). For the sake of their safety, they affirm absolute rule. Here, however, Hobbes engages with the euphemistic fiction that human beings volunteer to enter a contract ("Covenant") that is binding for everyone apart from the ruler. Later one has time and again gratefully drawn on this fiction, while Hobbes marked it *as* a fiction: "Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words." This means: the philosophy of law and of the state cannot get along without fictions.

> *The philosophy of orientation appreciates the sense of reality that the philosophers at the outset of modernity demonstrate for the sake of clarity: they gloss over nothing. Preeminent footholds are Niccolò Machiavelli's disturbing exposure of the hard core of political thinking, Thomas Hobbes' paradoxical thought to safeguard freedom through the submission under an absolute rule, Francis Bacon's attempt to develop an orienting method of research that is always aware of its contingencies in the sciences, and Michel de Montaigne's sovereign personal orientation which is skeptical against all general guidelines and finds stability in itself. From here, basics of orientation are revealed, for instance the distinction between situation and orientation (Machiavelli's fortuna and virtù), meandering thinking as preparing regulative thought (Montaigne's Essai), the limitation of orientation through leeways, which can be expanded within leeways again (Bacon's Idola), and the necessity of fictions for societal issues (Hobbes' social contract).*

9. Alternative Foundations of the Self-Referential Orientation in Substances: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz

In the 17th century, the so-called 'rationalism' of modernity takes shape in closely connected leading orientation decisions. Nations still have little significance; even though one begins to publish more and more in national languages, Latin remains the common language. The Netherlands, which endured ferocious fights for freedom, offered a place of refuge with a high, though not unlimited degree of freedom of religion and of thought. The Catholic Frenchman RENÉ DESCARTES (1596-1650), the Sephardic Jew BARUCH DE SPINOZA (1632-1677), whose family fled from Portugal to the

Netherlands, and the Protestant German GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ (1646-1716) all lived alone, remained unmarried, did not teach at universities (just as Blaise Pascal, sec. 10), to a certain extent undertook diplomatic tasks, and paid for their living either of private means (Descartes), through skilled manual work (Spinoza, who was banned by the Amsterdam Jewish community because of his writings, grinded lenses for the new telescopes), or through employment at royal courts (Leibniz). However, all of them built up tight networks with other scholars, which is reflected in a rich exchange of letters. Leibniz visited Spinoza personally in order to hear his unpublished thoughts and felt they were "paradoxical."

DESCARTES, whose family belonged to the nobility of office, enjoyed an excellent school education at a prestigious Jesuit college. Initially, he led the life of a young nobleman in Paris society, participated then in the Thirty Years' War as a commissioned officer, traveled extensively through Europe, but then, after having got to know the world, withdrew into the Netherlands in order to direct his study inward: "to study within myself as well" (*étudier aussi en moi-même*). In the Netherlands, too, he lived in hiding, warned by the process of the Inquisition against Galileo Galilei (1633). In view of the controversialness of all questions of faith and knowledge, he wanted to put science on a radically new and unwavering ground (*fundamentum inconcussum*). This was preceded by experiences of disorientation and reorientation, which shocked and unsettled him to the core.

In order to illuminate these experiences, he created multiple new literary forms of writing: first, the narrative of a sequence of three dreams that he dated precisely on November 10, 1619, and located them at a military camp near Ulm at the Danube. He dreamt the following: On the street, he is seized by a whirlwind or a vertigo, is always afraid to fall, wants to escape in a college whose members he can see standing firmly on the ground; he thinks he is persecuted by the devil, is then in his room haunted by thunder and sparks of fire that he seeks to explain with the help of available science, yet without success; finally, in a book of poetry, he comes across *the question of orientation par excellence*: "Which way of life will I follow? (*Quod vitae sectabor iter*)?" In this question, caused by his "heated brain," the "spirit of truth" seems to appear to him, for which he thinks he has to thank God alone.

Decades of widely spread research on physics, astronomy, physiology, psychology, and mathematics ensue; among other things, Descartes developed the analytic geometry. About all this he reports in his *Discourse on the Method of Rightly*

Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking the Truth in the Sciences. He calls this discourse a story (*histoire*) or fairy tale (*fable*). Introductorily, he tells of his personal way to a method, which he has tried out effectively and which he recommends as the foundation of a new universal science. With *Methods,* human orientation becomes autonomous from specific knowledge and from concrete situations; it gives itself a specific direction that others in different situations can follow; it chooses its own way. Descartes elucidates this through *a traveler's experience of orientation*: having lost his way in the forest and wandering around desperately, he does the best in order to orient himself if he walks straight ahead in whatever direction; in this way, he will come out of the woods sometime and regain an overview in open country. At that time, "forests" designated also loose collections of things to know; Bacon, for instance, had presented a work entitled *Sylva Sylvarum.*

Gaining an overview in the midst of a confusing situation is another essential feature of orientation. This is, as Descartes emphasizes, not inherent in reason as such, as everyone obviously goes "different ways" (*diverses voies*) with it. Therefore, human reason needs instructions for its proper use. Descartes instructs his readers to divide and compartmentalize complex, difficult, and thus insoluble problems into some surveyable and completely evident connections until the problems seem easily solvable, and then recombine the evident connections according to clear and comprehensible rules which one chooses freely.

This is the method of *surveyable representation* (*übersichtliche Darstellung*), as Wittgenstein later calls it. Thereby, Descartes argues, intuitions of right and wrong also play a role; even if they may be erroneous, they cannot be questioned anymore; the philosophy of orientation calls them plausibility standards. According to Descartes, the final criterion is the ease (*facilité*) of understanding. *Thus, orientation precedes truth.* Descartes revolutionizes philosophy by recommending to follow the "order of one's own deliberations (*ordre des raisons*)" and by renouncing to say anything about the "order of things themselves (*ordre des choses*)."

In his *Discours*, Descartes designs related rules for the leading of one's life, which he calls "*preliminary life orientation (morale par provision*)." Where one cannot identify the truest opinions (*les plus vraies opinions*), it is best to follow the most probable ones (*les plus probables*) that have stood the test of time. If they cannot be identified with sufficient clarity, one should take decisions depending on how far the opinions or attitudes in question can be applied to practice, and then cling to them,

follow them with *resoluteness*. On the whole, one should rather try to overcome oneself than fate (*fortune*), rather change one's own wishes than the order of the world (*l'ordre du monde*). Wherever possible, one should make a virtue of necessity (*faire de nécessité vertu*). In fact, we use to do so in everyday orientation.

The basic precondition for this is "to provide a comprehensive view (*une revue*) of the diverse activities of the human being in this life, in order to try to make the best choice." First and foremost, an *orientation arises from the overview of other orientations*: this makes one's own orientation decisions easier.

In the *Meditationes de prima philosophia,* Descartes deepens his *Discours* to a "First Philosophy," a groundwork of philosophy in general, no longer in French for a broad audience, but in Latin for the philosophical expert audience. He gives his meditations the form of spiritual exercises as he got them to know at the Jesuit college: the routine of consequently pressing forward to one's innermost interiority in order to purify oneself before God from one's sinful incentives. Descartes applies the Augustinian model to scientific thinking, tracks down all that is dubious in order to uncover the indubitable. He wants to, as he writes, once in a lifetime (*semel in vita*) turn everything on its head (*evertere*) from the ground up (*funditus*), in order to stabilize the sciences in something firm and abiding (*firmum et mansurum stabilire*).

Here, however, he sees himself slide down an abyssal vortex (*in profundum gurgitem ex improviso delapsus*); the experience of disorientation increases, he loses the ground unter his feet, can no longer support himself anywhere and must work hard to swim out of the vortex (*enîti*). The new foothold is *the mere self-relation of thinking,* which cannot doubt that it doubts – which means that thinking does not accept anything as true besides doubting itself. The self-relation in the "I think, I am" (*ego cogito, ego sum*) cuts off every external relation. Being on one's own is the starting point of so-called 'rationalism.' Descartes emphasizes that this self-relation of thinking is always a temporal process: thereby orientation as a whole is put on a *temporal certainty*.

Methodically, Descartes turns this first temporal certainty of the pure self-relation of thinking into the gold standard of all further certainties: everything that is to be considered as true must be compared with this primary certainty. However, at the same time, the Aristotelian substance metaphysics remains plausible beyond question for Descartes. Hence, in his eyes, a temporal process must be an accidental quality of a firm substance, and self-referential thinking must exist as a thinking

substance (*res cogitans*). And since the process of thinking cannot be bodily and physically extended, corporeality must be excluded from it. A separate extended substance (*res extensa*) is opposed to the thinking substance. Thereby, Descartes establishes a dualism of 'reason versus nature' and of 'soul versus body' allowing him to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, the existence of God and therefrom also the existence of bodily beings. Yet, at the same time this dualism splits human orientation in such a way that it for centuries has difficulties in uniting both parts and *loses the orientation about itself*.

Finally, Descartes puts these deliberations into the literary form of a treatise, the *Principia philosophiae.* Here the empirical judgment *ego cogito, ego sum* turns into a syllogism connecting the *cogito* and the *sum* with *ergo*: "I think, therefore I am" (*cogito ergo sum*). SPINOZA then begins to consequently construe the *Principia philosophiae* deductively according to the method of mathematics (*more geometrico*), again along the lines of Euclid's geometry. Therein all basic principles of orientation seem to vanish because a mathematical deduction excludes all individual points of view and standpoints. However, Spinoza wants to exclude all mere wishes and special purposes from philosophical thinking, i.e. stop all wishful thinking. The assumption of an absolute freedom of the will is wishful thinking, too, for him.

However, the Cartesian self-relation remains. SPINOZA translocates it to nature as such – or God. The Aristotelian notion of substance and Descartes' own conception force him to do so: to accept only one substance. For Descartes, the thinking and the extended substances are independent of each other, but both of them are 'finite substances' and, as such, dependent on the 'infinite substance' that is God who has created nature as a whole and preserves all things in their being. Yet, according to the Aristotelian concept of substance, substances must be independent entities, and that is why 'finite substances' become paradoxical in their dependency on God. Seen from the Judeo-Christian point of view, the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* are at once substances and not substances, and there remains only one real substance, which is God or nature (*deus sive natura*). Since everything depends on this substance, philosophy must begin with it.

However, the assumption that there is only one single substance is paradoxical as well, for there remains nothing from which it can be independent. Therefore, this stand-alone substance must be the cause of itself (*causa sui*), and as not even time can precede it, God's creation of the world must not be a temporal process.

However, if God is coinstantaneous with his creation and the cause coincides with its effect, God cannot be discerned from his creation, but is rather identical with it: God or nature. Then one can by the same token say that God is everything (pantheism) and that he is not at all (atheism). God becomes confusingly paradoxical, too, which has triggered passionate debates that finally have led to the philosophy of orientation.

In the notion of the *causa sui* with which Spinoza begins his *Ethica*, the distinction between cause and effect is short-circuited: when both sides coincide, the distinction either has nothing to differentiate between, or everything in nature can be regarded as both a cause (*natura naturans*) and an effect (*natura naturata*). There is much to be said for this. The logical figure of the paradox, which Spinoza uses without designating it as such, here leads beyond the mechanistic understanding of nature that prevailed until the end of the 19th century: if God is indiscernible from nature created by him, then nature is just as incomprehensible as God. To reach adequate knowledge is the measure of all cognition, but human beings are not able to achieve it.

If the body and the spirit are not independent substances, according to the Aristotelian model, they must be attributes (*attributa*) of the one divine substance; they are our perspectives (*sub specie*) on it; an infinite number of attributes or perspectives is possible. In fact, the body-soul-opposition is only a perspectival contrast, and Spinoza initiates perspectivism. As a consequence, individuals are *modi*, varieties of the attributes and thereby parts of the whole nature. For the sake of their own self-preservation, they must be interested in overlooking nature as a whole, so that they are able to conduct themselves successfully and persist in it (*conatus in suo esse perseverandi*). However, *modi* of the whole can survey the whole only to a limited extent. According to Spinoza, this finds expression in emotions (*affectus*) directed to something that either supports one's own self-preservation (then the emotions are pleasant) or impairs it (then the emotions are unpleasant). In order to act rationally, which here means prudent and considerate, it is in one's own interest to learn to explain negative emotions and thereby dissolve them.

Hence, Spinoza's metaphysics of the one and only substance results in the following ethical consequence: if it is God who affects himself in all parts of nature, he turns all parts and thus in principle also all human beings to each other without reservation. Hobbes' *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man) turns into *homo homini*

deus (the human being is God to the human being). The paradox of the *causa sui* inferred from Descartes' *Principia* ultimately leads to the paradox of God's rational love to himself (*amor Dei intellectualis*): if we consider things rationally, we can in actual fact only love each other as joint parts of nature and thus of God; for in this love, God loves himself. Just as the concept of 'cause,' Spinoza also traces the concept of 'love' back to itself. In his system, freedom becomes paradoxical, too, because it is, as freedom from affects, insight in (divine) necessity. In the final analysis, human concepts and norms of good and evil are inadequate. Spinoza's contemporaries described him as someone who actually lived in this spirit.

LEIBNIZ, son and grandson of professors, polymath, inventor of (among other things) a combinatorics, of infinitesimal calculus (probably invented independently of Newton) and a calculating machine, who occasionally works as a diplomat on his own initiative, philosophizes only on the side, but also rigorously. He pursues the way begun by Descartes and Spinoza and introduces the notions of 'perspectives' and of 'standpoints' into philosophy.

LEIBNIZ abolishes the substantiality of the *res extensa*: since all corporeal things are divisible, they cannot be substance. However, with Descartes, he maintains the substantiality of the non-corporeal substances. However, like Spinoza, he regards them not as effects of the divine substance, but brings them into a purely logical relation to the latter. He understands the divine substance as the subject of all possible predicates and thus of all possible determinations of the world (*conceptus primitivus, notio primitiva*), which are limited in each of the non-corporeal substances in an individual way. These limited individual substances (*monades*) are, in this way, mirrors (*miroirs*) of the universe (*univers*) or perspectives (*perspectives*) on it, each taking a different standpoint (*point de vue*). Each monad expresses, according to Leibniz, the universe in an individual manner (*exprimer l'Univers*).

Hence, Leibniz no longer understands the substances through thinking (as Descartes did), but more comprehensively as observations of the world (*perceptions*), which most often remain unreflected or unconscious (*petites perceptions*) and only in special cases proceed reflectively or consciously (*apperceptions*). Leibniz's notion of observation turns the opposition between perceiving and thinking into a merely gradual difference. As a result, the world consists of observations observing each other: it is a *universal system of observation* in which the substances become

mere hubs of relations. Thereby, space and time are nothing but order parameters of the observations.

In Leibniz' construction, the monads do not observe each other immediately because they cannot transcend their respective perspectives and are, in this regard, "windowless," that is, mere self-relation. Their self-relation, however, is not (as in Descartes) the immediate self-relation of thinking, but includes a broadly determined relation to the other, as the self-relation runs via the divine substance (as in Spinoza). This *unity of self-relation and relation to the other* is possible because, according to Leibniz, the divine substance unites all monads or perspectives in itself as the "central monad"; it has from the very start determined the algorithms of their interactions and communications in a pre-established harmony.

Hence, God is the perfect observer who encompasses all observations of all perspectives. He has always already a *perfect overview of the world,* and for him, everything follows the principle of sufficient reason. Hazards, surprises, reorientations, and distinctions of good and evil exist only if seen from limited perspectives and limited standpoints within the limited systems of observation.

The optimism encouraged by Leibniz's rationalistic design has first been admired and then been derided. This optimism stands and falls with the metaphysical assumption of a God giving us security in everything. Leibniz' design displays a *perspectivism of orientation*, which is carried out with logical calculus – but *without the risks of orientation.*

> *The philosophy of orientation does not seem to comply with the fundamental feature of the rationalistic tradition in the philosophy of modernity and its insistence on ultimate, logically justified certainties. In fact, in Descartes it finds the impressive description of profound experiences of disorientation and the consequent reorientation from truth to an eligible method of its own certainty and its own plausibility standards, that is, a radical changeover to orientation decisions. In Spinoza, the philosophy of orientation finds the potential to gain new religious, philosophical, and scientific possibilities of thinking and acting – by making paradoxical the hitherto strongest foothold of European philosophy, namely substance metaphysics. In Leibniz, the philosophy of orientation finds a logically and systematically implemented perspectivism on the basis of both self-related and other-related observations.*

10. Alternative Certainties: Pascal

With BLAISE PASCAL (1623-1662), Augustine's absolute certainty of faith returned in early modernity. He questioned the new orientations of Montaigne and Descartes anew – and thereby unveiled even deeper conditions of orientation.

Pascal had all requirements for this: he also belonged to a highly respected family in the service of the King, his father educated him following Montaigne's humanistic program (no mathematics). Nonetheless, Pascal became a brilliant mathematician and experimental physicist. He developed among other things a calculus of probabilities (*géométrie du hasard*), and he shone brightly as a disputatious author. As a young man, he became so famous that Descartes went to see him personally. For some years, he likewise plunged into the life of a Parisian. But throughout his life he was tormented by some kind of paralysis and severe pain. Finally, he withdrew into a monastery as a hermit or "solitary" (*solitaire*) and submitted himself to strict penances. In France, the king still pursued an austere politics of religion under the influence of the Jesuits. The treatise by the Flemish bishop Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638) about Augustine, which inflamed a new movement of reformation within the Catholic Church and which also ignited Pascal's religious consciousness, was soon put on the index.

According to his *Memorial*, dated from the night between November 23 and 24, 1654, Pascal experienced a second conversion to God, the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars." He discards proofs of God's existence: one cannot teach religion, but only make it venerable and amiable again. In his person, Pascal unites the large range of mathematical-scientific, religious, and philosophical thought. He combines the methodical-mathematical certainty on the one hand with the resolute certainty of faith (*certitude*) on the other, and in-between them, he opens up new philosophical horizons for that which we today call orientation, including life orientation.

Pascal makes use of several genres of writing: the treatise, the essay, and – to great success – also the (fictive) letter. Later on, and more or less unintentionally, he finds the form that is most suitable for his thinking: notes or fragments of different length. System thinking neither does justice to God's world, he assumes; confronted

to it, every order splinters. Pascal notes individual thoughts (*pensées*) like random ideas – as mere footholds for him and his readers. Thereby he forces his readers to *orient themselves on their own.*

In his *Pensées,* Pascal speaks as an "I" without presupposing its unity. As an "I" reflecting upon itself, it is self-referential and exists. However, in Pascal's view, Descartes' doubts are only thought up: no human being can really doubt whether he or she exists. The "I" takes center stage, as if it had a firm position. But thereby it becomes a nuisance for others, wants to subjugate them, is unfair in itself (*injuste en soi*) and hateable (*haïssable*). It is neither pure thinking nor a *fundamentum inconcussum,* but only, as we call it, a standpoint of orientation.

However, one can doubt logical contradictions: "Diverse secure things have been contradicted – diverse false things are accepted without opposition." The rules of mathematics (which no one at that time knew better than Pascal) are, in the end, only routines that have developed accidentally and to which one could imagine alternatives. Reason adjusts to everything, gets along with everything and follows the respective needs (*la raison étant flexible à tout*). The human being is a thinking water reed (*roseau pensant*); and yet, human dignity (*dignité*) lies entirely in human thought (*pensée*) and constitutes human greatness (*grandeur*).

Disorientation deepens: it not only concerns the human knowledge *about* the world, but also the human position *in* the world: the human being is a monster (*monstre*), a chaos (*chaos*), something self-contradictory (*sujet de contradiction*), a sewer of uncertainty and error; and yet, the human being judges all things (*juge de toutes choses*), is the glory and scum of the universe (*gloire et rebut de l'Univers*), a paradox for him- or herself (*paradoxe à vous-même*).

Macro- and microphysically, the human being is placed as the intangible middle between two infinities: the infinite largeness of the universe on the one hand, and the infinite smallness of its elements on the other; the human being looks in an abyss (*abîme*) on both sides. The world that can be observed scientifically is an infinite sphere (*sphère infinie*) whose center (*centre*) is everywhere and whose periphery (*circonférence*) is nowhere. The human being goes astray in it (*égaré*), is a nothing (*un néant*) compared to the infinite (*l'infini*), but an all (*un tout*) compared to the void, sort of in-between nothing and everything, infinitely far away from comprehending the extremes (*comprendre les extrêmes*). In terms of cognition, we human beings drive on a vast milieu (*voguons sur un milieu vaste*), having neither secure

knowledge nor being completely unknowing. Human beings are always insecure and wavering (*incertains et flottants*), pushed from one end to the other (*poussés d'un bout vers l'autre*). Every foothold (*terme, appui*) which we try to hold on to (*attacher*) and make firm (*affermir*) fluctuates and withdraws from us (*il branle et nous quitte*), and when we pursue it, it escapes our grasp (*prises*), slips away from us (*nous glisse*) and flees in an eternal flight (*fuite éternelle*). Nothing stands still and stays for us (*Rien ne s'arrête pour nous*).

Like no other, Pascal describes the *basic situation of human orientation*. He concludes that the point cannot be to seek assurance (*assurance*) and firmness (*fermeté*). He resolutely *shifts from certainty to uncertainty*: one has to work for the uncertain, go across the sea, ride on a board (*travailler pour l'incertain; aller sur la mer; passer sur une planche*). And human beings are tuned to this: in all their misery (*tout le malheur*), they search for repose (*repos*), which, however, soon again becomes unbearable for them, so that they fall back into restlessness.

And yet, even in this abysmal disorientation, orientation is still possible – if one bethinks of its scope (*portée*: the scope of thrown objects) in everyday life as well as in science. Just as a point of a certain size seems indivisible to the senses, so we do we produce principles (*principes*) that appear as final ones to our intellect without really being what they seem to be. Involuntarily, we draw horizon lines where our thinking ends; Pascal calls the orientation that creates such lines a feeling (*sentiment*) and locates this feeling in the heart (*coeur*). He outlines a logic of the heart (*logique du coeur*) as the basis of human orientation. According to this logic, we decide which principles and certainties we adopt in a given situation. These principles can be felt, Pascal says, and from those principles we have adopted we deduce theorems (*Les principes se sentent, les propositions se concluent*).

The ability to dispose of principles constitutes the spirit (*esprit*). According to Pascal, whose experience extends further than anyone else's in these matters, the spirit shows itself in three degrees: initially as the "spirit of accuracy and correctness" (*esprit de justesse*), when it is about the use of familiar principles; then as the "spirit of geometry" (*esprit de géométrie*) when principles need to be selected specifically, which demands already a certain amplitude of the spirit (*amplitude d'esprit*); and finally, in the "spirit of fineness and subtlety" (*esprit de finesse*), when principles first of all need to be found. As Pascal ventilates in many notes, this *esprit de finesse*, which comprises the skills and virtues of orientation, is reliant on a convenient envi-

ronment, an appropriate pace in observing and thinking, a favorable distance to the object, and a suitable perspective. The subtle spirit considers alternative truths next to every truth that it believes to have found. It mistrusts fictions, but reckons with its own weakness (*faiblesse*). It is exposed to desires (*concupiscence*), which may lead to corresponding philosophies. It follows styles of cultures without being able to say clearly what they consist in. It orients itself with the common sense without relying on it. It cannot be tied to a specific profession.

Just as Augustine before him, Pascal dares to look that far down into the abysses of human orientation because he still or anew sees faith in God as granting the human being's true felicity (*vraie félicité*). However, in regard to God, too, we only have a sign (*marque*) or an empty trace (*trace toute vide*) which could be willed by God himself in order to engage human beings to decide in favor of him. Reason cannot take this decision; reason can only prepare it by detaching the human being from habitual ways of thinking with the help of doubts. The force of reason (*force*) is able to decide what to doubt and what to trust. Pascal does no longer aim to prove God's existence. Rather, he wants to show that it is a rational decision to surrender to religion. He regards this decision as a bet, as a game (*jeu*) with happenstance and hazard (*hasard*) that one can only win despite all uncertainty (*incertitude*): you can gain eternal bliss (*béatitude*) but cannot lose anything apart from the present miserable life. Yet, in Pascal's view, everyone must be interested in eternal bliss – this is *his* ultimate certainty.

> *The philosophy of orientation is confronted with the deepest abysses of human disorientation when encountering the mathematician, physicist, philosopher, and staunch Christian Pascal. Pascal portrays the situation, with which human orientation has to cope, in the widest horizon and, at the same time, very densely: the human being's intangible position in the cosmos; the "I" that is not the firm subject of self-referential thinking, but a mere standpoint of orientation; instead of anything firm, fluctuating footholds and elusive horizons; human thinking that is infinitely flexible; mathematical logic that seems to provide ultimate certainty as well-practiced routine; the necessity of deciding between always preliminary certainties; and manifold conditions that facilitate or compromise this. The philosophy of orientation could nearly have been written as a commentary on Pascal.*

11. Alternative Conceptualizations of Lawfulness: Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant

In the time of the Enlightenment, the sometimes still profound religious piety bit by bit gave way to a purely rational faith in a "God of philosophers" (Pascal) and finally, for some people, to sheer disbelief. Together with the ample supernatural foothold of human orientation, the conjecture of a God-granted lawfulness of the world began to totter. Lawfulness then required confirmation by means of new evidence.

