

Introduction

73. It is a natural supposition that in philosophy, before one gets down to dealing with what is at issue, namely, the actual cognition of what, in truth, is, it is first necessary to come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded as the instrument by which one seizes hold of the absolute or as the means by which one catches sight of it. The concern seems justified, in part because there are various kinds of cognition, and among them there might be one rather than another that is better suited to achieving this final end, so there could be a wrong choice among them; and in part also because if cognition is a faculty of a determinate kind and scope, then without a more precise determination of its nature and limits, one ends up grasping clouds of error rather than the heaven of truth. This concern is even bound to be transformed into the conviction that the entire project of acquiring for consciousness through cognition what is in-itself is absurd in its very concept, and that between cognition and the absolute there lies a limit which completely separates the two. For if cognition is the instrument for seizing hold of the absolute essence, then it becomes immediately clear that the application of an instrument to a thing no longer leaves the thing as it is for itself,¹ but rather goes about forming and changing it. Or, if cognition is not an instrument of our activity but is to a certain extent a passive medium through which the light of the truth reaches us, then here too we do not obtain it as it is in itself but only as it is through and in this medium. In both cases, we make use of a means which immediately brings about the opposite of its goal; or rather, what is absurd is that we are making use of a means at all. It does indeed seem that this defect can be remedied through cognition of the way in which the *instrument* works, for such cognition makes it possible to subtract from within the result that part which, in the representation we obtain of the absolute through the instrument, belongs to the instrument; and so such cognition makes it possible to obtain the

¹ für sich.

truth purely. However, this improvement would in fact only bring us back to where we were before. If we again subtract from a formed thing what the instrument has added to it, then the thing – here, the absolute – is again for us exactly as it was prior to this consequently superfluous effort. If the absolute is only to be brought just a bit closer to us through the instrument, without the instrument changing anything about the absolute, perhaps as is done to a bird through a lime twig, then the absolute would surely ridicule such a ruse if it were not in and for itself already with us and did not already want to be with us; for cognition would be a ruse in such a case, since through its manifold efforts it creates the impression of doing something altogether different from simply bringing about an immediate and therefore effortless relation. Or, if the testing of cognition which we

54 suppose to be a *medium* made us acquainted with the law of its refraction, it would be just as useless to subtract this refraction from the result, for it is not the refraction of the ray but rather the ray itself through which the truth touches us that is cognition, and if this is subtracted, then all that would be indicated to us would be just pure direction or empty place.

74. Meanwhile, if the concern about falling into error sets up a mistrust of science, which itself, untroubled by such scruples, simply sets itself to work and actually cognizes, it is still difficult to see why on the contrary a mistrust of this mistrust should not be set up and why one should not be concerned that this fear of erring is already the error itself. In fact, this fear presupposes something, and in fact presupposes a great deal, as truth, and it bases its scruples and its conclusions on what itself ought to be tested in advance as to whether or not it is the truth. This fear presupposes *representations* of cognizing as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and it also presupposes a *difference between our own selves and this cognition*; but above all it presupposes that the absolute stands *on one side* and that *cognition stands on the other* for itself, and separated from the absolute, though cognition is nevertheless something real; that is, it presupposes that cognition, which, by being outside of the absolute, is indeed also outside of the truth, is nevertheless truthful; an assumption through which that which calls itself the fear of error gives itself away to be known rather as the fear of truth.

75. This conclusion arises from the following: that the absolute alone is true, or the true alone is absolute. It is possible to reject this conclusion by making the following distinction: that a cognition which indeed does not cognize the absolute, as science wants, may nevertheless also be true; and that cognition in general, if indeed it is incapable of grasping the absolute, may nevertheless be capable of grasping other truth. But we shall eventually see that this sort of talking back and forth amounts to a murky difference

between an absolute truth and some other kind of truth; and that the absolute, cognition, and so forth, are words which presuppose a meaning that, for one thing, is still to be attained.