The rapidly developing natural sciences offered themselves as new evidence, still under the name of 'philosophy of nature'; in many respects they were irreconcilable with the biblical assertions. The new evidence became spectacular and irrefutable with ISAAC NEWTON (1642-1726/27). In his *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (1687), he bases the understanding of nature on mathematical principles, but expressly dispenses with metaphysical presuppositions (*hypotheses non fingo*). Instead, he insists on experimental empirical evidence. In this way, he can consistently explain processes on earth and in the universe through common laws, especially the laws of motion and the law of gravitation.

While Newton, who was quite devout, still surrounds his discoveries with theological, but also with alchemical and magical speculations, which he, however, keeps secret, the *new lawfulness* establishes itself as a description of purposeless regularities, which manifest themselves in experiments and can be used in order to predict natural processes. As there are only minor and controllable deviations from this lawfulness, it seems absolutely reliable to a hitherto unknown degree of scientific certainty. The natural laws and the forces that work according to them can just as little be observed directly as Parmenides' 'being' could; but now, they seem to constitute the real being of all things. Their 'discovery' (not their construction) is celebrated as the new triumph of reason, which is equally available to everyone and applied methodically to experience. Thereby, modernity creates – in Hans Blumenberg's words – a *new 'legitimacy'* against the old religious one. The need for an ultimate, unconditional foothold for human orientation is fulfilled in a new, purposeless way: the forces and the laws according with which they work are indifferent toward the human being, even though they can be utilized meaningfully. Hence, human be-

ings find themselves in a naked and cold universe without purpose and have to orient themselves afresh.

Philosophers can relate to this new lawfulness in alternative ways. However, at the same time, national traditions develop in philosophy, especially an English, French, and German one. In different languages and cultures, one thinks in characteristic variations; and exactly in the evaluation of the unconditional lawfulness of nature, the situatedness (*Situativität*) of philosophical orientation appears. In the England of William of Occam, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Hobbes, but now also of Isaac Newton, the traditional skepticism against realism and abstractions persist, and thus also against laws of nature assuming an independent reality. The most important French and German philosophers, however, still trust in the hold on concepts, constructions, and systems built of concepts.

JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704), who initially was a Fellow at Christ Church College in Oxford, but then left the university in order to become the personal doctor and advisor of a leading, yet also threatened politician. This earned him a lot of political and economic experience, but also intermittently exiled him to Paris and the Netherlands. Locke was on friendly terms with Newton.

He wanted to describe how our world arises in the ideas of our mind. Using principles sparingly, he clung to the assumption of substances, which has borne the Aristotelian metaphysical and also the rationalistic line of tradition from Descartes via Spinoza up to Leibniz. However, unlike Descartes and Leibniz, he no longer presupposes "innate ideas," which they assumed in order to ensure truth and certainty. On the other hand, already Descartes did not limit consciousness to the mere thinking of thought, but included sensory experience and imagination, feelings and passions, appetite and will. With such classifications, different options of human orientation are traditionally weighted differently. The English language leaves a larger leeway: with the help of the concepts of the 'mind' and of 'understanding,' which Locke uses in a similar way, that which is considered as sensual and spiritual, unconscious and conscious, receptive and spontaneous can be comprehended as a unity, while the French notion of *esprit* and the German notion of *Geist* clearly give precedence to thinking and suggest the attribution of specific truths to it. It is impossible to argumentatively decide between the empirical evidence on which the British tradition insists and the evidence of reason that the French and German tradition prefers. Henceforth, they take root as lasting philosophical alternatives. The British ap-

proach more strongly bears in mind *the factual conditions of everyday and scientific orientation*.

Locke considers the mind itself to be able to divide its ideas into those that spring from some physical causal processes, which affect the nerves and the brain and which he calls "sensations," and those that the mind reflects upon in its own way, i.e. the "reflections." Furthermore, Locke conceives of the mind as being able to differentiate its ideas, regarded as "objects of the mind," and decide from which senses they stem, whether they are simple or complex, which of them represent primary and which of them secondary qualities of things, etc. Hereby, Locke includes the distinction between substance and accident into empirical evidence. At the same time, he pays attention to signs as means to communicate ideas; for him, signs are also products of the mind itself. The identity of a person rests upon his or her memory of such signs; this alone guarantees the continuity of consciousness. As a result, the lawfulness of nature becomes precarious: according to Locke, it is part of the connections of ideas and can be granted only by God.

GEORGE BERKELEY (1685-1753), who also traveled extensively, finally became bishop and married (which was still a rare exception among philosophers), drew the consequences from Locke's reorientation: if one begins with consciousness, one must abandon the assumption of an external world that exists independently. For Berkeley, this assumption is the source of all materialism and atheism. He agrees with Leibniz' pioneering insight that being can only be conceived of as being perceived (*esse est percipi*). The mind that perceives everything in grasping it by its ideas can distinguish between these ideas only through the criterion of how lively or vivid – or, as we call it: attractive and striking – they are. The signs through which the mind registers its ideas can be used more or less generally; they open leeways to subsume more or less things under them, and this in turn creates leeways for acting in various situations. However, signs can easily deceive us, for ideas are "mixed, as it were, and blended together"; signs that symbolize "abstract general ideas" arbitrarily separate and connect these ideas at the same time. "Principles" are abstract constructions and "general laws of nature," with the help of which we try to explain phenomena; principles are nothing more and nothing less than "rules we take for principles, which we cannot evidently know." For Berkeley – who disputes with Newton without mentioning him – God remains the supreme authority to guarantee the regular correlation of ideas encoded by signs.

One generation later, DAVID HUME (1711-1776) denied himself to resort to this authority that would safeguard certainty – and became the most significant British philosopher. Descending from impoverished Scottish nobles, he dug, against the will of his family, into the study of philosophy. He did that so intensely that it made him sick. He then earned his living as an amanuensis of an English merchant; later, he went to La Flèche in France, where Descartes attended school, and, in the deceptive hope of rapid literary fame, worked on his *Treatise of Human Nature.*

Here he not only describes "human understanding," but also "human nature" on the whole, consequently avoiding metaphysical hypotheses. Proceeding from a "free confession of his ignorance" concerning an "original and ultimate principle," he strives for a "cautious observation of human life." *One can read Hume's work as a withdrawal from apparent philosophical science into actual human orientation*. Sure, he tries to transfer Newton's experimental method to philosophy, but this means for him to build completely on the evidence of experience without drawing on mathematics. For "the sciences of mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural religion," too, depend on "the science of man." Hume proposes "a complete system of the sciences built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security"; for its part, the new science's new footing "laid on experience and observation" is possible only in "a land of tolerance and of liberty."

This has led to *the strongest disillusionment of philosophy in the course of its history* since the ancient skeptics. However, Hume's philosophical skepticism, which now focuses above all on "an original and ultimate principle," pushes him into *a strong experience of disorientation*. Not before, but after his comprehensive critique of knowledge in Book I of his *Treatise,* he sees himself "having narrowly escap'd shipwreck in passing a small frith" into which "the wretched condition, weakness, and disorder" of the faculties of understanding brought him; "despair" makes him "resolve to perish on the barren rock, on which I am at present, rather than venture myself upon that boundless ocean, which runs out into immensity." For in most cases, our understanding is "founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas"; but imagination is "a principle so inconstant and fallacious" that it may create illusions and contradictions everywhere. Then, "the question is, how far we ought to yield to these illusions"; but again, there is no sufficient reason to decide between them; thus we can "only observe what is commonly done."

In addition, Hume feels "affrightened and confounded with that forlorn solitude, in which I am plac'd in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster." Since he has contradicted all previous philosophy, he expects for his part only contradiction, finding in himself "nothing but doubt and ignorance" or "philosophical melancholy and delirium." However, after "all examination and enquiry," his mind returns to "that assurance, which always arises from an exact and full survey of an object." He decides to maintain his skepticism rather than yield to religious superstition. He oscillates between the unsettlement by philosophy and the reassurance through the "common affairs of life" without fleeing into allegedly unconditional certainties, no matter how desirable they may be. Nor does he express a wish to change the world. *He resolutely exposes himself to the conditions of life orientation that are always uncertain.*

In fact, he encounters fierce resistance with his *Treatise*. Thereupon, he tries out a variety of literary forms which make him more and more successful; but he fails when applying for professorial chairs in Edinburgh and Glasgow. From then on, for a long time he lives on appointments by noblemen. Later he works in a library, which gains him access to a plethora of literatures, and finally, he comes to fame, most notably in Paris. Moreover, he becomes rich – because of his six-volume *History of England*, which he regards both as source and as application of his science of man. Before that, he has presented a *Natural History of Religion* in which he proceeds genealogically, asking after the need for the religious belief that he has left behind. He courageously defends suicide against the widespread argument that suicide is a crime against God and one's fellow human beings. Although Hume does not commit himself to matters of religion in public, he is regarded as an atheist, and his work was put on the index.

In exploring the experience that he assumes to be sufficient for understanding how human beings cope with their life – which involves the sciences, morals, political institutions, and religions –, Hume follows Berkeley in proceeding from "impressions," "passions" and "emotions," which impose themselves in being particularly vivid. The "ideas," among which Hume counts thoughts, memories, and fantasies, are comparatively faint and ineffective; they copy impressions and associate each other according to the criteria of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. Descartes' and Locke's substances and Newton's absolute space and absolute time belong to these

mere ideas, while the impressions sustain the undeniable conviction of situational reality.

Hume holds on to *the ways in which everyday orientation takes place.* He observes and respects the fact that ideas are associated in different ways in each individual, but he does not yet differentiate between different standpoints, perspectives, footholds, the double contingency of communication, etc. He reduces the assumption of natural laws to the observation of regular sequences of events, which are *interpreted* as chains of causes and effects. That is, he reduces natural laws to customs of observation and expectation or, if you like, to the regularity of routines. As things can always happen (or be conceived of) in different ways, inferences from particular experiences, which constitute general rules, are always preliminary. Even if one strongly believes in the laws of nature, they are not themselves given to empirical observation. Hence, as Hume puts it in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* besides logic and mathematics "all other sciences are reduced to probability." *Hume takes fundamentally new philosophical decisions of orientation in order to face the uncertainty of all human orientation*.

In his insistence on experience, Hume also renounces the hypothesis of a particular self or "I" because one has no impressions of it and it is no identifiable entity in the mind. Hume ranks it as "a bundle of perceptions" that constantly re-organizes itself on the basis of new experiences. This process can be observed with the help of memory. Hume already uses the metaphor of a continually reconstructed ship to designate *fluctuant identities.* In his *Dialogues,* he plays with identities in deliberately keeping it open with which of his protagonists he identifies.

A skeptical empiricist like Hume needs not to deny the *free will,* but can conceptualize it non-metaphysically as the human leeway of decision in the natural world, for natural processes are only partly assessable and manageable for human beings who nonetheless must rely on these processes in their decisions. If one wants to consider someone as accountable for his or her action, one must assume a free will in this sense. Still, one can observe that reason influences action only to a limited extent: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."

By contrast, *morals,* without which human co-existence would not be possible, can be empirically rooted in moral sentiment, which includes mutual sympathy of human beings for each other and which is constantly schooled by observing and as-

sessing the behavior of other persons. Hume assumes that morals and other societal regulations – in so far as they are useful for everyone – work out and change on this basis, including the standards for justice and reliability.

Hume's *History of England*, which he, despite the contemporary conflicts between the parties, largely keeps impartial and in which he includes literature and science, is at heart a history of human freedom. When it comes to politics, Hume supports a strict separation of powers and the rule of law. On the whole, he champions political stability and, where necessary, as considerate reforms as possible. He advocates American independence. He turns down the proposal to continue his very successful *History of England* on the grounds that he has become too old, too fat, too lazy, and too rich. Loyal to his philosophy, Hume's life came full circle. He was fond of company and sociality. The new street in Edinburgh, where he built his comfortable house, was called St. David Street.

In his early experience of disorientation, Hume arrived at the following conclusion: "We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all. For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case." While Hume, admitting the all-encompassing uncertainty of life, remembered and turned to the good life among friends, IMMANUEL KANT (1724-1804 AD), by contrast, reacted to Hume's experience of disorientation by writing the *Critique of Pure Reason* – where reason is judged by reason itself. Kant holds on to the Cartesian self-referentiality of thinking through which thinking questions itself and finds hold in itself. Following the example set by Copernicus, he starts a "revolution" in thinking, a *great theoretical reorientation* according to which we "we can recognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them." Kant assures the efficiency of reason by limiting it. This gives rise to the most concise and consistent philosophy we know.

Kant tenaciously carved out his university career, while Locke had given it up and Hume failed to succeed in it. Kant's background was the German university philosophy, which had become established. He remained (nearly) always in Königsberg in the easternmost Germany, acquiring his large knowledge of the world from travel stories and books. He experienced changing reigns in his city, but was not involved in politics and diplomacy. Being rather sociable, he was noted for his dinner parties; nonetheless, he lived alone for his whole life. Inspired by Rousseau, he welcomed the French Revolution, yet without conceding a general right to incite revolutions. He resigned himself to the enlightened, but often still oppressive royal rule in Prus-

sia; he admired Frederick the Great. In his narrow sphere of life, he dedicated himself entirely to the renewal of philosophy on the highest academic level. According to Kant's own confession, the crucial incentive to this renewal was due to David Hume; he prefaced the second, more successful edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* with a quote from Francis Bacon's *Instauratio magna*. Like no other philosopher since Aristotle and Descartes, Kant has become one of the highest authorities in philosophy to this day.

As he elaborates in the Preface to the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant sees philosophy involved in a "battle-field of endless controversies" precisely at the point where it, in the rationalistic tradition, has bound itself to reason. Thus, Kant drafts a scenario of reorientation for philosophy itself. Human reason has precipitated itself "into darkness and contradictions." As Kant announces in the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* philosophy must therefore, in the treatment of knowledge by reason, finally enter a "secure course of a science," which is something that "can soon be judged by its success." Where the treatment is stuck, one must "often go back again and take another path." In order to avoid "mere groping about," Kant intends to find the path that reason could take, even though many thoughts formed before without the necessary deliberation have to be abandoned as futile.

Kant believes so strongly in reason that he assumes it cannot be disposed so unfortunate by nature that it cannot solve its own problems. He finds the path to the solution in adhering to the British tradition that trusts in experience. Following this path, he wants to do justice to the lawfulness of nature, which Newton had exhibited so convincingly and which was since then, according to Kant, a "fact." Thereby Kant does not have recourse to divine help, which, since Hume's times, had become altogether questionable. Kant's solution is admittedly cumbersome and difficult, and it raises new problems of orientation.

Actually, Kant only shifts the perspective – with far-reaching consequences: if reason shall contribute to the knowledge of nature and make its lawfulness intelligible, reason must conform to experience, but in such a way that reason determines and shapes experience. As a result, reason becomes independent of the situational conditions of experience or, in short: unconditioned. Only in this way can it claim universal validity.

Following Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, Kant dismisses the belief in metaphysical substances; at the same time, however, he builds his "transcendental philosophy" on Aristotle's equally metaphysical distinction between form and matter or, more abstractly, between form and content. Down to the present day, Kant has convinced many people with his assumption that sensory perception only provides unclassified data which are shaped by the concepts of the intellect (*Verstand*), which is a part of human reason (*Vernunft*). These unclassified data are to become objectively determinable for everyone, also and precisely in the lawful sequence of cause and effect. One can then make 'transcendental' statements *a priori* about this form-giving reason. These 'transcendental' statements are independent of specific experiences but nonetheless firmly focused on experience – while 'transcendent' statements lead us beyond all experience. On the basis of such transcendental determinations, Kant develops the "system" of a "pure natural science" that shall be fundamental for all empirical science: it shall consist of principles that reason does not read off from nature, but that it "prescribes" to nature.

Since lawfulness as such is not perceivable, reason can only speak about laws through its own lawful forms. That is to say, the principle of causality that Newton's natural science presupposes can only be understood as an interpretation of nature through human reason. Yet, Newton's (and other) laws of nature are empirical laws, determined by an experimental method. In contrast to 'pure' laws of (the interpretation of) nature, they can always be enlarged and corrected by new observations and experiments. Thus, transcendental philosophy only contributes the certainty that nature can be understood as lawful at all, for, according to another formulation by Kant, "reason has insight only into that which it itself creates according to its own design." Expressed in contemporary terminology, this is professed constructivism: we orient ourselves by our own specifications, also and especially in the natural sciences. In Kant's view, we never deal with "things per se" but only with "appearances," and human reason prescribes the conditions of the lawfulness of these appearances.

In order to provide a "system" of principles of a pure natural science, Kant deduces them in a "transcendental deduction" from the logical form of judgment which entails that the subject of a judgment is determined by a predicate. From the instances of this logical form, Kant extracts "categories," which, under the conditions of space and time, can be formulated as "principles." While Newton conceptualized

absolute space and absolute time metaphysically as *sensorium Dei*, Kant apprehends them as the human being's "pure forms of intuition." When, for instance, the *logical* relation of "ground and consequence" (*Grund und Folge*) is transposed into the pure spatial and temporal forms of intuition, it turns into the *causal* relation of a spatially separate and temporally preceding physical cause to a temporally succeeding physical effect (*Ursache und Wirkung*). As a result, the law of causality principally applies to human experience determined by, on the one hand, the forms of human reasoning and, on the other hand, the forms of intuition.

The constructivism of Kant's transcendental philosophy remains bound to the possibility of experience, even in the "pure" knowledge (or interpretation) of nature. Following the Aristotelian concept of form, the form must always be the form of certain contents. According to Kant, these contents are the experiences, and these experiences must be gained by a "consciousness," an "I" or a "subject." Insofar as this subject predetermines the "conditions of possibility" or the "forms" of experience, Kant calls it the "transcendental subject." Picking up a term from Leibniz, he designates it as the original "synthetic unity of apperception." For Kant just as for Hume, the subject is not a substance, but a mere "function of the unity," i.e. a "synthesis" which turns logically disparate ideas into logically coherent ideas. This synthesis cannot be justified any more, it is the "highest point" at which the "transcendental philosophy" is to be "affixed." To this day, many people affix the whole philosophy to this point.

However, the synthetic unity of apperception is only a "condition of possibility" that is to make conceivable objective knowledge of nature beyond Hume's skeptical empiricism. As such, it does not grant a truth of nature, which remains an "unknown X" also for Kant. Kant provides for philosophy its own transcendental space of certainty between the spaces of experience and transcendence. The space of mere experience is a space without laws, while the space of transcendence is a space in which human reason runs into wrong conclusions ("paralogisms") and paradoxes ("antinomies") and thus into the aforementioned "endless controversies" that disorient it. In regard to the "I," the world, and God, one can apparently prove antithetical certainties; and Kant proves that these certainties are unprovable. In this way, *certainties are subjects of uncertainty.* This is likewise paradoxical. Indeed, Kant uses paradoxes for the sake of accumulating evidence:

• In order to be able to make statements *a priori* about the "form" of knowledge, Kant follows Aristotle in separating the form and the content of knowledge. Yet, at

the same time, he starts from the premise that it is impossible to separate form and content in real empirical knowledge. For thinking becomes knowing only if it relates to experience ("Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind").

• Kant uses the distinction between form and content in such a way that he classifies the pure forms of intuition (space and time) also as the content of the pure forms of the intellect. Hence, the pure forms of intuition are at the same time contents, thus being paradoxical.

• Even in its transcendental justification, the objectivity of the knowledge acquired with the help of the natural sciences is not a fact, but a mere ought: the empirical subject is asked to de-subjectivize itself in order to become capable of objective empirical judgments. This de-subjectivization of the empirical subject, turning it into a transcendental subject, can, however, only proceed empirically; yet, this is possible only to a limited extent, and it is never verifiable objectively.

• If, according to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, only that is to be regarded as real which can also be an object of experience, then reason itself, pursuing its own critique, is not real, for reason cannot be an object of experience.

However, this does not mean that *The Critique of Pure Reason* is invalid. Orientation can also be based on paradoxes. Only when paradoxes are debunked do they increase disorientation. Kant seems to have noticed this. He was the first to ask: *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* In this treatise, he also operates with paradoxes (sec. 13).

> *The philosophy of orientation cannot be formulated in laws, but precedes the formulation of laws. The British tradition on the one hand, which relies on experience, and Kant on the other hand, who makes reason the center of orientation, take exemplary positions on the mathematically formulated purposeless laws of nature, which since Galilei and especially since Newton have become firm references of scientific orientation.*
>
> *Human orientation requires both alternative options of orientation, empirical evidence on the one hand and rational insight on the other. Yet, as the arguments from Locke to Kant show, it is impossible to decide argumentatively between these options. While Locke and Berkeley leave the certainty of natural laws to God and while Hume holds their certainty in skeptical suspense, Kant de-*

duces it from pure reason – at the same time delimiting the scope of rational cognition to the sphere of experience in which there is no absolute certainty. Both alternatives concur in only attributing laws to nature without being able to ascertain whether these also are the laws of nature per se. Hence, they can be nothing but footholds for scientific orientation, albeit very strong ones. Kant, who provides a specific space of certainty between empirical experience and metaphysical transcendence in formulating transcendental principles of philosophy, runs into productive paradoxes when distinguishing between form and content, subject and object, reality and use of pure reason, which leads him to the problem of orientation in thinking as such.

12. Alternative Conceptions of Morality, Politics, and Economy: Smith, Rousseau, Kant, and Bentham

In the second half of the 18th century, the living conditions in Europe and in colonized America, particularly Northern America, changed drastically: the economic productivity and the wealth of nations grew, and with them the attention to the distribution of riches and the pressure on the old estate-based system that now appeared as unfair. Likewise, the political and moral challenges increased: questions of social justice, of the democratization of society, of slavery, and with them the question of the obligatoriness of morality in general. By developing helpful ideas, philosophy became practically efficient as never before. In converting the ponderous governmental economy, so-called mercantilism, into the much more productive free enterprise economy, the reigning princes could invoke Adam Smith; the authors of the United States Declaration of Independence could refer to John Locke; the French revolutionaries to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the British members of parliament, who were concerned about distributive justice, to Jeremy Bentham. Just like Immanuel Kant, all of them proceeded from the *freedom of decision.* However, they did so in various ways; after all, one had to philosophically decide on the modality of orientation to freedom. Smith's, Rousseau's, Kant's, and Bentham's alternative conceptions of practical philosophy show how different the scopes for decision-making can be conceived of and which new possibilities of orientation arise from them.

ADAM SMITH (1723-1790) grew up in the Scottish school of moral philosophy, which was leading in Great Britain at the end of the 18th century. This school slowly broke away from theological precepts; it supported human beings developing into independent and enjoyable personalities. The ideal emanating from aristocracy, formulated by ANTHONY ASHLEY-COOPER, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), was the perfect harmony of right conduct. Smith's teacher FRANCIS HUTCHESON (1694-1746) placed this ideal within a context, which also embraces economy and politics, while Smith himself, just as his predecessors, based them on a "moral sense," i.e. a feeling for that which is morally correct and guided by the "sympathy" with others. He introduced a "political economy."

Smith was very young when he became a professor of logic and later of moral philosophy. Yet, he did not limit himself to philosophy; rather, after the traditional multiannual grand tour through Europe when he accompanied a young nobleman, he was appointed as commissioner of customs in Scotland and refloated the ailing Scottish monetary system. After his first major work in philosophy, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which he published while being a professor, he went down in history with his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Being the classic justification of free market economy, this latter work appeared in the year of the United States Declaration of Independence; it was quickly received and successfully implemented.

Admiring Newton, Smith configures his comprehensive moral philosophy as a side piece of the philosophy of nature. He tries to express it in preferably simple laws of which the agent needs not be aware; they are obeyed while remaining largely independent of the agent's good will. In his two major works, Smith builds on the plain observation that human beings are interested in the exchange with each other, both in perceiving moral conduct and judgment and in economic coping with life. Put in the language of the philosophy of orientation, Smith's point of departure is the *orientation of human beings to other human beings,* which is not yet guided by norms.

For Smith, the notion of "sympathy" does not so much mean mutual affection, but rather mutual empathy and being interested in communicating with each other. Through empathy, human beings ascertain the propriety of their moral conduct and judgment in society; if the latter is indeed appropriate, they will be rewarded with respect. Smith thereby proceeds to what we today would call a *sociological or soci-*

opsychological description of morality, which he then extends to an observation of the economic conduct of human beings at markets. In this way, moral conduct and judgment become discernable also as market behavior. Smith does not elaborate on this, yet, in both cases, the *orientation by the market* precedes the moral distinction between good and evil, between altruism and egoism.

The observation of the moral conduct and judgment of others becomes, according to Smith, all the more revealing the more one can absolve oneself from one's own moral attachments and occupy *the position of an impartial spectator*. Yet, God alone is a completely impartial spectator speaking through conscience. That is why Smith – different from his friend Hume – still seeks an ultimate foothold in religion. However, at the same time, Smith refers to the fact that one can distinguish oneself and one's conscience by deliberately *changing perspectives*. In Smith's view, one thereby learns to restrain and control oneself, becomes more independent in one's self-assessment and thus in turn a better observer. In doing so, one can never exclude self-deceit; yet, independent observers can detect it. By contrast, factionalism and fanatism make the observation biased and one-sided.