76. Instead of fussing around with such useless representations and ways of talking about cognition as an instrument for getting hold of the absolute, or as a medium through which we catch sight of the truth, and so forth – relations which are implied by all these representations of a cognizing that is separated from the absolute and of an absolute that is separated from cognizing – instead of fussing around with excuses which create the incapacity of science by presupposing such relations and which thereby free one from the hard work of science while at the same time giving off the appearance of a serious and eager effort – that is, instead of fussing around with answers to all of this, it is possible to reject these outright as contingent and arbitrary representations, and to regard the affiliated use of words such as “absolute,” “cognition,” and also “objective” and “subjective,” and countless others, whose meaning is assumed to be generally known, as even a kind of deceit. For the pretense, for one thing, that their meaning is generally known, and for another thing, that one even has the concept of them, seems rather to be meant only to spare us the most important thing, namely to provide this concept. By contrast, one could with even more justification spare oneself the trouble of taking any notice at all of such representations and ways of talking which are meant to ward off science itself, for they constitute only an empty appearance of knowing which immediately vanishes in the face of the science which comes onto the scene. But science, insofar as it comes onto the scene, is itself an appearance; science’s coming onto the scene is not yet science as it is carried out and unfolded in its truth. It makes no difference in this regard whether one thinks *that science* is an appearance because it comes onto the scene *alongside a kind of knowing that is other than it*, or whether one calls that other, untrue kind of knowing science’s own appearing. But science must free itself from this surface appearance;² and it can do so only by turning itself against it. For with regard to a knowing that is not truthful, science cannot simply reject it as just a common view of things while giving out the assurance that it is itself a completely different kind of cognition and that that other knowing counts as absolutely nothing for science; nor can science appeal to some intimation, contained within that other knowing, of something better. Through such an *assurance*, science declares its being to be its power; but untrue knowing just as much appeals to the fact that *it is*, and it *gives out the assurance* that science

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² Schein.

counts as nothing to it; but *one* arid assurance is just as valid as another. Still less can science appeal to the better intimation which is supposed to be present in non-truthful cognition and which from within that cognition supposedly points towards science; for in that case, science, for one thing, would again be appealing just as much to something that just is; and for another thing, it would be appealing to itself as the mode in which it is in non-truthful cognition, that is to say, it would be appealing to a bad mode of its being and thus to its appearance rather than to the way it is in and for itself. It is for this reason that the exposition of knowing as it appears is to be undertaken here.

77. Now because this exposition has for its object only knowing as it appears, it does not itself seem to be the science which is free and self-moving within its own proper shape, but from this standpoint can instead be taken to be the path of natural consciousness pressing forward towards true knowing, or it can be taken to be the path of the soul wandering through the series of ways it takes shape, as if these were stations put forward in advance to it by its own nature, so that it purifies itself into spirit by arriving at a cognition of what it is in itself through the complete experience of its own self.

56 78. Natural consciousness will prove to be only the concept of knowing, or it will prove to be not real knowing. But while it immediately regards itself rather as real knowing, this path has negative meaning for it, and what is the realization of the concept will count instead, to it, as the loss of itself, for on this path, it loses its truth. This path can accordingly be regarded as the path of *doubt*, or, more properly, as the path of despair; on this path, what happens is not what is customarily understood as doubt, a shaking of this or that supposed truth, followed by the disappearance again of the doubt, and then a return to the former truth so that in the end the thing at issue is taken as it was before. Rather, this path is the conscious insight into the untruth of knowing as it appears, a knowing for which that which is the most real is rather in truth only the unrealized concept. Thus this self-consummating skepticism is also not what earnest zeal for truth and science surely thinks it has prepared and equipped itself with so that it might be ready for truth and science; that is, it is not the *project* in science of not submitting oneself to the thoughts of others based on their authority but rather testing everything oneself and following only one's own conviction, or – better still – producing everything oneself and taking only one's own deed for the true. The series of the figurations of consciousness which consciousness traverses on this path is the full history of the *cultivation* of consciousness itself into science. That project represents

cultivation in the simple mode of a project as immediately finished and done; but in contrast to this untruth, this path is the actual working out of the project. To be sure, following one's own conviction is more than submitting oneself to authority; but the converting of opinions which are held on authority into opinions which are held on the basis of one's own conviction does not necessarily involve a change in the content of those opinions, and does not necessarily make truth step into the place of error. The only difference between being stuck in a system of opinion and prejudice based on the authority of others and being stuck in one based on one's own conviction is the vanity which inheres in the latter mode. By contrast, the skepticism which is directed at the entire range of consciousness as it appears, makes spirit for the first time competent to test what truth is, by this kind of skepticism bringing about a despair regarding the so-called natural conceptions,³ thoughts, and opinions. It is a matter of indifference whether one calls them one's own or someone else's, and with which consciousness that goes *straightaway* into examining matters is still suffused and burdened, which thus in fact renders consciousness incapable of achieving what it wants to undertake.