Starting from mutual observation, Smith's implicit transition to economic thinking in *On the Wealth of Nations* becomes plausible. In an economic context, it is observed under which conditions others opt for the exchange of goods or services, and *the market* consists exactly in the mutual observation of these observations. Insofar as the market is not limited by explicit rules, it is just as non-transparent in economic decisions as our feelings are in moral decisions. One can only orient oneself by observing their effects on the behavior of the involved persons. In both cases, these decisions' effects are dependent on incalculable individual needs and interests. Just as real or observable morality consists in the interaction of all individual moral decisions, so does the market consist in the interaction or synergy of all individual economic decisions. In Smith's approach, morality is – to put in in Niklas Luhmann's words – a market of esteem, while on the economic market the needs and interests of anonymous others are observed, followed, and respected.

In contrast to the moral market, the economic market has no clear foothold in pricing, which results from the mutual observation of the factual economic decisions of the participants; who and what is respected morally cannot be scaled like money. But just as the price on the economic market rises or falls through the change of supply and demand, so does the value of respect on the moral market, if a specific

moral achievement is more or less in demand. The 'natural' value of an economic or a moral good, which is measured by the expenditure afforded for it, recedes behind the *market value* determined by supply and demand. This can severely injure moral feelings. Yet, at the same time, morally contemptible self-interest can generate growing affluence for everyone on the economic market, though only in the long (and sometimes the very long) run and never to the same extent for everyone.

The presupposition of this is that, in a society based on labor division, self-interest increases the productivity of this society on the whole. BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE (1670-1733), a London doctor of French origin, had already called attention to the fact that, on a free economic market, private vices turn into public benefits, i.e. evil turns into good. He did so in polemical and satirical form in *The Fable of the Bees.* He argues: if no one wants to take advantage of the other out of moral consideration, nothing stimulates the increase of productivity and the whole society becomes impoverished. In principle, this has proved true.

Mandeville presented plausible examples from everyday life that he observed closely. Thereby he exposed moral idealization of all kinds, while his opponents furiously insisted on it. Smith, too, distanced himself from Mandeville, resolutely repudiating the blatant inferences Mandeville deduced from his thought. However, Smith borrowed the idea of the *revaluation of the (morally speaking) evil into good* and elaborated on this idea. While, according to Hobbes, the "selfish system" leads to the enthronement of a sovereign, according to Smith, it entails the increase of everyone's freedom on a free market. In addition, the "commercial society" can be constrained by rules which turns it into a "natural system of liberty."

In the market, Smith discovers a novel kind of generalization. This is unprecedented by the (deductive) generalization of metaphysics, the (inductive) generalization of British empiricism, and the mathematically formulated generalization of the experimental philosophy of nature. This novel idea of generalization arises through the inscrutable interaction of individual givens being volatile all the time. It can only be comprehended through continuous comparative study and, therefore, it can only be grasped provisionally. What is at stake here is not truth, but rather statistically determinable probability. Thus, in every new situation, one has to decide anew to what extent one wants to rely on it. The generalization on the market – i.e. economic and moral generalization at the same time – can constantly change through the changes of the individual circumstances and decisions. It is *the generalization of ori-*

entation, in which the relative certainty of the price or the validity of certain moral values is related to the relative uncertainty of whether it is worth dealing in goods at this price or orienting one's moral conduct according to the values of respect. *On a free market, be it the economic or the moral market, uncertainty becomes productive*. Smith himself puts the paradox of evil unwillingly producing something good into the well-established shape or figure of an "invisible hand" – an undetermined theological metaphor that is supposed to tide over something difficult to comprehend.

As an alternative, Smith's French contemporary JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778) also proceeded from the pre-reflective feeling for the good, but arrived at the contrary conception of the moral, political, and economic. While Smith limits himself to sober observation and description, Rousseau projects ideal states. He does so with a powerfully eloquent moral passion. In the first instance, he radically 'resets' reason – in order to then turn it into an unconditional foothold for everyone's orientation. He extremely extends *the leeway of freedom and obligation in society*. But following the French tradition of governmental mercantilist economy, he leaps over the potential of free enterprise economy to form a free society. Instead, he imagines a state of nature of human beings in which everyone is self-sufficient, free and equal – as people happily coexist in peace lacking any economic or social system at all. But then the social order we know destroys this happy peace, and a new peace can only be established with the help of a reasonable will that obliges everyone.

Rousseau's construction may also have had personal reasons. He lived differently than Smith: in unattached, unsecured and unstable living conditions. He grew up without a mother and then also without a father; he did not pass through regular studies; he switched denominations just as he interchanged his life partnerships; he did not commit himself to one single profession, but shone as a philosopher, educationist, writer, playwright, composer, and musicologist at the same time. He risked his books being banned and burnt, himself being persecuted; he confused and unsettled his friends and numerous, mostly aristocratic patrons; he longed for solitude – increasingly embittered about the society of his times – and yet pushed himself to the fore and went public. He had a strong need for self-expression and self-justification, and he searched and found hold in himself and his own ideas about the complete refounding of an egalitarian society. With these ideas he fascinated the 'higher' educated upper-class circles right up to the leading philosophers of his day.

Only few people in Western cultural history have caused similarly strong reorientations as he did.

Like Smith's, Rousseau's conception is not easy to overlook and therefore controversial. Rousseau's construal of an amiable, yet unrealistic state of nature of the human being is condensed in his early discourses, namely the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (*Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, 1750), which Rousseau traced back to a great experience of inspiration resembling those of Descartes and Pascal, and the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, 1755): the animal-like state of nature is supposed to have been disturbed just by the mutual observation of moral conduct and judgment, from which Smith expected the development of a more and more appropriate morality. In Rousseau's opinion, the labor-division of commercial society leads to a destructive competition that makes human beings more and more unequal and most of them unfree.

Rousseau's opinion is just as plausible as Smith's. These two derive opposite conclusions from one and the same starting point: an original moral sentiment. While Smith reckons with a moral reversal of good into evil, Rousseau supposes that the good turns into evil in society. Thus, for Rousseau, a new radical conversion becomes necessary. He indicates two paths to it: one of them leads via education (the individual shall re-acquire its natural freedom), the other via the creation of a civil society (*société civile*), which is based on freedom and equal rights and in which the individuals, raised free, can burgeon equal before the law. With the latter ideas, appealing until today, Rousseau has exerted his strongest influence.

In his famous treatise *Du contrat social ou essai sur la forme de la république* (*The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*, 1762), he conceives of the new society as one where everyone silently enters into a contract with everyone else through which human beings commit themselves to politically act according to a general will (*volonté générale*). The idea of a tacit social contract is based on mere reason: a good and just society is possible only if everyone shares the rational insight into a common good and justice. Thus, in the political form of a republic, prudent people are their own and only sovereign. Representative democracy and majority decisions become superfluous. *There is no space for individual orientations, neither in the state of nature, nor in society's state of reason*. Ideally, in both of them it is perfect certainty that reigns.

However, this is not possible without paradoxes. In his education novel *Émile*, Rousseau expressly acknowledges them: "The average man may forgive me my paradoxes – one needs them for reflection. And whatever objection one might bring up against me – I prefer being a man of paradoxes to being a man of prejudices." It follows that

• human beings are good only in a state of nature that cannot be observed; they were turned into evil creatures by society – which they were and still are themselves;

• these evil human beings shall create a new society through the tacit completion of a contract about a common legal order – yet, in order to complete such a contract, they must already be legal persons and, in addition, persons free from personal interests;

• through this contract, they shall secure their personal liberty in recognizing the absolute sovereignty of the community, the people – they shall understand themselves as free precisely in freely surrendering to a law that is binding for everyone. Rousseau calls this the total alienation (*aliénation totale*) of the individual wills (*volontés particulières*) from themselves for the sake of the general will (*volonté générale*). When someone asserts a special, particular will, he will be forced to be free (*on le forcera à être libre*).

In order to make these paradoxes of human nature, the social contract, and political freedom more plausible – which continues to have an effect until today –, Rousseau assumes

• that everyone concludes a contract with himself in order to cling to the general will. Yet, one cannot enter into contracts with oneself, and society as such cannot utter a general will and cannot effectuate it in a concrete situation of action.

• Since only individuals representing society can do so, these individuals must be chosen carefully. In order to establish a suitable system of laws, Rousseau thinks an especially wise legislator is necessary. Yet, this implies that there are differences in the endowment with or the use of reason among individuals. If we cannot presuppose common insights stemming from collective reason, we must assume that some individuals are superior in their orientation.

• The commitment or bond created by rational insight in the general will of the people is not sufficient in Rousseau's eyes. According to him, a republic needs a civil religion with dogmas in which everyone must believe unconditionally: dogmas of per-

sonal immortality, of God's justice arranging punishment or reward, and the holiness of the social contract. Yet, if one *must* believe in something specific, it is only of limited credibility.

• In *Émile,* Rousseau recommends the following for an education that is supposed to result in freedom: "Lead the pupil always to believe that he is the master, but in reality, you must be the master. There is no submission that is more complete than the one that has the appearance of freedom. In this way, you can conquer and control the pupil's will."

• Rousseau conceals such ongoing paradoxes by using the ancient metaphor of the body (*corps*): If all members of society form an organism, they fulfill a vital function in it; if they, by contrast, assert personal interests, they endanger the body as a whole and are then to be considered as sick. Yet, society is not a body.

While Smith and Rousseau extended the horizon of moral orientation in the transition from the earlier to their later works, which they did not connect systematically with each other, Kant and Bentham begin with one single principle: Kant's point of departure is the good will, Bentham's the benefit of action.

KANT demands unconditionality, also in moral philosophy, in order to justify his claim to of the universality of morals. For this reason, the morality of action must not be based on feelings or observations, needs or interests that can vary from place to place; rather, it must be based exclusively on reason itself – Kant performs a *Copernican revolution also in moral philosophy*. As a consequence, reason must – *as* reason – ignore all situational circumstances. It must ignore all conditions and ramifications of human action for which no one can be made morally responsible. Reason must adhere to nothing else than the intention of the agent. This intention cannot be read off an from action because it is an inner commitment. Just as reason 'prescribes' its laws in the theoretical cognition of nature, so does duty prescribe the law according to which we shall act. To this end, reason must presuppose a free will that can choose good or evil; it is moral when it chooses the good, and unconditionally moral when it wants the good for its own sake, in deference to the good – even though the good is always determined by a confusing variety of circumstances framing a situation of action, though it can always have bad consequences, and thus the good can only be the comparatively best.

The good will prescribes what is to be done. Reason can, in its practical use, give an *a priori* form to action just as it, in its theoretical use, can give an *a priori*

form to knowledge. This *a priori* form for action is the "categorical imperative." It commands unconditionally that one is to follow reason alone, not more, not less. Morality in the form of reason as an authoritative command is "the mere *form* of universal law-making." The contents fitting into this form cannot be concrete actions that always depend on specific circumstances, but rather the guiding intentions that always lead one's action, or, as Kant calls them, one's own "maxims" or "subjective" practical principles.

Thereby everyone is directed to him- or herself: one can experience the inner coercion of duty only as an individual; others' reason is, according to Kant, "foreign reason"; in the lives of different human beings, different maxims can arise. Thus, the categorical imperative commands to examine the leading maxims of one's own action in regard to the question of whether one could give them the form of a universal law at any time. If this is possible without contradiction, one is allowed to act according to these maxims, for instance the maxim always to be honest. If a contradiction arises, one must restrain oneself from the maxim. For instance, if one reserves the right to lie occasionally for oneself, one cannot count on honesty anywhere anymore once occasional lies have become a universal law.

Kant has guidelines for one's action in mind that are supposed to be in force a whole lifetime. However, he also here demands de-subjectivization – in this context not for the purpose of objective cognition, but rather for the purpose of moral action disregarding one's own advantage and any exception for oneself. Kant's most extreme example is that of a suicidal person who despite of world weariness feels compelled to go on living because suicide cannot become a principle of universal legislation. The condition for de-subjectivization is not that others proceed in the same way; otherwise the categorical imperative would not mean more than the Golden Rule, i.e. the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated by them. Kant expressly dismisses this interpretation of the categorical imperative, for the latter would then be an obligation under certain conditions, a "hypothetical imperative." On the other hand, the examination of one's own maxims cannot set norms for others. Every person must rationally check his or her own maxims. The categorical imperative does not prescribe how others should act; rather, it delimits one's own action in relation to others. As a result, it helps me to distance me from my own maxims and encourages me to be careful with my own morality. Put in the

terms of the philosophy of orientation, the categorical imperative opens up the *transition from moral to ethical orientation*.

From this starting point, Kant conceptualizes the law and politics. The *law* regulates the ways in which we, visibly for everyone, socialize with others. The law refers to individual actions that can be observed by others in the 'outer' world and does usually not take into account an agent's intentions that cannot be observed. The law presupposes that all human beings of the age of consent are equally free to act morally, i.e. of good will. However, one cannot expect that all people in fact act in this way. Therefore, in order to protect human beings from each other, external coercion is necessary, so that one's own arbitrariness can coexist with the freedom of others according to a law that is valid for everyone.

Kant defines *politics* as "executive jurisprudence" and obliges it to commit itself to morality, knowing full well that commonwealth comes into existence through different kinds of violence. Kant sets the "moral politician" who puts his politics under the control of unconditional morality, against the "political moralist" who – in the sense of Machiavelli (sec. 8) – concocts a morality that fits to his purposes. Kant also treats *economy* in his theory of law, yet only at the sidelines. He does not go into Smith's concept of a free enterprise system, which does not build on the 'ought.'

On the one hand, in his *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant dissolves the *paradox of the unreality of reason* with the help of terminology taken from the *Critique of Pure Reason* (sec. 11); yet, on the other hand, he creates *new paradoxes*. Although the reality of reason is not perceptible to the senses, reason is supposed to manifest itself in its practical usage, which must be observable in a way. In order to dissolve the paradox, Kant employs a bodily metaphor: in the categorical imperative and its command ("Act like this!"), one hears the "voice" of reason. Kant understands this being coerced by an inner voice as a "fact" of its own kind, which cannot be turned down, even less than observable facts of nature that, in his eyes, are mere appearances. For the sake of morality, he introduces a new kind of fact.

This means that the assumption of a freedom of choice between good and evil is indispensable, despite its inconceivability. This freedom of choice is produced "by the deed" (even though it cannot be observed in the deed). For Kant, an "intelligible world" opens up here, which he with the highest pathos calls the "reign of freedom"; Fichte will fall into line with this (sec. 14). However, according to Kant's notion of the good will, the will is not to choose, but only to want the good motivating action.

In fact, one only speaks of the good will when moral action has produced unpleasant effects or has turned out to be useless or detrimental. Then this action is *retrospectively* justified with reference to the good will that provoked it. In this way, Kant views moral action from the very start from the perspective of justification. Thereby he removes all taken-for-grantedness, naturalness, and ease from moral action that might provoke others' sympathy (in Adam Smith's sense) and consent. The alternative of 'self-obligation versus sympathy,' though, confronts us with the question of the utility of moral action in general. This is Bentham's starting point.

JEREMY BENTHAM (1748-1832 AD), who grew up as a miracle child in a prosperous family, studied law, yet without ever having to pursue a profession, develops moral philosophy starting from the notion of usefulness – Kant's and Bentham's concepts of the moral and the political are classic alternatives in the history of philosophy. Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* of 1789 was supposed to serve a useful goal: to systematically outline a penal law for Great Britain that could be passed by Parliament and thus be of real benefit to the entire population. Thus, the moral philosophy with which he corroborated his penal law had to be immediately plausible; it is difficult to deny that everyone strives for happiness. That which Kant excluded from morality, is, according to Bentham, its end. If needed, the purpose of happiness would justify a moral reorientation à la Mandeville and Smith: even "if happiness were better promoted by what is called immorality, immorality would become a duty; virtue and vice would change places."

Happiness can simply be grasped as the preponderance of pleasure over pain. Not only human beings, but also animals want to avoid pain and find pleasure in the long run. Thus, Bentham, too, relies on sentiment extending from there the horizon of moral and legal philosophy in his way. At the same time, he focuses on one single principle, comparable to gravity in Newton's philosophy of nature. Utility is not only the measure of every individual's or government's successful action; in striving for one's own advantage, one also promotes others' happiness insofar as one's own happiness depends on them.

According to Bentham, one does neither need to interpolate a revaluation of evil to good on the free economic market nor assume a social contract. Bentham regards the individuals directly as "members" of the "fictitious body" of the community. Hence, in a simple totaling, the interest of the community is "the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it." In addition, in Bentham's view happi-

ness can be scaled like the prices on the market. In order to create the greatest happiness of the greatest number, he proposes a "hedonistic or felicific calculus" with the following variables or vectors: intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, propinquity or remoteness, fecundity (does happiness beget more happiness?), purity (does happiness not have negative consequences?), and extent (how many people enjoy happiness?). All people shall count equally. Thus, Bentham's principle is universal as well.

Finally, the conception of moral action in regard to happiness includes also an 'ought' for Bentham: that which is useful is "a right action" and ought to be done; this is, in Bentham's view, the only sense of what we 'ought' to do. The moral principle of happiness or utility cannot and needs not to be proven; instead, one can prove everything else from it. The principle of happiness or utility is not always followed deliberately; often it is concealed by prejudice. Still, it can only be combatted by being assumed nonetheless because any other principle would also have to be "good for" something. Finally, this principle does not need any safeguarding with the help of religious belief. Bentham openly confessed his atheism.

His principle of happiness or utility created a distance to certain morals and their compulsions. Bentham advocated liberalization at all fronts, also in questions of race and sexuality. He campaigned for democratization, for the state of law, and against slavery. He wanted to supplement the three by then classic state powers (legislative, executive, and judiciary) with a fourth and supreme power: the people or 'the constitutive'; however, he did not succeed with this political reform. Insofar as we are not really able to calculate the sum of happiness, since the happiness of one person is only to a limited extent comparable to the happiness of another, Bentham has created with his principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number a new generality in orienting oneself: his principle orients as a general benchmark instructing us to detect and delete inequality. Like Smith's generality of the market is it a morally orienting generality.

Of course, even the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number turns out to be ambiguous. According to it, minorities can easily be outvoted; Bentham allows even torture, if it benefits the whole. Insofar as every society needs a common morality, Bentham suggests a moral education of everyone through a system of sanctions including physical, religious, political, and public inconveniences. He argues against a criminal law based on guilt and pleads for a criminal law based

on deterrence. In the lack of idealistic guidelines, the freedom of the single human being consists only in safety against the others, which is granted by the police and by the law, and in protection against illegal measures of the government. Without the premise of self-obligation, a powerful governmental surveillance and control apparatus becomes necessary, which permanently monitors the behavior of human beings (even with the help of informers and investigators) in order to punish every wrongdoing with sanctions and correct it. Bentham was most interested in the penal system, for "the more strictly we are watched, the better we behave." Smith's principle of observation here turns out to be repressive rather than inspiring.

The philosophy of orientation gains new leeways and alternative techniques of distinction through alternative conceptions of orientation that emerged in the field of practical philosophy at the end of the 18th century. In the moral, political, and economic realms, the footholds for orientation are widely spread and ambiguous; that is why the need for clear and reliable footholds for one's action decisions increases. On the one hand, situation of actions require a high sensitivity of observation which, however, can be angled in different directions; on the other hand, action decisions are facilitated by principles that can be backed up by different kinds of evidence.

Smith counts on the sensitivity of observation, Rousseau on sensitivity and reason at once, while Kant grounds practical reason on the principle of the good will; Bentham puts all action decisions under the control of the principle of human search for happiness. Despite contrary distinctions, all of them still rely on a benevolent nature. Smith and Rousseau drive forth contrary moral reorientations in extended leeways of moral orientation: according to Smith, one's bad own interests promote the welfare of everyone in a free commercial society; according to Rousseau, human beings that are good by nature become evil in a commercial society that creates inequality; Kant and Bentham focus on contrary benchmarks of moral orientation: the good will of the individual or the happiness of all.

Smith upgrades observation to a second-order observation of observations. Thereby, he discovers a new generality in orientation, which interrelates uncertainties such that they become dynamic and productive. In morality, this is proper behavior, on the economic market it is pricing. In this way, Smith can

move from moral estimation to economic rating, tying together morality and the market. Rousseau supports the French Revolution, but also its terror, by seeking an unconditional certainty in a new civil society based on reason. Kant abstracts from the individual situation of actions in order to make conceivable a universal validity of morality, but can only morally appeal to politics. Bentham, by contrast, can give a concrete handle to the political legislative power in reducing the motivation for acting to the pursuit of happiness, but runs into a legally authorized and governmentally organized observation of the population.

The present moral, economic, and political orientation has to take into account all these alternative options.

13. Alternative Ways of Conceptualizing How One Can Orient Oneself: Mendelssohn, Kant, and Herder

The *notion of 'orienting oneself'* stems from geography and came to Germany through the so-called pantheism controversy in philosophy. The Jew MOSES MENDELSSOHN (1729-1786 AD), next to Kant one of the leading philosophers of German Enlightenment, tried to settle the conflict about 'faith versus reason' with the help of the notion of orientation. Disputatious Christians forced him into that conflict. Mendelssohn was born and reared in humble circumstances. He was very small in stature and in frail health. He worked as a home tutor, bookkeeper, Torah instructor, writer, and manager of a silk factory. He translated Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* into German and updated Locke's *Letters Concerning Toleration* for Judaism. He won a scientific prize competition to the disfavor of Kant, and with numerous contributions, he rendered great service to the recognition of Jews in society and philosophy in those days. Mendelssohn was regarded as the German-Jewish Socrates. His friend GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING (1729-1781 AD), the most prominent German poet of Enlightenment, had Mendelssohn in mind as the prototype of his protagonist Nathan the Wise. Nonetheless, Frederick II, King of Prussia, who was famous for his promotion of the Enlightenment and his tolerance, denied him admission to the Prussian Academy of Sciences.

In Mendelssohn's eyes, Judaism can be tolerant because it is not based on dogmas, but rather on a form of life whose laws it extracts from the Torah. Judaism ori-

ents itself by the Torah without claiming to ever be capable to understand it fully. The word 'Torah' means direction and guidance, i.e., orientation. According to Jewish tradition, the Torah is authored by God himself. Thus, the alternative of 'faith versus reason' does not arise at all in Judaism.

Yet, it is precisely this alternative on which the decided and influential Christian FRIEDRICH HEINRICH JACOBI (1743-1819 AD) insisted when he accused the deceased Lessing of following the philosophy of the Jew Spinoza (sec. 9) and hence, according to the common interpretation in Germany at that time, of contemptible atheism. Jacobi challenged Mendelssohn to acknowledge Christianity and confess its theological dogmas (several of Mendelssohn's children did this later on). Through this move, Jacobi pointedly questioned the whole of Mendelssohn's lifework. Under Jacobi's attack, Mendelssohn's friendship to Lessing and his service to Judaism and philosophy got tangled up. In this severe personal emergency situation, Mendelssohn was compelled to reorientation, and that which helped him out was the concept of 'orienting oneself.'

In regard to Spinozism, Mendelssohn distinguishes between sound human understanding and speculative reason, so that he can concede that Spinoza went too far in terms of speculative reason with his metaphysical constructions; yet, a moderate or refined "chastened pantheism" is not to be condemned. He shows that, like Lessing, one can orient oneself by Spinozism without committing oneself to it – and this happened in German Idealism (sec. 14).

However, Mendelssohn does not leave it there. Instead, he begins to understand reason itself in the sense of orienting oneself. Already in his treatise on the sentiments (*Über die Empfindungen*), which was a much discussed topic at the time, he gives in a pathbreaking manner thought to the steering of attention in the exploration of objects: put in contemporary terms, one has to select, evaluate, and associate footholds until the obtained overview produces the exciting "total impression" of a vibrant whole. According to Mendelssohn, thinking is only one of the abilities that is in play here, and all of this does not happen consciously, but only semi-consciously, somnambulistically, as it were.

Therefore, Mendelssohn explicates the notion of 'orienting oneself' in an allegorical dream of reason, a narration in which he translocates the image of "the parting of the ways" shaped by Prodicos (sec. 4) to the Swiss Alps. Thereby, the figures of "sound human understanding" and "speculative reason" appear as mountain guides.

They come into conflict with each other, so the wayfarers, who have no sufficient overview of the situation, are confronted with the question of orientation. Mendelssohn puts the answer to this question into the mouth of a third person, the figure of "prudent reason" that is equivalent with the "I" in its need to orient itself. He concludes that one can trust in prudent reason, which reflects upon both sides. One can hold on to it or one can trust it. Prudent reason does not come up with precepts; it only relates the signposts to each other in such a way that a passable road appears. As Mendelssohn has it, prudent reason "orients itself" by sound human understanding or common sense, and at the same time, it "corrects" common sense with the help of the deliberations and conclusions of speculative reason. The reasonableness of orientation lies in the prudent weighing of both sides. The "I" following this kind of reasonableness changes constantly; in Mendelssohn's opinion, it has not a firm apprehension and concept of itself; it is the *continuously renewing self-reference of orienting oneself.* Thus, what evolves out of the crisis in which the Christian disputant Jacobi cast the Jewish enlightener Mendelssohn, is *reason as a self-reference of orientation.*

When ailing Mendelssohn died at the beginning of the year 1786, KANT wanted to come to the rescue of the case and concern of this philosopher of Enlightenment whom he highly esteemed. He took up Mendelssohn's notion of 'orienting oneself,' but realigned it in terms of the presetting of his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Kant himself was already close to the orientation problem. In the Introduction to his lecture on logic that he gave regularly and that his disciple Jäsche later reconstructed from Kant's notes and his listeners' transcripts, Kant places all insights (mundane ones just as scientific and philosophical ones) in "*horizons*" that are not only "logically" determined according to "the interest of the intellect," but also "aesthetically," according to "taste in relation to the interest of feeling" as well as "practically," according to "utility in relation to the interest of the will." In using the metaphor of the horizon, he affiliates with a debate that was well-established since Leibniz (sec. 9). Kant orients himself toward ALEXANDER GOTTLIEB BAUMGARTEN (1714-1762 AD) and GEORGE FRIEDRICH MEIER (1718-1777 AD). Logic itself deals with unconditional laws; yet the introduction to logic is about recommendable rules or maxims that orient ordinary and scientific thinking, i.e. about a kind of preorientation. In this line, Kant suggests "pre-determining the absolute horizon of the whole human species (in regard to past and future times)" and also "defining the position that our

scholarship takes in the horizon of knowledge as a whole"; depending on how it is categorized and oriented, it becomes another character. This means that orienting decisions are taken, for instance to predefine cognition in the sense of strictly objective or unconditional knowledge, or moral action in the sense of the unconditional form of the categorical imperative. *The preceding orienting decision conditions the unconditional. However, according to Kant, this decision only is capable of conditioned certainty. Thus, the decision for unconditional certainty is taken within the terms of conditioned certainty*.

In his Introduction to *Logic,* Kant without further ado incorporates Mendelssohn's definition of 'orienting oneself.' It is stated approvingly (in Jäsche's rendition) that philosophers shall "*orient* themselves *in thinking,* or in the use of speculative reason through common sense [...] as a test to evaluate the veracity of *speculative reason* [...] in order to discover the mistakes of the *artificial* use of the intellect." Just like Mendelssohn, Kant emphasizes here the important role of sound human understanding: the "judgments" of others can give one a "hint" so that one can review one's own "procedure of judging" without having to give it up immediately in case that a "contradiction" occurs. Said in our language: everyday orientation and scholarly orientation are improved if other orientations are included in them.

Kant counters the scholastic concept of philosophy, according to which philosophers only turn to other philosophers and expose themselves to their criticism, with a "worldly concept" of philosophy, according to which it delivers itself up to a broader public and thus also to sound human understanding. For Kant, this worldly concept of philosophy is crucial. For it is "essential to check an insight in the face of human beings whose intellect does not cling to any school." Those who can make themselves understood to these publicly demonstrates "the complete insight in a certain matter." Kant endorses even the "preliminary judgment" with which the decision about the truth of a judgment is postponed when it is not (yet) clear where the truth is to be found. Common sense most often judges its matters in this way, unless it is fooled by prejudices that it deems definitive judgments. According to Kant, the preliminary judgment that is typical of orientation can guide the intellect "in all meditation and investigation" and show means and ways to make progress; moreover, it can "sense" goals that can be achieved. Kant proposes something like an *art of orienting oneself,* without designating it such: "one could even provide rules about how to judge provisionally about an object."

Yet, for Kant this does not mean that philosophers shall orient themselves by common sense. In his treatise on the pantheism controversy of 1786, which is entitled *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?* (*What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?*), Kant not only counters Jacobi, whom he considers a religious enthusiast or fanatic, but he also corrects Mendelssohn's understanding of what it means to orient oneself. Kant does so through his own critique of reason – with the result that he leads his critique beyond. In the discussion of Spinoza, he restrains himself after some people had ascribed Spinozism to him, too.

Kant begins his treatise with the remark that notions like 'to orient oneself' are good examples of how "*pictorial* representations (*bildliche* Vorstellungen)" make concepts suitable for usage and how "many a useful maxim" can be won from them "even in abstract thinking." In contrast, invoking common sense, in which all are supposed to coincide, is always only a final "emergency relief," as Kant noted a couple of years before in the Preface to his *Prolegomena* introducing into his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Where it is about the possibilities of philosophy itself, "the stalest chatterer can take it on with the most thorough head." Philosophy must insist on its competence. All the more is it Kant's aim to designate reason itself as authority of its orientation, whereas Mendelssohn has not drawn a sharp line between common sense and speculative reason. Therefore, in Kant's view, Mendelssohn fostered "the complete dethronement of reason" by Jacobi.

Kant defines the notion of orientation starting from its original geographic meaning: the four cardinal directions, or the four points of the compass, are determined by the sunrise (*sol oriens*). But already in his earlier treatise on the differentiation between different regions in space, *On the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Regions in Space* (*Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume*, 1768), Kant came across the problem of right-left-distinction. The latter may appear self-evident, but there is neither a sensory nor a logic criterion for this distinction: one can neither perceive nor define right and left without entering into a circular argument. Therefore, the difference between right and left confuses Kant's basic determination of cognition as a synthesis of sensory perception and logical thinking. As Kant stated elsewhere, the distinction of right and left is "given without being understood" (*dari, non intelligi*). One can only learn to distinguish between right and left by practicing this distinction.

Being caught in this quandary, Kant tries to find a way out in his 1786 treatise on orienting oneself: he allocates the distinction between the four cardinal directions (and with it the right-left-distinction) to "feeling." Yet, one does not feel anything in employing this distinction; rather, this distinction is also a "subjective principle" filling in where the "objective principles of reason" are not sufficient. *To orient oneself is a precondition in the usage of reason*.

Reason, argues Kant, realizes this "shortcoming," which in turn induces a feeling, namely the "feeling of need." This is the *need to orient oneself.* Thereby, reason loses its supposed autonomy and turns into a *needy reason*. Here, reason has no longer "free insight." Instead, the right of subjective need wrings from it a "precondition": a "rational faith based on reason" (*Vernunftglauben*) rather than "rational insight" (*Vernunfteinsicht*).

The term *Vernunftglaube* (literally: "reason-faith") is obviously paradoxical: it combines two alternative concepts, between which Jacobi let Mendelssohn choose, in one single term. This term is inherently contradictory; with this paradoxical term, Kant replaces the term of 'orienting oneself' that helped Mendelssohn to get by; in doing so, he erases the leeway which Mendelssohn wanted to gain through the term. Kant proceeds systematically: he abstracts gradually from geographic orientation in which right-left-distinction is crucial, moves on to so-called "mathematical" orientation in which positional relationships independent of the right-left-distinction prevail, and finally reaches "logical" orientation in which all connections with the spatial are transcended. In this way, Kant arrives in the realm of the supernatural, which was the "battle ground" of former metaphysics and which, in Kant's practical philosophy, becomes "the reign of freedom" (sec. 12). Here, where orientation has neither footholds nor leeways for consideration, reason's "right" to "orient itself through its own need" (or through the *Vernunftglaube*) gets a chance. The meaning of orientation merges with the practical certainty of reason and its obligation to moral action. Kant does not use the notion of 'orienting oneself' in the remaining chapters of this treatise and in his later work. Reason shall triumph, albeit paradoxically.

The pure *Vernunftglaube* is understood as faith in a God who rewards human efforts to become worthy of happiness by means of moral action, at least in a transcendent immortal life. *Vernunftglaube* is not a form of knowledge, but rather faith in an "ideal of pure reason" whose conceivability Kant has clarified in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (sec. 11) and whose practical significance he has defined in his *Critique*

of Practical Reason (sec. 12): the ideal of a "highest good" in which *Glückwürdigkeit,* one's being worthy of happiness, and *Glückseligkeit*, one's factual happiness, unite. Yet, this ideal serves as a mere instrument for "orienting oneself in thinking," precisely in the context of moral thinking and acting, as a kind of "guidepost or compass." It helps us to abandon the thought of any advantage or reward for moral action, but it is not mandatory. At the end of his treatise on orienting oneself, Kant mainly campaigns for a moral concept of God in order to forestall religious enthusiasm or fanaticism. With this in mind, he argues that reason must remain autonomous: this is possible if reason orients itself through itself alone whenever it feels a need for orientation.

JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER (1744-1803 AD), son of a pious teacher and a student of Kant's in Königsberg, reacted polemically to Kant's treatise. Herder soon became acquainted with the most brilliant minds of his day; he held high offices and posts in ecclesiastical and cultural authorities, and became one of the strongest stimulators of his day in the fields of linguistic and literary studies, philosophy of history and of culture. As he writes in *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (1774), he wants to betake himself to the open seas without abandoning the poles around which everything revolves: truth, consciousness of benevolence, and happiness of humankind (*Wahrheit*, *Bewusstsein* des *Wohlwollens*, *Glückseligkeit der Menschheit*); yet, hovering at sea on massive waves, in ghost light and fog light that might be worse than the blackest night, he wants to "diligently take a look at these stars that point the way and give *directions, safety,* and *calm*," and then steer the ship's course "with *devotion* and *industriousness.*" In short: Herder wants to orient himself at an endless and dangerous open sea.

In fact, he leads philosophy back to the field in which the problems of orientation are most pressing, and he deliberately seeks situations of disorientation – though starting from secure certainties of orientation. On this way, he develops a new understanding of humanity whose point of departure is the existing variety of cultures and nations. Thereby, Herder more and more gives up on the universalism of Enlightenment thinking. From this point of view, in his late work *Understanding and Experience: A Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason* (1799), he item by item settles a score with Kant's transcendental philosophy, more embittered than prudent, and thus not always with convincing arguments.

There he also inserts a note concerning Kant's treatise on orientation. Herder initially reminds his readers of the originally geographic sense of the notion of 'orienting oneself' – a sense from which Kant aimed to absolve the term: "to orient oneself means to find the four cardinal directions in space (*Weltgegenden*) for orienting maps, sails, etc." Then Herder marks a mistake in Kant where there is none: he argues that the four cardinal directions are present even when nobody pays attention to them, and that one can neither determine nor change them through being positioned to the right or the left; for the changeable horizon of a single person does – according to Herder – not change the "firm horizon of the world." Herder is right in presupposing that there is a world in which we must orient ourselves; yet, the distinctions between east and west or between right and left obviously are dependent on the standpoint or position that one takes up in the world. The notion of the 'standpoint' was in general use at least since Spinoza and Leibniz; Kant uses it often. In this respect, Herder falls short of insights already gained.

Herder continues his note on Kant as follows: "Already the notion that I *can* orient myself in thinking implies that I *must* orient myself, that is, that there are *firm points* inside me and outside of myself that I have to bring into accord." This is right insofar as the one who has to orient him- or herself coordinates points of reference, which attract attention in his situation, putting them together to neatly arranged patterns that make sense for him or her. Still, these are not firm points, but rather preliminary footholds that can prove tenable or not. There are no unconditioned points or things in our human orientation. Herder himself admits this when identifying orienting oneself with "finding out where one is in the world and how it relates to us and how we relate to the world."

Yet, then again he only looks at the other side detaching the self-reference of orientation from its reference to the world: "If I only orient myself *with myself*, this means that I throw all parts of the world into me and define them in accord with my idiosyncratic egoism, and in this way, I can be very disoriented in the true world." For sure, the disconnection of orientation from the world and its footholds results in disorientation. However, it is precisely the meaning of orienting oneself that one does *not* disconnect oneself from the world and its changes, but rather remains constantly attentive to them. Herder, by contrast, draws an absurd conclusion, which is coherent only for himself: "Were I to orient the world by myself, I would disorient the world as I revolve around myself, or as I feel dizzy. The egoism orienting worlds

cannot end up otherwise than in the form of a *philosophy of vertigo*; here one is at one's wit's end with all certainty." Herder plays with the equivocalness of the German word *Schwindel*, which stands for 'vertigo' and for 'fraud,' in order to insinuate that Kant attempted to defraud. Kant did not go into that any more.

Mendelssohn, Kant, and Herder were not yet ready to pose the problem of 'orienting oneself' in its whole breadth and depth. Kant's distortion of Mendelssohn's philosophical concept of 'orienting oneself' and Herder's polemics against Kant's own use of this concept have not been able to stop the 'career' of this concept in the history of philosophy, though; on the contrary, its career has been accelerated through their dispute.

> *The philosophy of orientation owes its basic notion of 'orienting oneself' to a controversy about 'faith versus reason.' The most well-known thinkers in Germany at the end of the 18th century were involved in this controversy: the combative Christian Jacobi attacked the considerate Jew Mendelssohn because of his deceased friend Lessing's understanding of Spinoza, which was suspected of atheism. Mendelssohn, the prototype of Lessing's Nathan the Wise, sought to counterbalance the situation of combat with the help of the old geographic metaphor of the crossroads, an image of pausing in order to orient oneself. From this, Kant extracted the notion of an unconditional Vernunftglaube, through which reason orients itself in the realm of the extrasensory or supernatural.*
>
> *Herder, who with his philosophy of language, history, and culture went beyond the scope of a philosophy shaped by rationality, criticized Kant and reclaimed the notion of 'orienting oneself' for the sensory world. Due to the fact that the notion of 'orienting oneself' was at the center of a historical crisis of orientation that was aggravated by personal polemics, this notion became so prominent that it soon won through in philosophy, the sciences, and everyday life and gained acceptance in the form of the noun 'orientation.' The concept of orientation has then for a long time been taken for granted, which is the reason why no one considered elucidating it even more.*

14. Alternative Surveys of Knowledge: The Encyclopedias by d'Alembert & Diderot and by Hegel

What is at stake in orienting oneself is not only to find one's way in a certain situation, but also to obtain a long-term orientation – through *knowledge*. Philosophers in France in the second half of the 18th century wanted to provide a *survey of all available knowledge*, also in order to prepare democracy and the greatest happiness of the greatest number. A French group of publishers gave the task of translating and extending the English two-volume *Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* by EPHRAIM CHAMBERS (1680-1740 AD) to DENIS DIDEROT (1713-1784 AD) and JEAN LE ROND D'ALEMBERT (1717-1783 AD). In the course of three decades, between 1751 and 1780, these two volumes grew into 17 volumes of texts, 11 volumes of plates, 5 supplementary volumes, and 2 volumes containing indices. All of these volumes constitute the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres,* in English: *Encyclopedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts.* This encyclopedia, which was worked out in a collaboration between the brightest minds of French Enlightenment, is rated as the greatest achievement of French Enlightenment. In Germany, GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770-1831 AD) alone created an encyclopedia in the form of a philosophical "system" that develops and justifies itself on its own accord, the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse.* This *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline* has set the highest standard in philosophically ordering and justifying knowledge and making it surveyable.

Probably it was the humanist and librarian at the French royal court, GUILLAUME BUDÉ (1468-1540 AD), who introduced the term 'encyclopedia.' This term combines the Greek words *enkyklios* (enclosing in a circle) and *paideía* (education); just as the German word *Bildung,* it comprises both the process and the object of education. The French enlighteners of the 18th century, who called themselves plainly *les philosophes* (i.e. the philosophers) and their own times *siècle philosophe* (i.e. a philosophical age), integrated knowledge from the sciences and the arts and crafts. The editors of this encyclopedia went to the workshops of the workers in order to receive precise descriptions of their crafts, tools, and machines in the proper terminology. According to Diderot, until then most workers just followed their instinct,

but did not understand their machines; they work spontaneously and intuitively, attending to the immediate situation. The *Encyclopédie* also describes routines, which guide ordinary, artisanal, and technical works. Being described by concepts, they can be compared with other works and thus be refined. The comprehensive view of all available knowledge is supposed to provide orientation in the sense of creating new possibilities of action.

The French *Encyclopédie* is the result of a collaboration of French authors (*société de gens de lettres*), including experts from different fields and the leading philosophers of the day, among them as diverse thinkers as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and d'Holbach. Many of them met regularly in cafés, salons, theaters, editorial offices, and Freemasons' lodges; some of them became friends, and all of them tried to influence the media of their times: newspapers, stages, book markets. Every one of them was an independent thinker, yet they oriented themselves toward each other. As a consequence, the French *Encyclopédie* did not come into being on the basis of knowledge that equally obligated everyone, but rather in the mode of *mutual orientation*.

That which connected the group of authors was first and foremost an antagonism against the Catholic Church insofar as it tried to control the public opinion by imposing censorship. Voltaire called the group *franc-penseurs*, the free thinkers. They constituted something like an intellectual scene that was in touch with the highest social circles. Despite impending publication bans and incarceration, all authors enjoyed the benevolence of the French chief censor and of absolute monarchs like Frederick II. of Prussia and Catherine II. of Russia.

Hence, the *Encyclopédie* springs from *personal orientations* without any institutional restrictions. The responsibility for it was not placed in a superordinate institution like an academy, a university, or a governmental department, but rather in the editors' hands: later, when d'Alembert vacated his position because of constant attacks on the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot took the task alone. Against the will of the editors, only the publishers intervened sometimes in order to prevent publication bans.

The editors complemented each other beautifully, although they were very different personalities. D'Alembert, illegitimate son of a cardinal and a marquise, an outstanding mathematician and physicist, authored articles mostly from these fields. He also authored the *Preliminary Discourse of the Encyclopedia* (*Discours Préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie*), where he in a calm and straightforward manner explicates

the *common philosophical orientation* of the whole group of authors. He was highly recognized and became general secretary of the *Académie française* for life. Diderot, instead, similar to Rousseau, with whom he was friends, led a dissipated life that lacked any clear direction. To the dislike of his father, a master knife maker, he never lived in a stable position, was temporarily imprisoned by the censors, followed various interests and gained numerous contacts and friendships, which helped him to recruit the authors for the *Encyclopédie*. He had plenty of love affairs, from which his frank literary production benefited.

Diderot's thought was meandering, experimental, self-ironic, and he loved paradoxes; he loathed streamlined rational systems; he was vigilant against absolute claims, appreciated dissidents, and had the strength to leave things undecided. However, due to his broad sphere of interest, he gained the reputation of being able to overlook the knowledge of his day and make it useful for the general public. In the *Encyclopédie,* he found the task of his life and the hold for his life. In this context, he worked concentrated and according to schedule.

He facilitated the other authors' interests and orientations in deliberately giving them leeway for shaping the content and style of their articles on their own. Even hitherto unknown research that the authors of the *Encyclopédie* had conducted for other purposes, was allowed to appear. The editors demanded nothing but exactness, clarity, brevity, and originality of everyone. The latter requirement was due to the fact that *The Comprehensive Universal Lexicon of All Sciences and Arts* (*Das Grosse vollständige Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschafften und Künste*), published in 1732-1754 by the German bookseller and publisher JOHANN HEINRICH ZEDLER (1706-1751 AD), repeatedly was accused of plagiarism. However, the *Encyclopédie* could not avoid borrowing and adopting some articles from other sources, for instance the one about *orienter, s'orienter*.

A large-scale endeavor like the *Encyclopédie* runs into the paradox that the intended survey of all up-to-date knowledge gets lost again during the long time of preparation. Diderot stated that "it has become nearly as difficult to find one's way in a library as in the universe." For this reason, a second-order survey became necessary: a *survey of the survey*, and with it a *new self-referential orientatio*n. The *Encyclopédie* creates it in a fivefold way:

(1.) Firstly, through the *alphabetical order* of the articles. For dictionaries, it dates back to Antiquity. Yet, the alphabetical order is not mandatory, for a dictionary

could also be structured according to word families or to factual coherencies. When it comes to encyclopedias, structuring them according to factual coherencies would be more obvious; here, the alphabetization means randomization. The objective coherencies that really matter are dissolved and, at their place, an *artificial, but easily achievable overview* is established; herein the *Encyclopédie* follows one of the rules of Descartes' method (sec. 9). The arbitrary alphabetical order is easy to learn and fulfills the *basic need for orientation*: to quickly find information for a certain purpose in a certain situation. The decision for the alphabetical order is a *decision on the way of orientation*: *for fast finding of knowledge and against factual coherences.*

This decision is momentous, for the alphabetical order enforces the fragmentation of knowledge in 'articles' (literally: small limbs or links) in which information is condensed and abbreviated by a headword or catchword that shall capture or channel attention. Diderot discusses in detail how the factual interrelationships are broken down in this way into different articles. At the same time, the length of the articles must be limited such that they can be read in limited time because the human capacities for orientation can only grasp a limited number of information in a limited timeframe. The overview must not get lost in the individual articles. In addition, the length of the articles must correspond to the importance of the subject matter, which becomes difficult if their authors have a huge leeway, as every one of them considers his or her knowledge to be the most important. Diderot reflects this in detail, too. As there is no general law of how to produce an encyclopedia, he thinks that specific virtues are demanded of the editor: power of judgment (*jugement*), richness of ideas (*esprit*), and the penetration of the material (*pénétration*), that is, *specific capacities for orientation*. Diderot also demands aesthetics concerning the articles: monotony and boredom should be avoided as far as possible.

(2.) As descriptions and definitions hardly suffice in regard to handicraft gadgets, and since they even might confuse the readers, the *Encyclopédie* supplements many articles with *images and illustrations* that shall help the readers to construct and operate the appliances in question. As the illustrations must be labeled, the problem of the *right number of orienting guideposts and road maps* arises. For Diderot, it is enough to have guideposts at places where travelers are in danger of losing their way: "We did not want to look like a man who would plant guideposts at every step on a road, for fear that travelers would deviate from it: it is enough that there are some guideposts at the places where travelers are at risk of getting lost." If

there are too many guideposts, hints, and footholds for orientation, one loses track of them.

(3.) However, in a schematic geneaology (*arbre généalogique*), the editors of the *Encyclopédie* try to provide an overview of the factual coherence and interrelation of the articles. D'Alembert & Diderot here divide the understanding (*entendement*) into memory (*mémoire*), reason (*raison*) and imagination (*imagination*); to memory, they ascribe the history of the crafts developing through tradition, to reason the sciences and to imagination the arts. After every keyword, they mark its place in the branches of knowledge. Yet, they freely confess that other dispositions and systems would also be possible and meaningful. A genealogy as such cannot count as knowledge, but only as a *provisional orientation about possible factual coherences* in the sphere of the knowable.

(4.) All the more significant becomes the internal concatenation (*enchaînement*) of the articles with the help of *references* (*renvoie*). As Diderot has it, concatenation transforms the way of thinking (*la façon commune de penser*): "In scientific treatises, the concatenation of ideas or phenomena governs the methodological procedure; to the extent that one makes headway, the theme develops, generalizes or diversifies depending on the method one prefers." In order to discover such concatenations, one also needs specific capacities of orientation like, for instance, power of combination (*esprit de combinaison*), a sure feeling (*instinct*) if not genius (*génie*), and in all of this, one needs honesty (*honnêteté*) and courage (*courage*). This is the case because the references grant ample leeways and multiple options of interpretation: they may aim at things or words, at nearby or distant things, or at different aspects of a thing.

Over time a widespread system of references emerges. Diderot hoped that a proper use of signs would eventually enable concatenations just as precise and transitions just as swift as in mathematics. *Plausibility* (*la force de la démonstration*) *increases in accordance with the densification of relations* (*rapports, liaisons*); ultimately, the encyclopedic order (*l'ordre encyclopédique*) lies in the efficiency of its references, which also shows gaps to be filled. Whenever new articles come in addition, the editor must check anew the 'parcours' of references he established and make sure that they do not at any place grasp at nothing. In this way, the encyclopedic order can be improved – until it becomes unsurveyable.

(5.) Diderot dedicates a special article on the *Encyclopédie* in the *Encyclopédie,* thereby providing an overview *about* the overview *within* the overview, corresponding to how orientation *about* a situation takes place *in* the very situation in question. Diderot's article contains not so much a historical and systematic account of 'the encyclopedia' as a statement of accounts from the work at the present encyclopedic project. Diderot here provides a *philosophy of orientation* in a nutshell. Already in his *Prospectus,* he describes the orientation that the *Encyclopédie* is supposed to give as "a literary journey around the world [...] without getting lost." Expressed in our language, one has to stick to mere clues that appear everywhere, under the most diverse conditions: "if there are any footholds on this sea of objects that surrounds us, footholds like rocks that seem to pierce the surface and tower above other rocks, this is only due to particular systems, to vague conventions, and to certain events that are outside the physical understanding of beings and to the true achievements of philosophy."

In his article on the *Encyclopédie* in the *Encyclopédie*, he emphasizes this once again and adds that "the generic encyclopedic order is, as it were, a map of the world […], the detailed description of all topics, the well thought out universal topography of all that which we know in the intelligible and the visible world; and the references serve as routes between these two worlds, whereby the visible can be regarded as the old world and the intelligible as the new world."

At the same time, one needs ideas regarding the goals of one's research, i.e. ideas of "first and general reasons" or, in short: a "metaphysics of things," which can give direction to one while one is groping in the dark, departing from accidental beginnings. In his third critique, the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant called them "regulative ideas"; we call them vanishing points of orientation. Yet, these "metaphysics" may be shaped differently: "The writer, the scholar, and the artist lead the way in the darkness; when they make progress, this is due to fortuity; they reach the goal like a traveler who has gone astray and then goes the right way without knowing that he does so." Due to the spirit of Enlightenment, on one's way to the goal one must not just follow authorities, but also keep in sight the reasons for why one progresses, and one must remember one's doubts – one has to distinguish between certainty and uncertainty. The *Encyclopédie* as a whole is organized as an *event of orientation*.