79. The *completeness* of the forms of non-real consciousness will emerge through the very necessity of their progression and their interrelations. To make this comprehensible, it can be noted in general at the outset that the exposition of non-truthful consciousness in its untruth is not a merely *negative* movement. Such a one-sided view is what natural consciousness generally has of it; and a knowing which makes this one-sidedness into its essence is one of the shapes of incomplete consciousness which lies within the course of the path itself and which will serve itself up in that path. That is, such a one-sided view is the skepticism which sees in the result always only *pure nothing* and which abstracts from the fact that this nothing is determinately the nothing *of that from which it results*. However, only when taken as the nothing of that from which it emerges is the nothing in fact the true result; thus it is itself a *determinate* nothing and it has a *content*. Skepticism which ends with the abstraction of nothingness or emptiness cannot progress any further from this point, but must instead wait to see whether something new will present itself and what it will be, in order that it can also toss it into the same empty abyss. By contrast, while the result is grasped as it is in truth, as *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation, the transition is made whereby the progression through the complete series of shapes comes about on its own accord.

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³ natürlichen Vorstellungen.

80. However, to knowing, the *goal* is as necessarily fixed as is the series of the progression; the goal is the point at which knowing no longer needs to go beyond its own self, where knowing itself finds itself, and where the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept. The progression towards this goal is thus also unrelenting, and at no earlier station is satisfaction to be found. Whatever is limited to a natural life is not on its own capable of going beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven out beyond its immediate existence by an other, and this being torn out of itself is its death. But consciousness is for its own self its *concept*; as a result it is immediately the going beyond the restricted, and, since this restriction belongs to consciousness, consciousness is the going beyond of its own self; with the singular, the beyond is, to consciousness, simultaneously posited, even if the beyond is only posited as it is in spatial intuition *alongside* the limited. Consciousness therefore suffers this violence at its own hands and brings to ruin its own restricted satisfaction. With the feeling of this violence, anxiety over the truth might well withdraw and strive to hold on to what it is in danger of losing. But this anxiety can find no rest; even if it wants to remain in thoughtless indolence, thought spoils the thoughtlessness, and its unrest disturbs the indolence; or even if it fortifies itself with a sensibility which assures that everything is to be found *good as the type it is*, this assurance likewise suffers violence at the hands of reason which straightaway finds that something is not good precisely because it is that type of thing. That is, the fear of truth may conceal itself from itself and from others behind the pretense that it is precisely the ardent zeal for truth which makes it so difficult, and indeed impossible, to find any truth other than vanity's own truth of being always still cleverer than any thought that one gets either from oneself or from others. This vanity – which understands how to thwart every truth so that it retreats back into itself and which revels in this its own understanding (an understanding which always knows how to bring all thoughts to dissolution and how to find, in place of all content, only the arid I) – is a satisfaction which must be left to itself, for it flees from the universal and seeks only being-for-itself.

81. Just as these preliminary and general remarks about the manner and the necessity of the progression have been made, so too it might be useful to recall something about *the method of the way it is carried out*. This exposition, represented as the *conduct of science* in relation to knowing *as it appears*,⁴ and represented as the *investigation and testing of the reality of cognition*, seems incapable of taking place without some kind of

⁴ erscheinenden *Wissen*. It could also be rendered as “phenomenal knowing.”

presupposition which underlies it as a *standard*. For the testing consists in the application of an accepted standard, and in the resulting equality or inequality between the standard and what is tested lays the decision as to whether what is tested is correct or incorrect. The standard, likewise science itself if science were to be the standard, is thereby accepted as the *essence*, or as the *in-itself*. But here, at the point where science first comes on the scene, neither science itself nor anything else has justified itself as the essence or as the in-itself, and without something like that taking place, it seems that no examination can take place at all.