The three stellar 'German idealists,' JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE (1762-1814 AD), FRIEDRICH WILHELM JOSEPH SCHELLING (1775-1854 AD), and GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH

HEGEL (1770-1831 AD), do not want to leave it at philosophy collecting, testing, and ordering knowledge about the world. They want to secure an *unconditional and true knowledge* that from the very start includes knowledge about God. Thereby, they draw on the *a priori* determinations that Kant, in his self-referential critique of reason, has worked out as necessary conditions for objective knowledge and moral action. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel bring these determinations together to a "doctrine" or "system" of "philosophical science" that has its own truth. Since Kant has excluded the recognizability of things as they are in themselves, and thereby also truth in the traditional sense, Hegel states in his *Encyclopedia* that a "state of despair", that is: a kind of philosophical disorientation, has entered, which needs to be removed. That this is possible through *reason's self-reference* is the key point of the German idealists.

For FICHTE, who originated from poor circumstances and yet became the rector of the newly founded Berlin reform university, reason's self-reference is the gate to that "reign of freedom" that was a matter of insight for Rousseau and a matter of the 'ought' for Kant (sec. 12). Already for Descartes (sec. 9), the self-reference of the "I think" consists in thinking being performed; for Fichte, it is a matter of action, of the deed or fact-act (*Tathandlung*): it is not a pre-given object of knowledge, but rather knowledge that the "I think" itself produces, and thus an unconditional knowledge that cannot be wrong. Fichte argues that the whole theory of science or epistemology (*Wissenschaftslehre*) must build upon this knowledge. It needs no attention to the empirical world and the individuality of the "I." Fichte comprehends the "I" a mere self-distinction from the "non-I." If one applies this distinction to the distinction between "I" and "non-I" itself and so on, more and more knowledge comes into being. In this way, Fichte prepared a purely constructive *theory of* distinction. The fact that the constructively progressive fact-act of distinction creates its own realm may have encouraged Fichte to always appear courageous and combative, for instance to resolutely raise his voice for the French Revolution and later to fight just as resolutely against Napoleon's rule over Europe.

SCHELLING, already as a child conspicuously talented, was reared in an esteemed Swabian family of pastors; in the Tübinger Stift, he studied Protestant Theology together with Hölderlin and Hegel, and through Goethe's intercession, he was appointed professor of philosophy in Jena already as a 23-year-old. In his long life, Schelling passed through a varied and influential academic career. He was a tutor of

Bavarian princes and finally became the successor of Fichte's successor in Berlin, namely Hegel. Following Spinoza (sec. 9), he urged to keep nature in mind in the distinctions of the self-referential "I" in order to make nature conceivable in the spirit and the spirit in nature. For the same reason, he underlined the *unity* or *identity* that is either presupposed or brought about by distinctions. As not all things in nature can be discerned consciously, Schelling probed into a philosophical conception of *the unconscious.* Therein he converges with the German romantics.

With his most highly developed technique of distinction, his "dialectic" (sec. 15), HEGEL created the leading *model of a self-contained system of philosophical knowledge*. In this system, he was able to bring all philosophical fields that were discussed in his day as well as all important historical and contemporary philosophical positions into a coherent nexus, which remained convincing for decades to come. He expounded this nexus in his *Enzyklopädie,* the philosophical alternative to the *Encyclopédie* of the French enlighteners whose point of view Hegel also integrated.

Hegel's academic career was slower than Schelling's. Grown up in a Swabian family of civil servants and having studied theology in Tübingen, he worked as a home tutor; then he moved to Jena because of Schelling's intercession and collaborated closely with him. In Napoleon invading Jena, he saw the new spirit of the time. He became the managing editor of a newspaper in Bamberg, the rector of an academic high school in Nuremberg, and finally a professor of philosophy, first in Heidelberg, then in Berlin. Like Fichte and Schelling, Hegel was married and had several children.

In 1801, Hegel started his publications with a comparison of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems. He wrote that he felt the "speculative need" to gain a new unity out of difference. To this end, he introduces the concept of comprehension (*Begreifen*), understood as cognizing cognition or *self-referential knowing*. In this shape, the process of cognition can have its own *unconditional truth*. As in Parmenides (sec. 2), thinking and being turn out to be the same. In positioning oneself wholly on the side of "speculative thought" and the mediation of concepts that are independent of empirical evidence, Hegel from the outset excludes Mendelssohn's and Kant's question of how to orient oneself (sec. 13). In Hegel's view, speculation can correct common sense, but common sense cannot contribute anything to speculative thought. *In the reign of freedom and truth, there must not be any leeway or indetermination that would require any kind of orientation.*

Hegel does not want to leave it at Kant's pure and paradoxical *Vernunftglauben* either. Rather, he willfully continues to use *paradoxes* or, as Kant calls them, antinomies, which he turns into *a principle of his technique of distinction*. He leaves behind the mere abstraction, i.e. the mere omission of distinctions, for the sake of ever more general and ever more hollow concepts through which the concept of being becomes the emptiest concept; abstract "being" can be stated of everything, even of "nothing." Spinoza sublated the oppositions between cause and effect, God and nature, part and whole by merging them into the one divine substance that contains all determinations in itself; in lieu of this substance, Kant placed the transcendental subject producing all conceptual determinations on its own, even though inspired by sensory perception; Hegel now sublates the distinction between substance and subject. He uses the concept of "system" in order to make conceivable the unity of Spinoza's divine substance and Kant's transcendental subject as a unity that produces itself. One can neither imagine nor think this unity abstractly; one must go the dialectical way of comprehending it. And in order to do so, one needs instructions, one needs to be oriented by Hegel – who, however, does everything to make this process look differently, namely in such a way that the process of comprehending pushes *itself* forward. *The orientation that seems to become superfluous in the context of philosophical knowledge is needed again on the way to this knowledge*.

In the first elaboration of his system, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel leads the individual out of its immediate situation and guides it to "absolute knowing." The individual departs from its "spiritless" and "uneducated point of view" where its consciousness is nothing but "sense-certainty" taking everything it perceives to be the real and true; under Hegel's guidance, consciousness becomes aware of the fact that it is "self-conscious spirit." Seeking for more certainty, consciousness experiences that new footholds turn out to be untenable, or that only the experience of these disappointments is certain. The latter continues until all disappointments are dealt with in the process of comprehension. In the end, everything is clear; one is familiar with one's certainties; one is able to sovereignly decide which certainty is appropriate in which situation; and this implies that one can orient oneself masterfully among various certainties. *In the sovereign orientation of "absolute knowing," the need for orientation disappears again*. *Hegel outlines a dialectical way that leads to sovereign orientation through disorientation and reorientation.*

Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* was first drafted for his pupils at the Nuremberg high school. In Heidelberg and Berlin, he worked it out for his students "for the use in his lectures" and reworked it several times before his death. The title *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* was already common in Germany. A *Grundriss* is an outline that is to provide an overview: Hegel wanted to give an *overview of the systematic order of philosophical concepts*. Being its single author, he tried to show that he did not play any role as a person.

Hegel gives an overview already through his table of contents, which he calls an "indication of contents" (*Inhalts-Anzeige*). The materials are not registered in retrospect as in usual tables of contents; Hegel neither leaves it at an apparently natural genealogical tree of knowledge. Instead, his encyclopedia demonstrates the *self-differentiation of the unity of philosophical knowledge,* which is a succession of philosophical concepts that develops itself step by step at up to five levels of differentiation. All levels are divided into three parts, which is due to the dialectic (sec. 15). The supreme and most overseeable division is that which consists of the following three parts: *The Science of Logic, The Philosophy of Nature,* and *The Philosophy of Spirit.* At the second level, *The Science of Logic* divides into the "doctrines" of being, of essence, and of the concept itself; *The Philosophy of Nature* into mechanics, physics, and organics; and *The Philosophy of Spirit* into subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. At the third level, the section on "The absolute spirit" comprises art, religion, and philosophy. Hence, the way of comprehension leads to philosophy itself. It is philosophy's achievement to comprehend the entire systematic coherence of the concepts through which we comprehend the world. The system closes by leading back to its beginning, and philosophy turns out to be the leading science.

The division of the *Enzyklopädie* into the three main parts means that philosophical thinking first of all comprehends itself in *The Science of Logic,* though not in a formal logic that Kant takes as a basis for his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hegel instead develops a logic that at the same time is metaphysics; for Aristotelian logic can only be understood in its close connection with Aristotelian metaphysics. Then the problem of the transition from *The Science of Logic* to *The Philosophy of Nature* arises, which is not immediately plausible and thus controversial: once one has comprehended (in Hegel's sense) that being, as Parmenides thought it (sec. 2), can only be being-as-thought, the difference between being and thinking is sublated. Then they become a unity having the same structure as intuition, namely immediate givenness.

Hegel calls this unity the "absolute idea," literally an intuition or representation of thinking, which is absolved from the efforts of thinking. As such, it appears as "nature."

The *Philosophy of Spirit* can then build on *The Philosophy of Nature*: the Hegelian "Organik" leads to the "animal organism," which in turn leads to the "reproductive process" (*Gattungsprozess*). The "subjective spirit" begins with the "doctrine" (*Lehre*) about the natural human being, i.e. with "anthropology." Herefrom, the "spirituality" (*Geistigkeit*) of the person emerges, thereafter the spirituality of social structures, i.e. the law, morality, and the state. The "absolute spirit" embraces the totality of all structures that transcend sociality, initially in works of art, then in religious ideas, and finally in the concepts of philosophy. In this way, the concepts become more abstract and form a hierarchy of sub- and superordinations on the one hand; but on the other hand, they grasp being in ever more nuanced and complex ways. *Now philosophical thinking does not only orient itself masterfully about its certainties, but also in the realm of being itself, which consists of its being-thought.*

The sections in Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* are numbered paragraphs, which contain a sequence of consequently successive steps of thought (altogether 577). Like the articles of the *Encyclopédie*, the paragraphs can be read and thought trough independently of each other; for instance, you can learn what is space and time or spirit, morality, and civil society. But the paragraphs obviously belong to the systematic totality in whose context alone they can be really understood. This context dispenses with a system of references and with metaphysical vanishing points like the ones in the *Encyclopédie*. Still, occasional references can also be found in Hegel's *Enzyklopädie*.

Hegel glosses the paragraphs with *Anmerkungen,* i.e. with notes that are typographically distinguished from the §§; after his death, there were added extensive *Zusätze* or additions, carried together from his students' lecture notes. The annotations and the additions do both often help us understand the purely conceptual connections in the §§; they can be short or long, and they give us hints pointing into completely different directions. In most cases, the notes and additions are factual remarks, often on current or previous scientific or philosophical discussions; now and then, misunderstandings are warded off. In this way, the system becomes cross-linked with its non-systematic circumstances. This happens in various ways, without systematic stringency. On the whole, the annotations multiply the coverage of the

Enzyklopädie – and threaten to, again, make it confusing. However, one is able to concentrate on the paragraphs themselves due to the clear separation between them and their annotations. Thus, crossing the borders of the system, the *Enzyklopädie* creates *a graded practice of orientation*. It integrates the scholastic and the worldly concept of philosophy point by point, while Kant assigned them to different writings (sec. 13).

Nonetheless, one must somehow enter into the philosophical system. That is, one must find the way from the individual and empirical-scientific standpoint to the standpoint of philosophical knowledge. Hegel offers several approaches from different standpoints (*Standpunkte*). The first is the aforementioned approach from the "uneducated standpoint" of "sense-certainty" which is explained in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807. On the "educated standpoint" of "absolute knowing" or of *The Science of Logic*, which Hegel at first published separately in 1812-1816 in two volumes, one proceeds from the insight that subject and object do not differ in true knowledge to the concrete philosophy of nature and of spirit in the *Enzyklopädie.*

Yet, the *Enzyklopädie*, the completed system, has its own Introduction. Here Hegel starts from the ideas of religion and everyday experience and the empirical sciences. For him, they "incite" philosophical thinking altogether and convert the accidental to necessity. Hegel explains this as follows: philosophy relates to experience like eating to food: the former is there thanks to the latter, but it proves ungrateful insofar as food is consumed by eating. In current terms: the environment constantly irritates the autonomous system, and the system is motivated to integrate the environment according to its own concepts.

As Hegel writes in his Introduction to the *Enzyklopädie,* every philosophy is due to earlier philosophies, that is, to the history of philosophy. Hegel's philosophy incorporates history in such a way that it recognizes the steps in history as steps in his own systematic development; history turns out to be a systematic progress leading to most recent philosophy. Hence, Hegel has also portrayed his system as a history of philosophy.

As a result, one can approach the system from one's own individual standpoint, from the standpoint of religion, from the standpoint of the empirical sciences, from the standpoint of the absolute knowledge of logic, and from the standpoints of historical philosophies. However, one does only approach the system if one has the speculative need for philosophical, unconditional, and true knowledge. Conversely,

the system is not dependent on all these standpoints and approaches. Hegel shows this by integrating them in his *Enzyklopädie* itself; the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* the *Science of Logic,* and the *History of Philosophy* become, in revised versions, parts of the *Enzyklopädie.* The latter thus disposes of approaches to itself.

Still, the *Enzyklopädie* has, in Hegel's eyes, also a "standpoint" (*Standpunkt*). Here Hegel's most famous sentence applies: "that which is reasonable is real, and that which is real is reasonable." (*was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich, und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*.) Seen from the standpoint of the "uneducated" individual that observes how its world constantly changes in more or less chaotic ways, the quote is nonsense; seen from a political standpoint, the quote is outrageous because it seems to justify the existing political conditions, so that one could see the philosopher of the Prussian state in Hegel; yet, seen from the standpoint of philosophical knowledge, the quote is true: simply because, in Hegel's sense, one can only speak of 'reason,' 'reality,' and 'truth' if one has comprehended them in an unconditional system of knowledge. In this system, reality *is* reasonable and true.

It is no coincidence that Hegel's system begins with the standpoint of philosophical thinking because the circle of the self-referential system returning to itself has, strictly speaking, no starting point; any standpoint is a standpoint only from the perspective of other, conditioned standpoints. Therefore, the beginning of the system is nothing but the decision to get oneself into philosophy and to orient oneself by it. Yet, this *is* a decision. In the draft to his first Berlin lecture about the *Enzyklopädie,* Hegel noted down: "The decision to philosophize casts itself into thinking like into an endless ocean; all the bright colors, all the footholds (*Stützpunkte*) have disappeared, all the other friendly lights are extinguished. Only the one star, the *inner star* of the spirit, shines; it is the *polar star*."

Yet, Hegel is also aware of the fact that philosophy inevitably is the philosophy of a certain age and takes the *point of view of its day*. He also writes that philosophy is "its time captured in thoughts" and that it has become time for philosophy to be elevated to the status of science. Hegel is not as naive as to believe that philosophy and time will end with *his* philosophy. Sure, once philosophy has achieved the true philosophical knowledge in Hegel's sense, it will not be able to develop itself further. But time will go on and pass by. After having been intensely efficacious for decades, Hegel's philosophy has simply become outdated. From various points of view, it has been declared one-sided, incorrect, or "dead" – in most cases, it has not been under-

stood any longer. Hegel's philosophy has lost its plausibility in a different age or in a new situation, without it being possible to adduce a clear, unambiguous or true reason for that. One has oriented oneself anew.

> *The philosophy of orientation finds alternative models of creating permanent overviews of knowledge in d'Alembert's & Diderot's* Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers *on the one hand, and in Hegel's* Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse: Zum Gebrauch seiner Vorlesungen *on the other.*
>
> *D'Alembert & Diderot provide a collection of scientific, artistic, and craft knowledge relevant for the development of all fields of society; as editors, they collaborate with many other authors. They leave ample leeway for their capacities for orientation. They structure knowledge according to the orienting principle of rapid retrieval, i.e. through an alphabetical order that is easy to overlook, but in fact arbitrary in regard to the subject matter in question. This principle enforces the decomposition and dispersal of knowledge in (more or less) small articles. This makes a second-order overview necessary, i.e. an overview of the overview: d'Alembert & Diderot try to create a schematic genealogy of knowledge, a reference system among the articles, metaphysics as vanishing point for the search, and an overview of the production of overview in a special* Encyclopédie *article within the* Encyclopédie *itself.*
>
> *In his* Enzyklopädie*, Hegel offers opposition to the attention economy organizing the French* Encyclopédie *as a process of orientation. Hegel counts on the inner logic of a system of philosophical concepts developing itself out of itself. Here the dialectic of concepts is the organizing principle according to which a comprehensive, reasoned and overseeable unity of knowledge is created. Hegel aims to enable unconditional knowledge in philosophy and an independent philosophical truth. So, philosophy becomes sovereign and can fully follow its "speculative need." However, the need for orientation arises anew when it comes to the interpretation of philosophical concepts in the empirical world and to the approach or access to the system of knowledge from different "standpoints." Hegel takes this into account, too, through a graded practice of orientation within the system. However, he thereby creates a new paradox: the system at once presupposes orientation and renders it redundant in sublating it dialectically. Hegel*

knows that the standpoint of his philosophy can only be a standpoint in time, that it is dependent on non-philosophical orientation, and that the orientation that his philosophy provides has its time as well.

15. Alternative Compositions of Knowledge: Hegel's and Schleiermacher's Dialectic

Hegel's dialectic was already in Hegel's lifetime confronted with an alternative: one that starts from the individual in need of orientation and stays with it, namely the dialectic of FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER (1768-1834 AD). Schleiermacher was a theologian *and* a philosopher, who, on the one hand, implemented a radical reform of Protestant theology, which he shaped for more than a century, and, on the other hand, developed a general outline of a realistic philosophy of orientation on the basis of one and the same pivotal idea. Both Hegel and Schleiermacher worked with new, but *alternative techniques of distinction*. The meaning of Hegel's and Schleiermacher's varying kinds of dialectic is notoriously contested; we try to clarify it in contraposing their alternative techniques of distinction.

In his dialectic, Hegel – like Fichte – sets out from the distinction itself in the form of 'A is either X or non-X.' According to Spinoza's formula *omnis determinatio est negatio* quoted by Hegel, every determination is the negation of another. Hence, determinations work with opposites that exclude each other; they are *exclusive distinctions*. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the way to "absolute knowledge" (sec. 14) is a way of negating all apparently certain determinations of truth; it leads to the critical truth about truth. Hegel labels this "way of despair" as "skepticism accomplishing itself." He presents it as a way on which the individual is pushed on despite itself: a "necessary passage." Following this logic, which is not purely formal, paradoxically, negation in the form of a "*determinate negation*" brings forth positive determinations.

Formal logic assumes that concepts retain their meaning when being connected with each other. Therefore, they can be abbreviated as formal signs like A and B. Already Aristotle, the father of this logic, proceeded like this. Mathematics, which does not know any semantic shifts of its signs, rests on this assumption. Yet, in fact, concepts change their meaning when they are tied together, argues Hegel. If I say of

a rose that it is red, this is not an abstract red, but rather this very specific red of that concrete rose, hardly determinable in its nuances; and the rose determined by the proposition of being red, is not just any rose, but precisely this rose, which is determined such and such. In this respect, formal logic has an antinomic, paradoxical premise: in determining its objects, it deprives them of their determinations.

This paradox cannot be avoided, but one can make it fruitful, which Hegel did through his dialectical logic. It says that, in distinguishing an object via negation of one side of the distinction, a new determination emerges; yet, thereby the distinction itself changes; that is why it is necessary to also determine the unity of the distinction according to which the determination is made. Subsequently, the object is determined in a new and richer way and becomes part of a larger context, though not simply through abstraction, but rather through a concept emerging from the determinate negation.

The simplest example is the one with which Hegel himself begins in *The Science of Logic,* the determination of being. As 'being' can be stated of absolutely everything (everything that exists *is* somehow, and be it as a mere idea or invention), 'being' itself cannot be determined by anything; thus, its determination is also its negation: 'nothing.' It follows that 'being' immediately transitions into 'nothing,' and, as mentioned above, of 'nothing' one can also say that it 'is' ('it is nothing'). 'Being' and 'nothing' are, paradoxically, at once differentiated and not differentiated. They have one thing in common: they transition immediately into each other. The unity of their distinction is becoming: 'being' *becomes* 'nothing,' and 'nothing' *becomes* 'being.' The notion of 'becoming' abolishes the paradox, for in 'becoming,' 'being' and 'nothing' are at once preserved and disappear, or, as Hegel puts it, 'being' and 'nothing' are "sublated."

However, the unity of 'becoming' includes a new paradox because 'becoming' endures and disappears incessantly. For Hegel, it is "an unstable unrest that collapses into a calm result." Its paradoxical determination can only be preserved if the paradox is, in turn, abolished by another determination: the being-there (*Dasein*) of something (*Etwas*) that can be this way or that way or transform itself – with ever new paradoxes pushing ahead the "necessary passage."

Another, easily accessible example is the notion of family in the chapter about "Objective Spirit" in Hegel's *Encyclopedia.* In the family, naturally grown moral life (*Sittlichkeit*) can be determined as follows: all family members try trustfully and lov-

ingly to do justice to the individual needs of the others. It belongs to this natural determination of the family that it multiplies itself in this spirit. Yet, when a certain degree of multiplication is reached, the family members drift apart and lose their natural attachments. In this way, the family enters into society (*Gesellschaft*) and thereby into another system of needs satisfaction: the competition on markets based on the division of labor, where the natural value of things and the consensual participation in them gets lost. Everything becomes ware, commodity, merchandise (sec. 12, 17), and the moral life of the family is negated by an opposed moral life. Yet, this also has an advantage: societal needs satisfaction is regulated by the state, which thereby creates a higher and richer *Sittlichkeit.* Both the family and the civil society are sublated in it.

The comparison of these examples shows that the method of Hegel's dialectic cannot be formalized (for instance in the scheme thesis – antithesis – synthesis), but is rather, as Hegel says, "the particular method of each subject matter itself"; the determinate negation takes place in a peculiar way in every situation, dependent on the meanings of the respective concepts. And yet is it Hegel's claim that the determinate negation takes place in a "necessary movement" of the self-referential concept of the concept, which means: an exclusively self-determined and insofar unconditioned determining-itself-further of the initial determination of being. To this end, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* presupposes an individual consciousness, which differentiates itself as subject from its respective objects, or which differentiates its concepts from things existing by themselves. The subject observes step by step how its determinations become paradoxical and how the paradoxes are dissolved again by new concepts. Then, in *The Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline,* the distinction between concept and object is sublated, and the self-referential concept of the concept moves ahead by itself.

However, Hegel research has evinced that the path of this conceptual movement rests less on internal necessities than on particular decisions. The transitions are not without any alternative; rather, the meanings of the concepts used depend, as Hegel himself points out, on *leeways*: "one and the same word" can be used "for two opposed determinations." For example, "becoming" (*Werden*) can either mean an incessant generation and corruption or the steady continuation of this process; the German word *Aufheben* can equally mean "to cease, to put an end to" and "to preserve." Within the semantic leeways of such words, different movements are

possible, for instance alternative subsumptions of previously opposed concepts. In this way, movement can be classified as resting (in the sense of 'resting at a certain place in each moment,' as Zenon, a student of Parmenides, pointed out), and necessity as freedom, and vice versa. Which path is taken must be *decided*, seemingly through the self-referential movement of the concept of the concept, yet in fact, it is decided by the author arranging this movement. The apparent necessity of the movement arises through the *resoluteness* of the author, who clings to the already achieved removal of the respective paradoxes. That is, he draws on the previously accomplished concepts wherever this is meaningful, but he no longer regresses to the less complex ones.

The transitions Hegel creates require the art of combination, a sure feeling or intuition, if not genius – just as Diderot's references beneath the lexicon entries do (sec. 14). For the readers, dialectical developments first become plausible if the name of the new concept is mentioned, which is usually familiar, i.e. obtained from the previous everyday orientation and thus immediately understandable, but now becomes relevant in its significance for the coherence of the system. According to Hegel, we think in names, and even the apparently purely self-referential construction is therefore also a reconstruction that refers to other things, persons, and commonly used concepts. The familiar names are the footholds of a pre-orientation without which one cannot understand the argumentation of the *Encyclopedia* and its dialectic.

SCHLEIERMACHER, son of a pastor, raised a Pietist, distanced himself from Pietism, worked as preacher and professor at the newly founded University of Berlin. He had a huge public influence. He created the translation of Plato that has been authoritative until today. He was married, very sociable and highly esteemed also as a human being. He moved in the Berlin salons of intellectuals and defended a scandalous novel just as he defended the emancipation of the Jews. He achieved affluence, united the Protestant churches in Prussia, developed a progressive educational movement, had numerous successful disciples – and competed fiercely with Hegel. This competition increased in his disciples. Schleiermacher's philosophy, in which he follows Spinoza, is similarly broad in scope as Hegel's, but deliberately not designed as a system. Schleiermacher, a German idealist of another fashion, sparsely interested in polemics, wanted to lead Kant's critique back to life instead of concluding it through a system. In this way, Schleiermacher came across the basic condi-

tions of orienting oneself. Just like Fichte, he regularly used the notion of orienting oneself, but did not yet turn it into a topic on its own and neither developed his theology and philosophy on the basis of this notion. Hegel and Schleiermacher did not engage in a deeper philosophical dispute.

In his *Speeches on Religion* of 1799 (authored long before Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*), Schleiermacher begins with a revolution of the understanding of God: instead of being able to comprehend God, God is experienced in the "feeling of absolute dependency" (*Gefühl schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit*, as he put it in a phrase he coined later). The phrase "feeling of absolute dependency" is a deliberately non-religious formulation designating religion. With this phrase, Schleiermacher addresses the undeniable fact that one – despite of all freedom of thought and freedom of choice – all around remains dependent on circumstances and processes in the world from which one cannot free oneself, but which one experiences strongly without being able to put them into words. This dependency can, but needs not necessarily be related to God, whether it be a Spinozistic all-embracing or a personal God. Thus, the ascertainment of this dependency is at the same time a philosophical basic statement, a courageous reorientation also in philosophy: Schleiermacher assumes the fundamental contingency or *situativity* of all human thought, decision, judgment, and action, which one can never understand completely, let alone comprehend in Hegel's sense; and one can never free oneself from this contingency or situativity. *Seen from a philosophical perspective, the feeling of absolute dependency is the basic mood of orientation in view of incessantly changing situations.*

As a feeling, it is the feeling of an individual. For Schleiermacher, the individual is and remains the locus and the basis of all possible knowledge. Involved in the conditions of the world that it cannot overview, the individual is for itself as incomprehensible as is God, and it can only to a limited extent express itself by the means of language. Schleiermacher's dialectic proceeds from this point of departure, which is also, though in a wholly different manner, the core of his philosophy. He lectured about it again and again on the basis of few footholds in order to continuously enrich it with new insights in vivid talks. In this literary form Schleiermacher's dialectic could remain in flux; first after his death was it written out in different versions and edited as a book. In this form it continued to be in flux.

In Kant, dialectic was conceived as a flawed form of thinking or reason's lapse into illusions, which appears inevitably when reason does not heed its critical limits

and which can only be rectified through critique. In Hegel, dialectic became a method of leading the self-referential critique of reason, and in this context, the dialectical method acquired a constructive meaning. Schleiermacher, by contrast, draws on the Platonic sense of dialectic and defines it as "the art of holding talks in the field of pure thinking" (*kunstmäßige Gesprächsführung im Gebiet des reinen Denkens*); he binds his dialectic to the dialogue among individuals who can only strive for pure thinking, but unlike Kant and Hegel, he does not presuppose it. Schleiermacher thereby radically questions the principles of knowledge or, if there is no definite knowledge, of knowledge acquisition. One must always start from the premise that there is "material for undiscovered dispute." Seen from the perspective of the individual, it is realistic to assume that "arbitrary beginnings" are possible in all fields of knowledge.

However, knowledge that is convincing also for others emerges first when it is brought into systematic shape, without it having to be a system à la Hegel. If the concepts that individuals put forward shall convince others and thus possibly turn into generally valid knowledge, these concepts must (in current terms) be consistent, i.e. compatible with each other; coherent, i.e. interrelated; and consequent, i.e. to be brought into a logical order. In short: they must just fit together and support each other in a way. In philosophy, this does not result in absolutely certain knowledge in Hegel's sense; there only remains "belief in knowledge" (*Glauben an das Wissen*). In line with this belief, knowledge can always remain in becoming and therefore move with the times.

According to Schleiermacher, too, the "construction" of knowledge works with distinctions. However, he understands distinctions otherwise: not as exclusive, but rather as inclusive distinctions; he speaks of "negative" and "positive" or "relative" opposites: plausible distinctions are contrasts. The opposites of a contrast must be contained in each other in order to refer to each other at all, just as the human being only is human in the specific contrast to the animal (or for religious thinkers in contrast to God), and just as a woman is a woman only in the specific contrast to a man, and the North Pole is the North Pole only in the specific contrast to the South Pole. Parmenides' (non-)distinction between being and thinking (sec. 2) is such an inclusive distinction – a contrast in which both sides emerge from each other and are not distinguishable from outside. The unity of a distinction, which, in Hegel's view, 'jumps out of' and exits the negation of a determination, must, in Schleiermacher's

view, already implicitly be contained in it. For this reason, Schleiermacher understands opposites as "poles" of a determination by which one "orients oneself"; following the example of Aristotle's practical philosophy (sec. 5), every determination of objects moves within the leeways of such poles. Thus, determinations can always remain provisional, i.e. they can and must be determined further *in new situations*, and the general that results from them, is something universal only for the sake of orienting individuals with individual standpoints.

Schleiermacher appraises the contrasts between being and thinking, nature and reason, the real and the ideal, individuality or particularity (*Eigentümlichkeit*) and identity or communality (*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*) as such polarities. The fact that the respective sides never occur 'purely' prevents their dogmatization and their turning into metaphysical opposites. In this way, Schleiermacher's dialectic is critical. Its constructive side is thought with the help of the polarity of "chaos" (as material of construction) and the "highest substantial force" of shaping this chaos; the shaping or structuring itself is in turn conceptualized with the help of the polarity of practical "organizing" (*Organisieren*) and the theoretical "discerning" (*Erkennen*) or "symbolizing" (*Symbolisieren*), which cannot be separated, since they intertwine at all times. Seen from a theological perspective, the polarity "chaos" and "highest substantial force" (in Spinoza's sense) as well as the polarity "fate" (understood as the incalculability of occurrences) and "providence" (understood as total predictability) can serve as divine names. Here God is understood in the context of pre-defined leeways. Later on, the paradoxes or polarities involved here have become usual techniques of approaching God and the world.

Such equipped, Schleiermacher's philosophy has substantially prepared the present philosophy of orientation. The acquisition and composition of knowledge move between polarities in an 'oscillating procedure,' so that the concept formation can do justice to ever new situations and concept constellations. Thereby the concepts are continually adjusted to the observed objects and the observations of objects to the concepts. The same applies to Hegel's dialectic. However, Schleiermacher maintains that knowledge acquisition does not work with fixed concepts, but rather with always preliminary 'schemata' that leave leeways for the choice of linguistic fixation and thus also for displacements. Kant had introduced the notion of the scheme as an auxiliary term mediating concept and intuition; for Schleiermacher, this notion becomes central in the construction of knowledge. In the processes of

oscillation, skepticism on the one hand and imagination on the other get a chance, too.

For Schleiermacher, the individuals' need to get around to a general knowledge that is valid in their living together is, ultimately, an ethical need. The difference between theoretical and practical philosophy is, in his eyes, not an exclusive, but rather an inclusive contrast; the two coalesce in a theory of human living together. Schleiermacher constructs the coexistence of individuals, too, through crossing the polarities of organizing and symbolizing, and of individuality and communal identity. Four "relative spheres" of coexistence ensue: (1) the communal, for everyone identically organized, world of communicating and socializing (*Verkehr*) whose most immediate area of education (*Bildungsgebiet*) is the body of the individual and the greatest the jointly inhabited world; (2) the individually organized world of conviviality, friendship, and hospitality, which lives on mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*) and opening-up of the individuals (*Aufschließung*) in their individuality; (3) the communal, for everyone identically symbolized world of science in which signs are used as unambiguously as possible; and (4) the individually symbolized world of art and religion. The "relative" spheres are mutually dependent on each other without there being a hierarchy among them. In the current sociological systems theory, they are taken as functional systems of societal communication.

For Schleiermacher, just as (later) for Nietzsche and (still later) for Rorty, philosophy is an art before it can become a science. Philosophy can be based on rules, but these rules require individual skills. Thus, in contrast to what Hegel tried to make us believe, it is made clear that philosophy – just as any other science – can never acquire any definite knowledge, since all knowledge acquired under the factual conditions of knowledge acquisition can be contested again or simply become obsolete. But in philosophy, the differentiation between art and science (or, as one would say today with reference to Thomas S. Kuhn: between revolutionary and normal science) is only *an orienting distinction*. So, manifold scientific and philosophical systems can subsist after and next to each other. Progression in knowledge is always progression viewed from a standpoint that one can change.

To thinking as such, one can neither ascribe universal validity according to Schleiermacher, since thinking occurs in various forms and in different languages, and since it also differs depending on individual living conditions. However, different languages and individual standpoints in knowledge acquisition are not to be ex-

ecuted and deleted; rather, in Schleiermacher's opinion, they enrich knowledge acquisition – and human orientation as a whole: even the alignment with a focus on universal validity is only one possibility of orientation next to others. The question is then: who can convince whom in what case with which argument; who is interested in whose thoughts and messages; and how can one decide about this from case to case? Schleiermacher here distinguishes between (1) "commercial" thinking, which is directed to utility and power, (2) "artistic" thinking, which inspires others, but leaves them free in their decisions, and (3) "pure" thinking, which – like Hegel's thinking – in itself tries to reach something steady and firm in knowledge. In all cases, thinking is an ethical handling of "foreign thinking," and it is "sign of a more limited mind" if it seeks to insist on itself.

The philosophy of orientation has, in Hegel's and Schleiermacher's respective dialectic, alternative models of how a permanent overview of orientation can be achieved through knowledge; furthermore, it has alternative models regarding the construction (Aufbau) of knowledge. Both Hegel and Schleiermacher address alternatives as an issue: Hegel does so by constraining the leeways of alternative trains of thought, Schleiermacher by expanding them. Even though Hegel's and Schleiermacher's vocabulary may today appear to be cumbersome in many aspects, it can still advance the philosophy of orientation as a whole. Taken together, Hegel's and Schleiermacher's philosophies outline the leeway between, on the one hand, the ideal of human orientation, and the reality of human orientation on the other.

Hegel's dialectic, the logic of "the movement of the concept" that takes place as a "determinate negation" of every new determination or definition of the concept of thinking and being, or: of the truth, works with gradual steps in creating and overcoming paradoxes; in this way, it must not fend off contradictions, but can make them fruitful for a sovereign orientation. However, Hegel obfuscates the decisions that thereby can be made in one way or another – to the benefit of a target-aimed "necessity" with which the movement of the concept is meant to close itself into a self-explanatory and self-substantiating "system" without any alternative.

Schleiermacher, by contrast, reckons from the very start with the fact that concepts can be determined in alternative ways. To this end, he also develops a

new technique of distinction that proceeds not from exclusive, but rather from inclusive contrasts, in which the opposites already contain each other; that is to say, he proceeds from poles instead of negations. The leeways or scopes that they extend are already implied in them. In the oscillation between conceptual poles, human orientation can decide in every concrete situation about the appropriate determination; yet, the latter remains preliminary, i.e., in new situations new decisions can (or have to) be taken. According to the current state of the art, human orientation indeed seems to work in this manner.

III. Postmodernity

The alternative constructions of knowledge we saw within German Idealism have brought philosophical thought in a new situation: Hegel provides the broadest and deepest philosophical access to the world as well as the most consequent differentiation and the most stable independence of philosophical thought. In integrating the history of philosophical thought in his system and justifying it through his system, he in the most successful manner absolves philosophical thought from the situativity and temporality of what happens in the world. Therein philosophy lives up to its highest aspiration and gains the greatest prestige; philosophy appears as the promise of guiding the orientation of humankind through systematically reasoned definitions of concepts. In the midst of spectacular political upheavals in Europe – civil revolution, regicide, national wars of conquest and liberation (so-called battles of nations), political reforms and monarchical restauration – philosophy offered reliable orientation in the form of Hegel's encyclopedia and the optimistic certainty that the world would find its true order in the near future if it listens to the spirit.

Schleiermacher's alternative theology and philosophy is no less optimistic than Hegel's. Yet, in the tradition of theology, Schleiermacher draws tighter limits to the power of thinking. According to the formula of "the feeling of absolute dependency," which is meant to be religious, but can also be understood in non-religious ways, thinking, too, is dependent on something that is not at its disposal and that it cannot conceptualize definitively and neither shape spontaneously. Schleiermacher keeps alive the awareness of the situativity also of all philosophical thought. The latter can nonetheless, with appropriate new distinctions, conceive of the situativity of human orientation and also of the relocatability of its limits; it can integrate time in itself without thereby making itself entirely independent of time. The paradoxical simultaneity of mastering the situation and time on the one hand, and of being-mastered by it on the other, became the theme of the most courageous new beginnings of philosophical thought after Hegel; they worked through Hegel without always mentioning or realizing it.

The later 19th century was characterized by new and unprecedented scientific and technical, political and social changes in Europe and the USA, and by the (first) industrial revolution. This revolution occurred faster and interfered deeper with the conditions of living and the orientation of human beings than ever before; it required totally new orientations also in thought and in the thinking of thought. For the sake of these orientations, new distinctions and techniques of distinction had first to be developed. They more and more absolved themselves from the formerly highest 'foothold' of a divine governance of the world, and they were more controversial than ever before. Therefore, one could less and less be certain of these orientations; philosophy became, as Nietzsche then called it, "experimental philosophy." While the philosophers who were permanently appointed as professors at a university in most cases sought to extend and combine the designs of their great predecessors – first and foremost Kant, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel – it was again through outsiders who often did not know each other that vital new orientations were initiated. Modernity was driven further into that which we, in the lack of a more precise term, for the time being call 'postmodernity.' In postmodernity, a revaluation of the relation between the universal and the individual is in the making, and with it the insight that individual orientation precedes all constructions of the universal.

16. Alternatives in the Revaluation of the Universal and the Individual: Emerson and Stirner, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard

Largely independently of each other, the following individual thinkers initiated the resolute revaluation of the universal and the individual: RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882 AD) in the USA, and ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (1788-1860 AD), MAX STIRNER (1806-1856 AD), and SØREN KIERKEGAARD (1813-1855 AD) in Europe. Emerson and Stirner as well as Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard sketched out characteristically different paths: the two first-mentioned did so in relation to the individuality of all thinking, the two last-mentioned in relation to the limits of thinking in general.

EMERSON originated from a Christian family of preachers, but distanced himself from specific denominations and churches. He was well-traveled, also in Europe, and lived as a free orator, writer, and poet. He counted less on theory than on rhe-

torical persuasiveness. He wrote essays and made circularized his philosophy personally through lectures, first and foremost via popular education in the so-called lyceum movement. He was engaged politically in the abolition of slavery and delivered the eulogy at Abraham Lincoln's funeral. He was thoroughly educated in European, particularly German philosophy. By breaking consciously with the traditional themes that were discussed at the universities and in aiming at the personal conduct of life, i.e. orientation in life quite generally, he founded a new and unique philosophical tradition in the USA. This tradition began with his 'intellectual declaration of independence,' as some called it.

At that time – just as in the beginnings of Greek philosophy – a new optimistic spirit of awakening prevailed in the United States of America: new land was inhabited; soon excellent universities were founded there; the political independence of the USA was successfully declared; a comprehensive freedom of religious practice was created; the USA liberated themselves democratically from the estates-based ossifications of European societies and generated great personalities for state leadership. One gradually expanded one's living space through conquest or purchase, one dealt with a constantly displaced frontier, could dispose of good farmland and rich treasures of the soil, and one experienced a growing economic prosperity. Venturesome immigrants, capitalism that was unimpeded for a long time, industrialization, and the extension of the infrastructure in grand style prompted the hitherto most dynamic and most successful development of a state in the world. Even though the rule of conflicting parties, corruption and moral decline spread, even though strong social contrasts and economic crises eventuated, moral values were placed above economic interests: in a severe civil war, the hard-won liberation of the slaves was achieved. In all areas of life, one was attuned to continual reorientation and developed routines of reorientation.

Emerson gives a philosophical expression to the spirit of incessant reorientation. His thinking, which is close to poetry, appears improvising, preliminary, and fluid. He works with concepts that leave wide leeways for interpretation and progression. He masters the art of aphoristic abbreviation and the essayistic unfolding of far-reaching thoughts. Just as Nicholas of Cusa, Spinoza, and Schleiermacher in Europe, he captures contrasts as poles that include one another and create leeways for dynamic conceptual developments. He often chooses alternative views and loves paradoxes. He speaks less out of philosophical erudition than his own personality

and life experience; he does not want to reserve wisdom for scholars. HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862 AD) sets an example of this way of life.

Without building on the concept of orientation itself, Emerson lays weighty milestones on the way to a philosophy of orientation. As he states in his speech *The American Scholar*, he seeks a "nearer reference to the time and to this country." "Instead of the sublime and beautiful," he explores and poetizes "the near, the low, the common." He gives "the single person" a "new importance." At the same time, he strongly integrates the person into nature: nature flows through human beings and causes them to speak, to think, and to act. As such and as a whole, nature cannot be determined theoretically. Emerson expresses this with the help of the notions of the "soul," "over-soul," and "God." In such "transcendental beliefs," the in principle idiosyncratic and therein solitary standpoint of each one is always already connected with the standpoints of others – without the need of theoretical definitions.

Individuals can, like nature itself, communicate immediately in signs and symbols that need no further determination or explanation. In *Nature,* Emerson formulates this as follows: "I am nothing; I see all." Thought is only function therein. In this way, a basic attitude of observing, receiving, venerating, and obeying arises, and the openness for a "stairway of surprise." Human beings search reassurance in conceptual determinations. However, identifications and classifications are always preliminary: "science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts," as Emerson says in *The American Scholar*. Everyone has his or her own sight of principles; everyone can make the diversity of meanings fruitful for him- or herself and be creative under the specific conditions in his or her own present – and this is necessary because practical work and distresses force our hand. One must deliberately expose oneself to unsettling. Over time, the compulsion to creativity out of adversity lets grow human beings' confidence in their own progress and in the progress of mutual understanding and promotion of each other; in Emerson's words: human beings learn to trust in virtue and love. In our words, what grows is trust in the ability to orient oneself in regard to others in life situations that are uncertain for everyone.

The "genius" can *give* orientation to others; in his or her orientation, the genius can count on complete self-reliance. According to Emerson, single "representative men" – personalities, philosophers, and poets – set signs for others, i.e. footholds to which others can adhere for the sake of their own orientation and on their own con-

ditions. Yet, these footholds cannot be theoretically generalized or dogmatically be predefined. Emerson describes such single individuals as complete human beings who with their life can express the whole of nature and human possibilities. In regard to religion, they find God in finding their own midpoint; thereby high ideals of truthfulness, clarity and simplicity become lived realities. Emerson's "representative men" stand out due to "courage" in mastering daily problems. Courage is the mood against the contrary mood of anxiety. In the persistent insecurity and endangerment of life, one must, as Emerson puts it, "day after day overcome anxiety." Knowledge, custom, and reason may help; but courage also grows in repeated coping with threatening situations, and in this way, a "prophetic instinct that is better than all wisdom" develops, as Emerson lastly writes in *Society and Solitude*. This is trust in one's own orientation abilities.

With his *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* of 1844 (*The Ego and Its Own,* literally, *The Individual and His Property,* also known as *The Unique and Its Property*), and its motto "Nothing is more to me than myself!" (borrowed from Goethe), STIRNER marks a philosophical extreme. He insisted radically and dogmatically on his claim that everything, both the material and the spiritual, can ultimately only be the property of individuals – for only individuals can relate to something else from their inevitably individual standpoint. Stirner studied with Hegel *and* Schleiermacher, lived under narrow circumstances, committed himself to the circle of Left Hegelians, took up some of their ideas, but also questioned them. He had to once more face prohibition and persecution, even though he for philosophical reasons did not participate in the political revolution that was prepared also in Germany in the times of political restauration. Stirner translated, among other books, the *Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith (sec. 12). He had the work *Das Wesen des Christentums* (*The Essence of Christianity*) by LUDWIG FEUERBACH (1804-1872 AD) in mind, where the traditional determinations of the idea of God are described as human projections, so that the human species itself can appropriate divinity. Yet, Stirner traces the human species back to the individual. As a single individual, he appeals to other single individuals in committed, pathetic, and polemical ways. Initially, he causes a stir, and then he is forgotten for a long time. Emerson's upbuilding keynote is in Germany not confronted with any other, more critical and militant, tone than Stirner's.

Stirner fights against the universal insofar as it is believed to be sacrosanct, as "holy." Through the assumption of something general or universal, the individuals

expropriate themselves, he believes. Then the individuals are ready to submit themselves to societal and governmental orders without any reservation, and they can be connected and separated through different general terms subsuming them. However, Stirner thinks that in all constructions of the universal, egoism continues to have an effect: through general terms, claims, and orders, human beings shall be won for something that is in the interest of certain individuals. Stirner wants to free the ego from the fixation on such allegedly unconditional and unegotistical universalities, and make a point of "egoism." For him as well, it is true that the ego is nothing and yet the reference point for everything else; and for him as well, there arises perfect freedom of thought and action and the coercion to become creative, also in regard to concepts for existence. He does not want to simply abolish the general or universal, which would be unthinkable, but rather, like Emerson, allow only a limited function to it. Stirner expected serious labor unrest in the near future and, sooner or later, the breakdown of the state as an order of dependencies; that is why he was regarded as a dangerous "anarchist." In the remote future, however, he expected a life of enjoyment instead of a life of sacrifice.

SCHOPENHAUER and KIERKEGAARD do not focus on the right and the strength of individual thought, but rather on the limits of thought and thus of universality altogether. Their biographies show astonishing parallels. Both of them stemmed from wealthy merchant families, so that they were economically independent all their life and not reliant upon the employment at a university; thus, they could distance themselves more easily from traditional thought. Nonetheless, both of them were deeply rooted in tradition; on their own volition, they acquired a comprehensive humanistic education. Both of them were headstrong characters; they cultivated a life that in many aspects seemed strange; many anecdotes testify to that. Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard appeared as knotted mavericks with pronounced views; if necessary, they were ready to dispute in public. Both of them had precarious love relations and shied away from a marriage. Both of them presented their most important works when they were around 30 years old and felt they did not receive the recognition they deserved; yet they did not lose courage and continued writing. Both Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer resorted to polemics when rationales became problematic. Schopenhauer, at that time a little-known lecturer at the Berlin university, dared to compete openly with Hegel and failed; Kierkegaard, disappointed by the Berlin university where he attended the lectures of aged Schelling, competed in his

home town Copenhagen with the highly esteemed Copenhagen bishop Mynster – after having become a public caricature in the course of feud with a satirical magazine.

However, there are also conspicuous differences between Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer: while Schopenhauer early on (through his mother, a successful author who kept a salon in Weimar) was appreciated by Goethe, the highest intellectual authority of his day, Kierkegaard (who definitely loved the opera and theater) was, like his old father, afflicted with melancholia. Schopenhauer was a staunch atheist who nonetheless incorporated religious dogmas like the one about hereditary sin in his philosophy, whereas Kierkegaard was a just as staunch Christian who nonetheless struggled against the official, established Christendom, the Church and its dogmas.

While Schopenhauer, in his philosophical authorship, clings to the literary form of the treatise (most of his popular *Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life* are minor treatises), Kierkegaard invents plenty of new literary forms of writing to express his philosophical thinking; yet, in regard to religion, he cultivates devotional writing called "upbuilding discourses." With his clearly arranged main work *The World as Will and Representation*, which first became famous after a quarter of a century in its second edition, Schopenhauer by and large remains caught in the old (particularly Kantian) opposites, even though he revaluates them resolutely. Kierkegaard, by contrast, experiments within the short period of a decade with new opposites as expressed in a cascade of works responding to each other. Kierkegaard's philosophical rank is recognized even later than Schopenhauer's.

In their respective philosophies, both Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer *dethrone self-aggrandizing reason* on the basis of a feeling of absolute dependency. As an atheist, Schopenhauer regards reason as being dependent on a blind, irrational will that instrumentalizes and propels reason; as a Christian, Kierkegaard regards reason as being dependent on the mood of anxiety that is afraid of sin. Without having known each other (Kierkegaard became aware of Schopenhauer at a late point of time), both of them experience a *continual, unsettling compulsion to think, which reason is not able to settle and appease.* In this restlessness, both of them realize fundamentally new orientation needs, and both of them rely on immediate personal experiences.

SCHOPENHAUER addresses also the *bodiliness of thinking.* Obviously, the body is the organ of all cognition, the origin of all ideas, and the point of departure of all ori-

entation in the world. The thinking subject finds itself as a body *in* the world, being a part *of* the world; through the body, it is entangled in the world and exposed to its influences. This means that the body is at once a observing subject and an observed object; thus, the subject-object-distinction is suspended. Emerson, too, emphasized this point. Yet, for Schopenhauer, the body is, first of all, something that incessantly "wants to do" something, namely to live and to sustain and propagate itself; the strongest testimony of this will is sexual desire, which has its bodily shape in the genitals. Schopenhauer resolutely stopped euphemizing sexual desire.

Just as Emerson integrates the individual in nature's continuum, Schopenhauer integrates the individual will in a universal will to live – where its universality is a natural instead of a conceptual one. In this universal will to live, or just to be there, he believes to have found the thing-in-itself that Kant vainly tried to think. Continuing to think in Kantian categories, Schopenhauer turns the X, which was absolutely unknowable for Kant, into something real that can be experienced, in fact into that which is most strongly experienced as real. This will can be experienced precisely in the irrational being-driven of reason, and, according to Schopenhauer, this being-driven determines human orientation in total. The "blind will" utilizes reason as its "tool" provoking "ideas" or "representations" (*Vorstellungen*) that reason takes to be its own because it does not comprehend its own bodily causes. Therein Schopenhauer discovers an ongoing planless self-deception and illusion; following a famous metaphor, "the strong blind one bears the seeing lamed one on his shoulders." In this way, the human being never reaches the truth and cannot opt for it, because even before one can decide anything consciously and rationally, the will has already decided on it. Schopenhauer's response to this condition is the recourse to the notion of orientation. He writes: "it is in the interest of the will that something is thought at all, so that one is as well-oriented as possible for any eventuality." Yet, this orientation is still kind of blind, and also Schopenhauer does not elaborate on the notion of orientation itself.