82. One can have a more determinate grasp of this contradiction and the removal of the contradiction if, first of all, one is reminded of the abstract determinations of knowing and truth as they come before consciousness. That is, consciousness *distinguishes* something from itself while at the same time it *relates* itself to it. Or, as it is expressed: This something is something *for consciousness*, and the determinate aspect of this *relating*, or of the *being* of something *for a consciousness*, is *knowing*. However, we distinguish this being-for-another from *being-in-itself*. That which is related to knowing is just as much distinguished from knowing and is posited as *being* also external to this relation. The aspect of this in-itself is called *truth*. Just what might genuinely be there in these determinations is of no further concern for us here, as our object is knowing as it appears, and hence its determinations are also at first taken up as they immediately present themselves, and thus the way that they have been grasped may well be the way that they present themselves.

83. If we then investigate the truth of knowing, it seems that we are investigating what knowing is *in itself*. Yet in this investigation, knowing is *our* object. It is *for us*, and the *in-itself* of knowing, which would result from the investigation, would be instead its being *for us*. What we would assert to be its essence would instead not be its truth but rather only our knowing of it. The essence or the standard would lie within us, and that which was supposed to be compared with the standard, and that about which a decision was supposed to be made on the basis of this comparison would not necessarily have to recognize⁵ the standard.

84. But the nature of the object which we are investigating goes beyond this division, or to this semblance of division and presupposition. Consciousness in its own self provides its own standard, and the investigation will thereby be a comparison of it with itself, for the difference which has just been made falls within consciousness. There is within consciousness

⁵ anzuerkennen.

one item *for an* other, or consciousness as such has within itself the determinateness of the moment of knowing; at the same time, this other is to consciousness not only *for it*, but also external to this relation, or *in itself*: the moment of truth. Therefore, in what consciousness declares within itself to be the *in-itself*, or the *true*, we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up to measure its knowing. If we designate *knowing* as the *concept*, but designate the essence, or the *true*, as what is⁶ or the *object*, then the examining consists in seeing whether the concept corresponds to the object. However, if we designate *the essence*, or the *in-itself of the object*, as *the concept*, and in contrast understand by *object* the concept insofar as it is *object*, or insofar as it is *for an other*, then the examining consists in our seeing whether the object corresponds to its concept. One clearly sees that both are the same, but what is essential throughout the whole investigation is to hold fast to this, that both of these moments, *concept* and *object*, *being-for-an-other* and *being-in-itself*, themselves fall within the knowing that we are investigating, and that we thus do not need to bring standards with us and in the investigation to apply *our* ideas and thoughts. By leaving these aside, we succeed in considering the matter at issue as it is *in* and *for itself*.

85. However, from this aspect not only will it be superfluous for us to add anything and not only because concept and object, the standard and what is to be examined, are present in consciousness itself. Rather, we are lifted above comparing the two and conducting a genuine *examination* such that, while consciousness examines its own self, the only thing that remains to us is purely to look on.⁷ This is so because consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other hand, it is consciousness of its own self. It is consciousness of what, to it, is the true, as well as consciousness of its knowing of the true. While both are *for the same* consciousness, consciousness itself is their comparison. It is an issue *for that consciousness* whether or not its knowing of the object corresponds to the object. To be sure, for consciousness, the object seems to be such only in the manner that consciousness knows it; consciousness seems, as it were, to be incapable of getting behind the object to the object as it is *in itself* and not as the object is *for consciousness*. However, consciousness therefore also seems to be incapable in its own self of testing its knowing of the object. Yet precisely because consciousness knows of an object at all, there is already
 60 present the difference that something is, to consciousness, the *in-itself*, but another moment is knowing, or the being of the object *for* consciousness. It is upon this difference which is present that the testing depends. If, in this

⁶ das Seiende. ⁷ reine Zusehen; "be simply an onlooker."

comparison, the two do not correspond to one another, then it seems as if consciousness must alter its knowing in order to make it adequate to the object. However, in knowing's alteration, the object itself is, to consciousness, also in fact altered; for the knowing which is present was essentially a knowing of the object; along with the knowing, the object also becomes something different, for it belonged essentially to this knowing. Thus to consciousness it comes to be the case that what, to it, was previously the *in-itself*, is not in itself, or that it was *in itself* only for consciousness. While it therefore finds on its object's part that its knowing does not correspond to the object, the object itself also does not endure. That is, the standard for the examination is altered when that for which it was supposed to be the standard itself fails the examination, and the examination is not only an examination of knowing but also an examination of the standard of knowing.