In Schopenhauer's thought, the blind will is just as omnipotent as God – yet being unknowing, senseless, and planless instead of omniscient. This results in a crucial change of mood in philosophical thinking: the idealistic "optimism" that Schopenhauer would have discovered also in Emerson's philosophy if he had known it, gives way to the deep "pessimism" of senselessly being driven from one illusionary wish to the next. In this context, Schopenhauer discovers the significance of

moods for philosophy: in "the play of the continuous transition from the wish to its satisfaction, and from the latter to the former" persists only the disturbing change of ideas. However, unlike Emerson, Schopenhauer does not experience this disturbance as a dynamic, but rather as an agonizing malfunction, and the so-called "clearly conscious thoughts" as the mere "surface" of an unclear and unconscious streaming. Like Emerson, Schopenhauer observes that the conscious process of thought is meandering, floating, fragmentary and subject to shifting moods, and he regards this as an "essential imperfection of the intellect" which requires to "orient oneself" ever anew. Thinking lacks, for Schopenhauer, firm footholds.

Schopenhauer's declared pessimism, the nearly unbearable mood of just being-there, of an existence that knows that it is led by a blind, meaning- and purposeless will to live, causes him to cultivate ideas of which he can hardly know whether they are tenable, although he pretends to do so. Devaluating (1) life as a whole, Schopenhauer concedes (2) a need for redemption from it, which is to be fulfilled by the Platonic ideas in which "the only immediate objectivity" of the will appears; together with Kant's thing-in-itself, these ideas shall constitute "the two great dark paradoxes of the two greatest philosophers of the Occident." The Platonic ideas shall, in turn, become the object of "pure" representation and, in this way, stabilize representation (*Vorstellung*) over against the will; the power of the will shall end here and turn the "negation of the will to live" into the "affirmation of the will to live." These metaphysical hypotheses shall make conceivable (3) a calm, "contemplative" philosophical knowledge of the nexus of ideas, which Schopenhauer claims for himself.

In this way, philosophical insight acquires also in Schopenhauer (4) a new religious character: in following the urge of the will in its need for redemption, philosophy becomes, as Schopenhauer noted down, the "true gospel," namely the gospel of "fatalism." Just like Emerson, Schopenhauer finds confirmation of his ideas in Indian Buddhism; both of them deliberately crossed the borders of European philosophy. Yet, Schopenhauer builds ethics on compassion, understood as the common suffering from the will, and in this way, he fights against moral idealization. Moreover, he praises (5) art, particularly music, as the "quieting (*Quietiv*) of the will" and emphasizes its power of transfiguration. Music is, for him, an image of the will in which the will can calm down. Therefore, "the true philosophy" would be "a perfectly right, complete, and detailed explanation of music." Last but not least, Schopenhauer

maintains that his teaching liberates (6) from the fear of death, for in suffering from the will, death comes as "grace."

Grace is the forgiveness of guilt that cannot be undone through one's own doing. The disbeliever Schopenhauer shows the deepest appreciation for Christianity's "great truth" of "hereditary sin." In his view, Adam symbolizes the affirmation of the will to live, and Christ its negation, the redemption from this will. Ultimately, this is – for Schopenhauer – also the truth of philosophy, the "transition into the empty *nothing.*" The latter is not an absolute nothing, which would be unthinkable, but rather the nothing in the world of ideas, the "nirvana" of Buddhism, where Schopenhauer finds "that peace that is higher than reason." Although Schopenhauer's pessimism was foreign to Americans, he was received as "German Buddha" in the field of philosophy, particularly by the transcendentalists following Emerson.

In KIERKEGAARD, the anxiety of faith being afraid of sin corresponds to Schopenhauer's disturbance caused by the blind will. Kierkegaard's philosophizing is borne by Christian faith, but it is in no way optimistic. Seen from a Christian perspective, sin is freedom vis-à-vis God, the possibility of missing God due to wrongdoing. As God's will is concealed to human beings, they must assume that this possibility is always already actuality. God's will is not blind, but human beings are blind for it, and to the extent that they know this, they live in the anxiety of perishing in sin, at least if they take Christian faith as seriously as Kierkegaard. Seriousness does not consist in comprehending sin in Hegelian terms. According to Kierkegaard, one cannot do justice to sin by comprehending it; on the contrary: the theoretical stance towards sin is frivolous and reckless because it provides an apparent foothold and creates a perverted mood. The latter turns into earnestness only in acting, i.e. in fighting against sin.

In his religious approach, Kierkegaard observes that all concepts, not only the concept of sin, acquire a new meaning if they are used in another mood, for instance in humor. However, this aspect is overlooked in theoretical determinations of concepts. The *mood* is the most situative, futile, and incomprehensive feature of thinking and, like optimism and pessimism for Schopenhauer, at once that which propels and guides comprehension. In Kierkegaard's view, too, thinking is here stretched to its limits. Yet, in contrast to the blending will in Schopenhauer, Kierkegaardian anxiety is revealing: it clairvoyantly discloses the efforts to conceal it. But just as every calming satisfaction of the will again reverts into a new unsettling willing for Scho-

penhauer, for Kierkegaard every calming of anxiety turns into a new anxiety of the constantly returning anxiety. Anxiety becomes despair that cannot be tranquilized any more, and this is the basic situation of the human being before God: a permanent, sometimes more, sometimes less conscious vertigo, which – like the will in Schopenhauer – turns into habitual disorientation.

Anxiety and despair are Kierkegaard's great religious themes, which encroach on psychology and philosophy. Anxiety and despair can neither be appeased by thinking and its universalities nor by some redeeming metaphysics in which Schopenhauer indulged himself. Kierkegaard unsettles Christian faith through philosophical thinking, and vice versa, and in this way, he advances with great strides the discovery of conditions and possibilities for human orientation:

(1) Thinking, which is habitually exposed to moods, becomes a *passion* for Kierkegaard; it loses the mastery over itself.

(2) The moods of anxiety and despair make all things questionable and ambiguous. Concepts become mere *signs* that can always be understood in one way or another. In Christian faith à la Kierkegaard, this applies first and foremost to Christ himself: he acts as the "God-man" without anyone being able to see and define him as such; he appears *incognito*. Philosophically, the sign is, according to Kierkegaard, the contradiction of "negated immediacy": it always means something other than it is (otherwise it would not be a sign). However, one can only interpret signs through signs, in a move of "double reflection" that also allows double misunderstandings. Thus, signs confront us with the *choice* of whether we want to believe in them or not. As such, they remain a perpetual "*offense*," and this is exactly what Christ wanted to be, according to Kierkegaard, for only in this way could he prevent dogmatic determinations of Christian faith, which soothe and reassure, whereas Christian faith requires us to exist troubled and concerned.

(3) Logically, the offense is the *paradox*. Kierkegaard turns the paradox into the basic figure of thought in order to confront thinking with its true existence. It is a logical offense or nuisance that one shall believe in sin in order to be forgiven and redeemed from despair. The annoying paradox opens up Christianity and closes it at the same time. Logical thinking can refute the paradox, but it cannot dissolve it and thus it cannot evade it; in getting annoyed at the paradox, one precisely shows one's interest in it. Philosophy is always faced with a paradox when it shall understand how the supratemporal, with which neither theological nor philosophical thinking

can dispense, can be present in time. It is, as Kierkegaard puts it, "the highest paradox" of thinking "that it wants to discover something that it cannot think." Thus, the paradox excites the "paradoxical passion" of thought.

(4) The title of Kierkegaard's book *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) is paradoxical as well, insofar as the mood of anxiety disturbs our concepts without a definite concept of anxiety being available to us. The subtitle, *A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin,* indicates that hereditary sin, which provokes anxiety, is not a notion that would be immediately dogmatic; rather, it is present in an indirect way, in the form of simple footholds that are implied in several other perspectives such as psychological, philosophical, and theological perspectives. In our current terminology, one would also say, as Kierkegaard did, that hereditary sin is approached in an orienting deliberation.

Kierkegaard practices a deliberately confusing philosophical "authorship" with the help of shifting *pseudonyms,* behind which he is clearly recognizable as "editor" – and yet, his pseudonyms are not identical with himself. His pseudonyms are, as he called them, pseudonyms in "psychologically varied differences of individuality." Kierkegaard lets them respond to each other just as individuals do; he lets them interact. Subjectivity is reflected by another's subjectivity without this resulting in objectivity. All the more so, as the pseudonyms create freedom for thought experiments: they touch on an empty center that Kierkegaard deliberately keeps free; for, in relation to faith and, particularly, in relation to sin, no one can be objective.

'The pseudonyms allow the author not to have to commit himself to certain opinions and, by contrast, to be able to give voice to opposing standpoints (for instance with the help of the inversely related pseudonyms "Climacus" and "Anti-Climacus"). With his often saltatory, light-footed, apparently superficial style, Kierkegaard rejects all claims for ultimate authority. He also breaks with the authority of the author to which Schopenhauer still clung. This is a nuisance for all those who expect unambiguousness of a writer – an expectation that was still self-evident for Schopenhauer. Kierkegaard, by contrast, wants to avoid all "immediate communication of paragraphs in the manner of professors."

(5) In anxiety and despair, the self also loses its foothold and self-reliance. In his late book *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard – like Schleiermacher – grasps the self exclusively through *relations* like the relation between soul and body, infinity and finitude, temporality and eternity, freedom and necessity. What matters

for him is the mere self-relation of the self behind which there is no substance, no subject, and no stable confidence in one's own orientation abilities. For Kierkegaard, it is crucial to 'balance' these relations. This figure of balance makes conceivable that the self can always be thrown into turmoil and must find its balance anew – more in anxiety than, as Emerson has it, in courage. Due to its unstable self-relation, the self can react to disturbances and cope with them, but it is also always in danger to be destroyed by them. Philosophically, this is the duplexity from which the self's despair arises. For Kierkegaard, the Christian, the highest form of despair is the despair of insisting on willing to be oneself – against and without the help of God, on whom one in fact depends in everything, following Christian faith. Kierkegaard believed that true Christian faith must pass through such despair. The deliverance from a dogmatic philosophy on the way to a philosophy of orientation requires a similar transition.

> *The philosophy of orientation is, in the transition from modern to postmodern philosophy, faced with new and completely different footholds in its investigation of the conditions and structures of human orientation. The first pathbreaking alternatives in orienting oneself refer to the limits of thinking as a whole and revalue the universal to the benefit of the individual. Emerson and Stirner, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard saw themselves as heroic lone fighters and therein, they built resolutely on their own experience. They invoked moods, which philosophy hitherto had excluded; yet, all thinking and acting is co-determined by moods, which give a new meaning to common concepts, for instance moods of courage and combat, of weariness and anxiety, optimism and pessimism.*
>
> *Emerson consciously calls back to one's personal orientation and provides us with pioneering footholds for its investigation. Whoever trusts in the success of one's own orientation can become a sign and standard for other orientations – Emerson did so first and foremost for Nietzsche. However, he still (in an idealistic or transcendental fashion) relies on a friendly nature shared by everyone, which inspires and supports thinking and acting that proves advantageous for everyone. Stirner, by contrast, who wants to secure the individual's right to its own access to the world, assumes a rather defiant attitude against all seemingly pre-given general orders. For Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, Emerson and later Nietzsche, a blind urge of the will, distress or anxiety fuel thinking; the distinc-*

tion between calming and disturbance (or despair) becomes more decisive than the distinction between truth and falsity. Schopenhauer's dethronement of reason results in the wish for permanent rest in nothingness; Kierkegaard, in his certainty of faith, tries instead to make the handling of anxiety fruitful for a new determination of the self-relation in the sense of a mere 'keeping one's balance' – in which one can succeed or fail.

While Schopenhauer adheres to the concept of philosophy as a "complete repetition, a mirroring of the world in abstract terms, as it were," Kierkegaard asks after the effect of philosophical concepts, which can deprive the described relations of their earnestness in rendering them merely in abstract terms. The despair over a stable being-able-to-be-oneself, understood as habitual anxiety in the sense of a fear of sin or "sickness unto death," brings us close to death. But for this very reason, it also coerces us into committing ourselves to new projects of thought or philosophical reorientation. While Schopenhauer still professes sovereign insights of a new metaphysics that is expressly intended to redeem, i.e. less to convince than to console, Kierkegaard renounces all power of authority in thinking with the help of a network of pseudonyms presenting different opinions from different perspectives. He seeks paradoxes and works creatively with them.

Both Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard conceptualize the concrete universal of animals and the human species in a new way, namely as a temporal kind of a general or universal being, which emerges through the propagation of individuals with individuals, stays for some time, and perishes again. According to Schopenhauer, individuals and the species mutually generate each other; according to Kierkegaard, "hereditary sin" can, within a Christian framework, only be thought in such a way that Adam does not bear the blame for all sin, but rather that all other human beings have to take responsibility for it in their thinking and acting. They have to do so ever anew in their respective situation. In this way, even before Darwin, the concept of a temporal, always changing general or universal being is prepared philosophically: the concept of fluctuance.

17. Alternatives in the Moral-Political Commitment of Philosophy: Marx and Mill

After the French Revolution, a seething revolutionary atmosphere held sway over Europe. The industrial revolution created massive new socio-economic realities: the capitalist market economy on the one hand, which generated great riches, and the impoverishment of the working class, which was used to produce these riches and resources, on the other. The extremely uneven distribution of riches provoked philosophical statements. In Great Britain and the United States, one urged in the tradition of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism to make possible the greatest happiness of the greatest number (sec. 12). In Germany, Hegel's philosophy prevailed. However, after Hegel's death, his sentence, "that which is reasonable is real, and that which is real is reasonable" (sec. 14), was interpreted in two alternative ways: either as backing the existing state of Prussia and justifying the current social, economic, and political conditions, or as an appeal to change these conditions, since the reasonable is yet to be realized in society.

Both in Europe and in America, the workers' poverty caused a *moral commitment* in philosophy *to become practical philosophy* as long as economy and politics accepted that the social conditions deteriorated further. Philosophy began to become the moral conscience of the world, and therein it took over a task of the disappearing religion. Insofar as philosophy did not become practical, i.e. insofar as it did not urge to put its thought into action, philosophy appeared as mere *theory*, as something made up; it had to and wanted to regain its credibility through a practical test. With its *critique of* the existing economic, social, and political reality, it at the same time exposed itself to a *critique by* this reality. Philosophy turned from an observer into a fellow player in history, in which it can persist or perish. In the end, it is history that proves it right or wrong. The most accentuated examples hereof are, in the 19th and the 20th century, the philosophies of KARL MARX (1818-1883 AD) on the one hand, and of JOHN STUART MILL (1806-1873 AD) on the other.

MARX, the grandson of rabbis, son of a baptized lawyer, studied law and philosophy, and as a journalist, he learned how to make use of the media. He campaigned politically in the organization of the international workers' movement, and finally, together with his friend FRIEDRICH ENGELS (1820-1895 AD), he dedicated

himself more and more to a socio-critical philosophy. Engels was the broad-gauge, economically (among other things, through stock trading) successful son of a textile factory owner who supported Marx financially. Stricken with disease, Marx was not able to complete his large-scale magnum opus, *Das Kapital* (*Capital*). Perpetually persecuted for political reasons and, time and again, being expelled from the States, Marx lived under poor circumstances in Brussels, Paris, and finally in London.

Philosophically, Marx proceeds from Hegel's dialectic philosophy on the one hand, and from Feuerbach's anthropology on the other, who in the essence of the ancient God recognized the true essence of the human being, which was only projected onto God. For Marx and Engels, both Hegel's and Feuerbach's philosophies have remained pure theories; now they think the time has come to transform them into revolutionary practice. To this end, Marx and Engels sharpen Hegel's and Feuerbach's philosophies: unlike Feuerbach, they do not base the essence of man on its bodily-sensory, but rather on the comprehensive societal production of means to live, and they turn Hegel's dialectic into a method of demonstrating a necessary sequence in the history of the production of means to live; this sequence should also allow for prognoses. With the help of masterful reversals in their formulations, they want to turn dialectic upside down, so that it is put "from the head to the feet." However, the scientific, propagandistic, and agitating commitment of Marx and Engels first has its full effect when VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN (1870-1924 AD) creates an ideology with mass impact for the purposes of the Russian Revolution.

Marx and Engels, who regards himself as "second violin" in relation to Marx, direct philosophy's attention to the fact that the material hardships and needs determine human life to such an extent that they also dominate morals, religion, politics, and even philosophy itself. Where the practical coping with life is at stake, thinking loses its supposed autonomy; pure thinking becomes a mere appearance; in fact, thinking is the organ and function of the respective circumstances of life. Thinking orients human beings under these conditions; if they change, this will result also in radical reorientations in thinking. Where severe poverty obtains obviously, such as the poverty of the workers descending into misery, reorientation is triggered *morally*: others' emergency coerces human orientation into helping these others immediately, and now this help must be implemented politically.

Marx aims for emancipation in the sense of enlightened humanism, for the liberation of the human being as such, now above all from the hardships and con-

straints to which the capitalist market economy subjects the majority of human beings: day after day, they have to fight for subsistence minimum by working painstakingly hard in the service of others who profit from their work. Marx also employs the means of universalization, totalization, and radicalization. First of all, he onesidedly declares labor (*Arbeit*) as the core and criterion of societal conditions and processes to gain better means of life. For him, this means that labor power turns into commodity (*Ware*) and thereby loses its dignity in the capitalist market economy and its more and more differentiated labor division. Due to the fact that the owner of the means of production, the capitalist, skims the "surplus value" (*Mehrwert*) created by laborers, the laborers are alienated from the objects of the work, from their work itself, and finally from themselves as human beings. Capitalism engenders human self-alienation.

For Marx, this becomes evident in the laborers' increasing pauperization as proletariat that has nothing but its labor power, which they must sell, and descendants who, again, must hire themselves out as laborers. This anti-humanistic economy must, according to Marx and the historical lawfulness he professes, lead to the revolution of the proletarians, who in the end will create a classless communist society of completely emancipated human beings and cancel all alienation. In making the labor value theory the principle of national economics, Marx marginalizes price formation on the market and the possibility that market economy, as Adam Smith (sec. 12) argued, offers the long-term enhancement of the good of all. This enhancement of general welfare has occurred in history, even though to a very variable extent and after long times of increasing exploitation of the workers, of economic crises, and outrageous misery all over the world, just as Marx has predicted. Marxism-Leninism, however, historically failed as the real existing socialism which many countries in the world experienced. In this regard, philosophy has not passed the practical test.

MILL's way to the becoming-practical of philosophy was different, even though it, time and again, overlaps with Marx's way. Mill did not react to Marx, albeit both of them lived in London for a long time; Marx, however, responded to Mill. Following the British tradition, Mill works less with deductions from general propositions than with inductions from concrete observations; he foregrounds not so much groups that fight jointly for their moral, social, and political right, but rather the individuals and their freedom. Mill bears in mind a "Civil, or Social Liberty" which develops in the individuals' leeways over against the power of society involving its economy,

politics, public opinion, and morality. According to Mill, these leeways weigh heavy for the "weaker members of the community." Even though the powerless, in the first instance, have little use for these leeways, they can be extended over time; according to Mill, they should not be secured through revolutionary propaganda and violence, but rather parliamentarily, through legislation.

The state of law regulates the use of political power, which is inevitable also in a democracy. In a democracy, however, no general will in Rousseau's sense (sec. 12) needs to be presupposed. On the contrary, the individual must be protected against the "tyranny of the majority"; and ultimately, all individuals must be protected against assaults on each other. Therefore, a society must find a "fitting adjustment between individual independence and social control" through the law and morality. Mill presupposes that every one's "standard of judgment is his own liking." Therefore, everyone shall be free to achieve his or her own wellbeing according to his or her own ideas, since the individual is best at that, provided that no-else else is injured.

Mill concedes that this thought is not original. Compared to Marx's and Engels' social-revolutionary pathos, Mill adheres to a calm sense of reality, which weighs all circumstances, also in moral-political dedication. Educated by his father, James Mill, in the teachings of his father's friend Jeremy Bentham (sec. 12), Mill regards "utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions." Already as a small child under the guidance of his father, Mill has begun to acquire a comprehensive education in the spirit of a cool rationalism, and since then, he has worked until he suffered a nervous breakdown and depression. This causes him a severe personal disorientation that awakes in him important new philosophical perspectives beyond the classic utilitarianism. He reorients utilitarianism: the greatest happiness of the greatest number must not occur at the expense of the happiness of the individual; rather, it must summarize the happiness of the individuals.

Just like his father, Mill is for decades employed by the *East India Company*, one of the mightiest capitalist organizations of his day. However, he also perceives the misery of the working class and seeks to combat it, for some years also as a Member of Parliament, through gradual reforms. Inspired and supported by Harriet Taylor, his later wife, he advocates equal rights of men and women. He fights against the privileges of the land-owning aristocracy, believes in democracy, and tries to strengthen it by extending the right to vote. At the same time, he fears the democrat-

ic drive for equity and demands that the public spirit and factionalism must not win through. Like Marx, he regards the state as provisional in the transition to a more liberal society without strong leadership structures. He does so under the banner of liberalism: the state shall protect the freedom, security, and welfare of the individuals – and restrict them as little as possible. Society shall not dominate over the individuals, and the individuals shall not dominate over society; rather, society and the individuals shall realign and coordinate their interests.

Mill mistrusts not only tradition and habits, but also the masses' power of judgment. Without illusions, he orients himself to that which is realizable politically and avoids to debate principles. In order to launch new developments, he speaks up for competition and innovation not only in economy, but also in regimes; however, he does not endorse unlimited growth. Mill wants to charge independent and educated personalities (like himself) with the government of the state; these personalities shall represent the people also in the parliaments. He expects the greatest welfare of all from everyone's active participation in the shaping of society on the one hand, and from the competence of the elected representatives and the rulers on the other. The wisdom of the people lies, for him, in the election of wise leaders. Put in the language of the philosophy of orientation: as far as possible, Mill tries to tie political power to fact-orientation and personal superiority in orienting oneself and providing orientation for others; for him, the party system and the antagonism of government and opposition in democracy are of lower interest.

Even in regard to Mill's approach to social problems, the practical test revealed limits, be they institutional or personal ones. Nonetheless, Great Britain, the at that time premier economic power of the world, succeeded in avoiding a radical social upheaval in the country – despite repeatedly flaming up protests – by carrying out gradual reforms of laws and of the parliament, to which Mill personally contributed. However, Britain enjoyed rich earnings from a worldwide colonial empire, which did not enjoy comparable parliamentary rights. But neither in Germany nor in France, the revolution of the working class proclaimed by Marx came to pass; it happened only in Russia, which Marx did not deem mature for it and where the desired freedom of all could not be realized.

The philosophy of orientation can in view of Marx's and Mill's alternative orientation decisions explore the leeways in which philosophy can commit itself mor-

ally and politically and, in this sense, become practical. Since the justification of Christian dogmatics in the Middle Ages and the design of the state of law, the market economy, and democracy in modernity, Marx's and Mill's practical projects have been the hitherto most comprehensive and influential ones in the history of philosophy; both projects have changed the societal circumstances in a sustained manner.

Both Marx and Mill regard society as a society of individuals: the individuals are dependent on a society in order to be able to live as individuals, and society is dependent on different individuals in order to be able to make progress. While Mill targets the good of the individual, Marx targets the good of society as a whole, though at first the good of the majority in a society, but both of them want to enhance the good of all. Further, both of them find in democracy the political form to achieve this end, and both of them advance political economics, yet in alternative ways.

Mill builds democracy on the mutual restriction of leeways, which can be determined anew in new situations, i.e. be changed through reforms. This requires a comparatively low degree of ideology, which unites the individuals to a community, and a high degree of individual orientation abilities and virtues in order to understand and support the constitutional democratic structures that become more and more complex.

Marx, on the other hand, observes that in societal misery, revolutionary transformations are required from a moral point of view. He predicts that these transformations occur according to economic and historical laws. Still, the revolutionary upheaval must be carried out by human beings who suffer from the situation, and for this purpose, they need guiding ideas that unite them and motivate them to fight, i.e., they need a strong ideology, as Lenin has pronounced it plainly. Through an ideology, the individual orientations are determined by an assertive political program with mass impact subordinating the individuals' ideas and aims to common interests. When a society suffers bitter hardships, the orientation towards the benefit of the whole community prevails over the individual orientations.

It may be for situational reasons that communism failed historically as an attempt to free all members of a society from misery; in countries where political leaders still cling to the communistic ideology, it can only be upheld by force.

However, the failure of communism can also be due to the fact that philosophy overestimates the general when it believes it can develop political programs according to which an entire society can be changed revolutionarily; to allow such programs to be successful, the living conditions of a society seem to be far too complex, and individual orientations seem to vary too much.

*Yet, such a statement, too, is under suspicion of ideology if we follow the Marxian theory according to which philosophy must be a criticism of ideology (*Ideologiekritik*). The reason is that philosophy cannot completely refuse the suspicion to be a representative of individual or societal interests and, since one can orient oneself* about *a situation only* in *this situation, one cannot explore one's situation in total. Philosophy is, for Marx, always part of a "superstructure (*Überbau*)" whose "base (*Basis*)" it comprehends only to a limited extent. The philosophy of orientation is aware of the fact that every philosophy inevitably springs from a situated standpoint. Yet, this entails that the orientation of philosophers, too, is always already practical because they reflect, correct, and continuously reform their ideas in regard to relevant footholds of new situations. Therefore, philosophy as orientation must prudently abstain from exceedingly universalizing, totalizing, and radicalizing.*

18. Alternative Ways of Liberating Philosophy from Metaphysics: Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James

WILHELM DILTHEY (1833-1911 AD), FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1889/1900 AD) and WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910 AD) consciously drive forward *an epochal change within the field of philosophy*. They proceed largely independently of each other, but go ahead in the same direction. They insist on their *own orientation decisions* and include them also into their philosophies. In this context, they resolutely break with metaphysics and begin to investigate the conditions and structures of orientation decisions as such.

Their curricula vitae resemble each other in many aspects, and yet, Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James represent different types of personalities. Nietzsche, whose father died early, originated from narrow circumstances, while Dilthey stemmed from a prosperous, and James from a wealthy family. Dilthey and Nietzsche were

sons of pastors, who turned away from theology and remained critical against Christian religion throughout their life; James, by contrast, at all times kept his ways to God open. All three of them attended the very best schools and were deeply rooted in European thought; James came to Europe 13 times in his life, particularly to Germany, while Dilthey and Nietzsche never reached beyond Europe.

All three of them were university professors. Dilthey, who became a professor of philosophy first in Basel, then in Kiel, Breslau, and Berlin, and James, for whom Harvard University established a new professorial chair, enjoyed a successful academic career, whereas Nietzsche, who was appointed to a professorship in Basel already as a student of classical philology, had to resign his position after ten years for reasons of health and because he in the meantime had turned completely to philosophy. Since then, Nietzsche lived at changing places primarily in Italy and Switzerland as a stateless migrant. He had to find places whose climate was endurable for him; yet, also for the sake of his intellectual freedom, he never settled down. All three of them entered philosophy starting from different disciplines: Dilthey from theology, Nietzsche from classical philology, and James from medicine and psychology. This facilitated their break with tradition. Each of them was tormented by chronic ailments that brought them periods of depression and hampered their abilities to carry out their duties. Their ailments made them aware of the fact that thinking in large measure depends on physical conditions. Nonetheless, Dilthey and James were happily married, while Nietzsche tried to marry, but then refrained from doing so and remained alone.

Dilthey was the type of a gentle scholar who intensely carried out his research and was closely interconnected with his colleagues. He was cautious in valuing, avoided everything too personal, and presented his profound philosophical reorientations in classic treatises. He did so in serene and composed trust in his research and with the authority of a man of letters; he cultivated a close philosophical friendship with the aristocrat PAUL YORCK OF WARTENBURG (1835-1897 AD). James, whose godfather was Ralph Waldo Emerson and whose brother was the likewise famous author Henry James, synchronized with his friend CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE (1839-1914 AD), with JOHN DEWEY (1859-1952 AD), and F.C.S. SCHILLER (1864-1937 AD) in order to advance pragmatism as a joint undertaking. Nietzsche, by contrast, cultivated his image as a solitary genius – against the type of a mere scholar and to the dismay of Dilthey and James. To this, Schopenhauer (sec. 16) encouraged him as his

intellectual teacher, and his early, close friendship with the illustrious Richard Wagner and his wife Cosima enhanced it.

Nietzsche entered into philosophy in a very personal, pathetic, and polemical way with his pathbreaking treatise *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*), which turned upside down the classic view of the ancient Greeks, and with his *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*) that challenged the scholarly world of his day. Nietzsche created a hitherto unknown diversity of literary forms for his philosophy and learned progressively how to deepen and at the same time question his philosophical teachings by using these literary forms. Through the "subtler laws of his style," Nietzsche, as author, made a mystery of himself, so that one never can take him immediately at his word, but is forced into decisions of interpretation and orientation. In this regard, Nietzsche reminds us of Plato.

Next to treatises (like *The Birth of Tragedy*) and essays (like *Untimely Meditations*), Nietzsche on a big scale created volumes containing aphorisms, for instance *Human, All Too Human* (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*), *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*), and *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*), where he presents his thoughts from various perspectives. In addition, he authored evermore polemic papers and pamphlets like *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*), *Götzen-Dämmerung* (*Twilight of the Idols*), and *The Antichrist* (*Der Antichrist*), but also poems like *Dionysian-Dithyrambs* (*Dionysos-Dithyramben*). In *Ecce homo,* which contains the genealogy of his own thinking, Nietzsche highlighted his didactic poem *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*), which unites epic and dramatic, dialogical and lyrical features. Here Nietzsche lets his protagonist fail because no one can sufficiently understand his teachings.

Nietzsche raised a sensation through startling formula like "the death of God," "nihilism," "the will to power," "the overman" (earlier translated as "superman"), and "the eternal recurrence of the same," which he did not connect systematically. Such formula easily conceal the richness and depth of his philosophy, and it took decades before Nietzsche was discovered as a great philosopher. In contradistinction to Dilthey and James, and also to his own work in classic philology, Nietzsche offered little hard-earned knowledge in his philosophy; on the contrary, he often used secondhand knowledge. So much the more, he always anew surprised (and surprises) people with interesting perspectives, sharp evaluations, and trenchant

judgments. Nonetheless (or exactly for this reason) he remained, other than Dilthey and James, largely unsuccessful with his writings as long as his mental faculties were unimpaired; however, when he suffered from insanity, he quickly was known worldwide. His impact went far beyond philosophical professional circles, and it continues unabatedly down to the present day. Nietzsche has – after Socrates – wide appeal as the type of genius philosopher as such.

All the three, Dewey, Nietzsche, and James, turned away from metaphysics *in a productive way* by also freeing themselves from all transcendent and transcendental doctrines. They regard all philosophical doctrines, which claim to be unconditionally certain, as metaphysics. In observing that metaphysics and religion are in the process of dissolution, they not even try to disprove them, but only put them, as Nietzsche and James say, "on ice." Instead, they want to reveal "the whole, full, non-mutilated experience," as Dilthey puts it, in all the abundance with which this experience provides us, starting from natural bodily life and the individual consciousness right through to culture, history, and the communication systems of society that depend on each other in manifold ways. What is revealed here is the reality by and large ignored and concealed by metaphysics: the *reality of everyday orientation*.

Dewey, Nietzsche, and James consider metaphysics as a historical and thus bygone phenomenon. In his first main work, *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (*Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften,* published in 1883), Dilthey presents a detailed history of the "rule" and "decay" of metaphysics; he calls its historicization, against which metaphysics always has strived, its "euthanasia." Dilthey's result is that "metaphysics cannot overcome the relativity of the circle of experiences from which its concepts are taken." This circle of experiences changes all the time and is "unpredictable, relative, and restricted;" it cannot be understood metaphysically as a "logical coherence of the world." This is Nietzsche's view, too. For sure, he writes that metaphysics itself was a "step in the process of liberation" – namely from religious claims asserting an ultimate certainty, and therein, metaphysics has its "historical and psychological right." In the meantime, however, metaphysics has become a sign of weakness if one still wants to rely on a "science" that "deals with the basic errors of humankind – though in such a way, as if they were basic truths."

That which Dilthey and Nietzsche address as "metaphysics" includes, for James, the continental tradition of rationalism. To bid adieu to rationalistic metaphysics is easier when coming from the British and American tradition that follows

nominalism, empirism, and utilitarism, and it can appeal to common sense, which is not possible in the German tradition. That which James calls "pragmatism" turns away "from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins." Instead, pragmatism turns "towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power." In his "disbelief in the Absolute," James takes, as he says, "moral holidays" in which he leaves metaphysics behind. Nonetheless, Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James acknowledge that one can draw on metaphysics when nothing else leads to the targeted objective, for instance concerning the relation between consciousness and brain, or the ethically inevitable problem of the free will. However, one must then be aware of the fact that one only deals with metaphysics and must accept metaphysical paradoxes. Yet, for James, pragmatism does not exclude the search for God.

In James' view, when investigating concreteness, our state of the art corresponds to the one of physics before Galilei: everything is provisional and remains in need of revision. As to Dilthey and Nietzsche, the dissolution of metaphysics leaves a *general disorientation.* As Nietzsche states in a posthumous note of June 10, 1887, in which he sought to acquire an overview of the status of philosophy in general and his own philosophy in particular, life becomes "uncertain, accidental, nonsensical in our Europe"; one can no longer appreciate the old and has not yet learnt to appreciate the new that one still knows too little. Nietzsche concludes: "*One* interpretation" – namely the metaphysical interpretation – "perished; since it was regarded as *the* interpretation, it seems as if existence was meaningless, as if everything was *in vain.*" Nietzsche calls this "nihilism." From this nihilism results a "revaluation of all values," which challenges humanity to create new values. Dilthey confirms Nietzsche's diagnosis, speaks of the "perplexity of the spirit about itself" or a "consciousness of anarchy looming in all deeper convictions," and continues: "Maybe the ultimate suppositions of human life and action have never to such an extent been exposed to disintegration."

James, by contrast, remains optimistic. With his psychology and the philosophy of pragmatism, he has already found a new foothold. He trusts that *the successful orientation of thinking manifests itself in action*. This implies, in his opinion, that we have to look "away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities" and instead "toward last things, fruits, consequences, facts." Moreover, he recom-

mends "linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor" and, in doing so, maintaining a "maximum of continuity." Truths are valid only for a time in certain situations. They first appear as truths and stand the test when and as long they make a difference in action, or when one can make use of them in such a way that the results are satisfactory.

James argues that truths can have a "function of agreeable leading," i.e. *an orienting function*. The truths that prove successful in orientation, are consulted again in comparable situations: "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot." This is their "cash value," and with it arises something like a "credit system" of truth. Something is regarded as true as long as someone disagrees; just as money is valid as long as it is no longer accepted. However, somewhere there must also be "direct face-to-face verifications"; without them, "the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth." In this exchange, orientation finds a sufficient foothold, without demanding unconditional certainties. This is a good description of fundamental structures and processes of everyday orientation.

Just like, long ago, Newton's physics (sec. 11) created a new situation for philosophy, so did also *Darwin's evolutionary biology.* Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James affirmed it – while raising specific objections and without placing Darwin's theory in the center of their philosophies. Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) was philosophically significant insofar as Darwin empirically demonstrated that the apparently constant biological species on which Aristotle primarily had built his metaphysical concept of the concept (sec. 5) change incessantly in more or less long lapses of time. Strictly speaking, there are no biological species with invariable attributes or no steady forms that only change matter. Instead, individuals always beget different individuals with different individuals under different circumstances. The apparent substances that Aristotle regarded as 'being itself' are, in the language of the philosophy of orientation, in fact *fluctuances.* In addition, while Newton's laws could, following Kant, still be understood philosophically in the sense that they are construed by the human intellect itself, the Darwinian evolution of living beings occurs occasionally. As matters stand in the 19th century, the evolutionary process cannot be construed and predicted, but only be described.

Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James as well proceed to a *descriptive method.* Instead of abiding by principles, they observe experienceable processes. In the *description of the conditions and structures of human orientation* that precede scientific and metaphysical thinking, Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James largely agree. Nietzsche describes them in the most stimulating way, Dilthey in the most differentiated way, and James most concisely. Dilthey experiments with the notion of "being-oriented" (*Orientiertsein*), Nietzsche with the notions of "perspective" and "interpretation"; and James calls pragmatism on the whole "an attitude of orientation." Their respective descriptions extend to the fields of (1) culture, (2) history, (3) life, and (4) experience. For this purpose, they develop new and specific modes of distinction.

(1) *Culture*: In Nietzsche's eyes, an "era of comparison" has begun: "all *steps* and *kinds* of morality and *customs* of cultures" are accessible through traveling, the mixture of different peoples, the media and the sciences; they are compared to each other in its value and can be "experienced side by side." Thus, they are obligatory only to a limited extent. Today, this phenomenon is described as postmodern globalization. The *comparative method* orients itself by describing cultural differences, yet without assuming that different cultures have something in common. The differences are registered with the help of footholds that are, for their part, not binding. They constitute no essential attributes. One articulates contrasts in order to gain an overview. Comparisons can possibly be drawn in all directions.

(2) *History:* Under the programmatic title "critique of historical reason" (*Kritik der historischen Vernunft*), Dilthey conducts extensive historiography, focusing on the history of ideas that compares and contrasts different epochs. Nietzsche wants to begin a new era of "historical philosophizing" and aims for a "formation history of thinking" (*Entstehungsgeschichte des Denkens*). This history shall be kind of a naturalistic "chemistry of concepts and sentiments" (*Chemie der Begriffe und Empfindungen*). But it can also proceed alternatively, namely "antiquarian" in compiling sources and facts; "monumentalizing" in giving prominence to great examples; or, what matters to Nietzsche, "critical" in comparing its own time with earlier times, which enables us to decide on our own standards. In any case, history shall serve life.

(3) *Life:* James concentrates on accounting for all intellectual and spiritual life as a process of natural life. His broad concept of life, which emphasizes diversity and transformation, includes culture and history as well. For James just as for

Dilthey and Nietzsche, the concept of life has the function of replacing *a priori* judgments: life does not require any transcendent or transcendental justification. Life regulates itself, but can also be shaped; it is always to be presupposed as a whole, but it can never be grasped as a whole – like Spinoza's *deus sive natura* (sec. 9). Dilthey understands life as mere interrelation and interdependency (*Zusammenhang*). In the "interrelation of life" (*Lebenszusammenhang*), there constantly emerge connections of structures (*Strukturzusammenhänge*) or, in brief, structures (*Strukturen*) that dissociate themselves from their environment, sustain themselves within it, and can react upon it. This happens fortuitously, under favorable conditions. The respective structures can incorporate elements and other connections of structures that are in their environment, but they can also divide themselves and dissolve again. The crucial new thought is: these structures preserve themselves as a net of mere connections and not because of isolated relations of causality; they are individual like every living creature. Dilthey speaks of an "acquired structural interrelation" (*erworbener Strukturzusammenhang*), while Nietzsche aggressively uses the keyword of the will to power; for "in its basic functions," life is "violating, raping, exploiting, devastating," too. In Nietzsche, uncountable wills to power engage with other wills to power without any pregiven laws; this is, Nietzsche supposes, the most economical hypothesis helping us to understand life as such.

Since one cannot step out of life without losing one's life, one can only do justice to it by *understanding it on its own terms*, not by *explaining it with reference to something else*. Our understanding is, in turn, bound to contexts of life. For this reason, understanding is always individual, on the one hand, and comprehensive on the other: in understanding, objects are not first isolated and then connected according to one-dimensional relations such as causality; rather, they are from the very start contextualized, apprehended in their respective relations, which can be differentiated or abbreviated dependent on the requirements of the situation. Understanding thereby proceeds in an oscillating manner and in a hermeneutic circle: individual things can be understood in their relations to a whole, and the whole can be understood in relation to its individual parts. This is the *basic model of orientation in a situation*.

Nietzsche considers understanding, too, as a will to power, namely as an appropriation of otherness on one's own terms. In principle, the latter is therefore a misunderstanding, since there is no superordinate criterion for clearly distinguish-

ing a true from a false understanding. It is, as we all know, difficult to be understood. Hence, Nietzsche's point of departure is not being-understood, but rather being-misunderstood. Among human beings, understanding is, for him, a "leeway and playground of misunderstanding (*Spielraum und Tummelplatz des Missverständnisses*)." He goes even further: the will to truth and the value of truth itself could be a metaphysical prejudice, for human life is also in need of deception and self-deception. One must "admit untruth as a condition in life," and logic, metaphysics, and morality could, in Nietzsche's view, belong to untruths that are vital for life. In philosophy, all truths including the will to truth appear to be conditioned by life and thus not equally true for everyone: "all the basic instincts of human beings" have, according to Nietzsche, "already philosophized." This means that philosophy is "the most intellectual will to power," and physics, too, is "nothing but an interpretation and design of the world (*Auslegung und Zurechtlegung*)," a kind of "world-interpretation (*Welt-Interpretation*) that wants to divest existence of its naturally "*equivocal* character."

For James, the orientation by life contexts instead of isolated objects requires the *pragmatistic self-restraint of philosophy.* He conceptualizes a kind of critique of active, living reason, which implies that life cannot be halted for the sake of enabling objective insights. For this reason, truths must be parts of life contexts. Truths emerge from experiences; in their light, new experiences are gained in a self-referential process, and from these new experiences, new truths originate, etc. *James describes an ongoing process of orientation*: in contextualization, "lines of influence" take shape and are linked by "conductors" that offer themselves at some places and can fail to appear at other places. James uses already the metaphor of fibers in a thread, which became famous through Wittgenstein. If understanding is the integration into contexts, the mere integration of observations, objects, and sentences, etc., makes them already true. There may be manifold systems of integration, but one cannot escape from integration in some form. Nonetheless, "the 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter," is still thinkable, but only as "that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge." Such vanishing-points are also parts of the very process of orientation. In James' eyes, all experiences "lean on each other," but the whole of experiences leans on nothing. What remains is a "state of relative insecurity."

James, just like Dilthey and Nietzsche, does not find any bad *relativism* in this current state of insecurity, but rather a *realism* to which philosophy must face up. One not only (following Hobbes, sec. 8) regards something as good because one desires it, but can also regard something as true because one is okay with it to the extent that it fits well to the routines of one's own life. Truths only catch attention as such when they make a difference, i.e. when they render action more or less successful – whereby the success is assessed by the agents themselves in their respective situations. As regards *abstract thinking,* Nietzsche and James clarify that its success lies in its orienting *steering function.* Nietzsche designates language as a whole as a "process of abbreviation (*Abkürzungs-Prozess*)." Seen from a historical perspective, language develops via ever new usages in ever new situations. However, at all times, language and the concepts it offers give a pre-orientation, and all thinking and acting is under the "spell" of this pre-orientation: "the *spell* of certain grammatic functions is ultimately the spell of *physiological* value judgments and racial conditions."

According to James, the single concepts in particular are "only artificial shortcuts": "Their great use is to summarize old facts and to lead to new ones." All comes down to this "being guided" by a concept, and every agreement is said to be "an affair of leading." Logical links work with abstracted features; yet, the way in which one abstracts some features from some entities, and the question of which feature is regarded as crucial (for instance the mortality of Socrates in the logical parade example 'Socrates is mortal'), all this depends on the respective purposes and interests that are implied in an argumentation. The truly interesting aspect of syllogism is the decision for certain features and certain directions of abstraction. There are various kinds of union and separation; yet, James argues that under the respective terms of "great systems of logical and mathematical truths," the sensible facts of experience "eventually arrange themselves, so that our eternal truths hold good of realities also. This marriage of fact and theory is endlessly fertile."

The process of orientation, as we call it, sediments, for James, in the 'common sense' of the English tradition. The common sense collects *plausibilities* that can and need not to be justified anymore. At this point, the process of orientation comes to rest. As James puts it in "The Meaning of Truth" (1909), "the common-sense stage is a perfectly definite haltingplace of thought, primarily for purposes of action." Seen from rationalistic points of view, this stage is "vague, confused and mixed," but in concrete situations, it is "a use usually suggested sufficiently by the circumstances of

the special case." It orients us "in an extraordinarily successful way": James believes that it "suffices for all the necessary ends of life." After all, *the "economy in thought" is crucial in all situations of orientation*.

(4) *Experience*: However, understanding presupposes a distance to the objects and contexts to be understood. With his notion of experience (*Erleben*), Dilthey even goes back 'behind' understanding. Life is experienced immediately in life contexts, and it is experienced by individual consciousness. The ways in which we experience life individually, the 'how' of experience, is investigated in *psychology.* Especially through WILHELM WUNDT (1832-1920 AD), psychology was in Germany developed as an empirical science that rests on a physiological fundament, and it was conducted as individual and folk psychology. Dilthey and James presuppose this kind of psychology and advance it. James does so with his voluminous *Principles of Psychology* of 1890, which turned him into the founding father of psychology in the USA; Dilthey does so within the framework of his foundation of the humanities in his *Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology* (*Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie,* 1894). Both of them go beyond the scientific explanatory experimental psychology in order to describe coherencies that, as Dilthey formulates it, are not just "thought out or deduced, but experienced." Thereby, the footholds are "typical human beings."

In this new psychology, everything that hitherto has been discussed under the title 'epistemology' shall be suspended: psychology now no longer assumes a subject-object- or body-soul-dichotomy, but rather proceeds from functional life contexts. James, who often combines his descriptions with pedagogical recommendations, focuses on the "stream of consciousness," in which different states of consciousness alternate continuously, and discusses step by step the role of attention, conception, discrimination and association, of the sense of time, of memory and imagination, of perception, reasoning, emotion, and instinct, and finally of the will in this stream of consciousness. Nietzsche dispenses with systematic deliberations. He aggressively takes psychology to be critical and debunking, and he uses it in order to disclose hidden personal motives behind all claims for absolute certainty that are particularly prominent in moral philosophy. In his psychology, he sees a new "way to the basic problems" of philosophy. His genealogy of morals can be understood as the foundation of a critical moral psychology.

In regard to the technique of distinction, the productive liberation from metaphysics with its unconditional certainties that are built on abstract concepts leads to a new type of generalization, namely *typing (Typisierung).* Dilthey types or categorizes world views that develop in certain circumstances of life (for instance naturalism, idealism of freedom, objective idealism); Nietzsche typecasts social figures that become relevant in the life of society (namely the educated philistine (*Bildungsphilister*), the man and the woman, the strong and the weak, the sovereign individual, the criminal) as well as individuals to whom he ascribes a special weight in history, society, and literature (for instance the types of Socrates, Jesus, and Zarathustra); James categorizes ways of acting that can make a difference (or do not). All three of them compare and contrast these types with others, interpret them psychologically and characterize them as models – not in order to find fixed general terms for a certain case or a sharply circumscribed assemblage of cases, but rather in order to give some preliminary footholds of how they could be captured.

Typing serves orientation, both the orientation of those who typecast and of others. Particularly in Nietzsche's case, typing results obviously in individual characterizations and interpretations that reveal his own will to power and thereby compromise him. One can always counter the preliminary footholds, which appear through typing, with other footholds; typing leaves a leeway for other forms of typing. Hence, generalizations remain flexible; they always remain generalizations with reservations. Everyone can decide on his or her own whether he or she wants to adopt generalizations or types for his or her own orientation. In the end, every single individual is responsible for the general. Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James discuss this problem, and Nietzsche also demonstrates it in every moment with the help of his pointed and fast typing in his manifold forms of philosophical authorship.

> *The philosophy of orientation is still dealing with the paradoxes that William James places at the beginning and the end of his overview of pragmatism: "Philosophy is at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits." – "On the one side the universe is absolutely secure, on the other it is still pursuing its adventures." Both paradoxes arise through the end of metaphysics or of the belief in truths of unconditional certainty. Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James liberate themselves productively from metaphysics in investigating the conditions and structures of human orientation that metaphysics has concealed; for metaphys-*

ics emerges exactly if one ignores the conditions and structures of human orientation.

When the latter come into view, James' paradoxes dissolve. Human orientation, which seems to be trivial, proves to be highly sublime. According to Dilthey, Nietzsche, and James, orientation works with descriptive, comparative, and hermeneutic procedures that clarify structural contexts or connections of structures, Strukturzusammenhänge*, as Dilthey calls them: they can crop up spontaneously, isolate themselves from their environment, sustain themselves in it or react upon it; they can change under shifting conditions and dissipate again. These structures have their footholds in the mere interrelation and interdependency (*Zusammenhang*) of their parts, which is the reason why they do not need any metaphysical foundation. Nietzsche coined the formula of the "music of life" that must be re-learned by idealistic philosophers.*

The "truths" at which human orientation arrives belong to such living interrelations and contexts. Human orientation controls them, according to James, in regard to what difference they make for action. This implies that human orientation can generalize its footholds only for a time and with reservation, or that it can only preliminarily typecast that which it observes, as Nietzsche demonstrates effectively with his entire work. Thereby, human orientation works with conceptual short-cuts to the observable footholds in changing situations, and it always leaves leeway for new footholds and the semantic deferral of its concepts. In this way, human orientation – as well as the philosophy of orientation – can keep up with the times.

****** To be continued ******

Sections to follow in a Second Edition:

19. Alternatives in Designing Philosophy in View of Time:
Nietzsche, Bergson, and Whitehead

20. Alternatives in Designing Philosophy in View of Language:
Frege, Wittgenstein, and Analytic Philosophy
– Peirce and Philosophies of Sign

21. Alternatives in Scrutizing the 'Given':
Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

22. Alternatives in Conceptualizing Human Being:
Anthropology, Existential Philosophy, and Structuralism

23. Alternatives in Conceptualizing Society:
Sociological Systems Theory and Critical Theory,
Communitarianism and Liberalism

24. Alternatives in Conceptualizing Ethics:
Theory of Justice (Rawls), Discourse Ethics (Habermas), Metaethics,
and Ethics Starting from the Other (Levinas and Derrida)

25. Alternatives in Courageously Reversing One's Own Orientation:
Wittgenstein and Heidegger

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