86. This *dialectical* movement which consciousness practices in its own self (as well as in its knowing and in its object), *insofar as, for consciousness, the new, true object arises* out of this movement, is properly what is called *experience*. In this respect, there is in the process just mentioned a moment to be highlighted more precisely, and this will cast a new light on the scientific aspects of the following exposition. Consciousness knows *something*, and this object is the essence, or the *in-itself*; but the object is also for consciousness the *in-itself*; and with this the double meaning of this truth comes on the scene. We see that consciousness now has two objects: One is the first *in-itself*, and the second is the *being-for-it of this in-itself*. The latter seems at first to be only the reflection of consciousness into itself, a representing not of an object but rather only of its knowing of that first object. But as was previously shown, the first object is, to consciousness, thereby altered. The first object ceases to be the *in-itself* and, to consciousness, becomes that which is only the *in-itself for consciousness*. However, this way there is this: the *being-for-it of this in-itself*, the true, which however means that this is the *essence*, or its *object*. This new object contains the nothingness of the first; it is what experience has learned about it.

87. In this exposition of the course of experience, there is a moment through which the exposition seems not to correspond with what is ordinarily understood by experience. The transition, namely, from the first object and the knowing of it to the other object *about which* one says that it has learned from experience, was specified in such a way that the knowing of the first object, or the *being-for-consciousness* of the first *in-itself*, is itself supposed to become the second object. By contrast, it ordinarily seems that we learn from experience about the untruth of our first concept in *another*

object that we perhaps come across serendipitously and extrinsically so that the only thing left to us is the pure *grasping* of what is in and for itself. However, based on the point of view given above, the new object shows itself to have come to be through a *reversal of consciousness* itself. This observation of the matter is our addition, whereby the series of experiences traversed by consciousness is elevated into a scientific progression, and which is not there for the consciousness that we are observing. However, this is in fact also the same situation already discussed above concerning the relation of this exposition to skepticism, namely, that each and every result which emerges from a non-truthful knowing should not coalesce into an empty nothing, but rather must be necessarily grasped as the nothing of *that of which it is the result*, a result which contains the truth that the previous knowing has within itself. Here it presents itself as follows: While what at first appeared as the object degenerating for consciousness into a knowing of the object, and the *in-itself* becomes a *being-for-consciousness of the in-itself*, this latter is the new object. As a result, a new shape of consciousness comes on the scene for which the essence is something different from what was the essence for the preceding shape. It is this circumstance which guides the whole series of shapes of consciousness in their necessity. However, it is just this necessity itself, or the *emergence* of the new object, which presents itself to consciousness without consciousness knowing how this happens to it. It takes place for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness. Through this there enters into the movement of consciousness a moment of the *in-itself*, or of *being for us*, which does not present itself for the consciousness which is itself comprehended in the experience itself. However, the *content* of what emerges to us is *for consciousness*, and we comprehend only what is formal in it, or its pure emergence. *For consciousness*, what has emerged is only as object; *for us*, what has emerged at the same time emerges as movement and coming-to-be.

88. Through this necessity, this path to science is itself already *science*, and according to its content it is thereby the science of the *experience of consciousness*.

89. The experience through which consciousness learns about itself can, according to its concept, comprehend within itself nothing less than the whole system of consciousness, or the whole realm of the truth of spirit, so that the moments of truth present themselves in this their proper determinateness, not as being abstract, pure moments, but rather in the way that they are for consciousness, or in the way that consciousness itself comes on the scene in its relation to them. In this way, the moments of the whole are *shapes of consciousness*. By consciousness carrying on towards its true

existence, it will reach a point where it sets aside its semblance of being 62
burdened with what is alien to it, which only is for it and is as other; a
point where the appearance becomes equal to the essence so that its own
exposition coincides at this very point with the genuine science of spirit.
Finally, while itself grasping this, its own essence, consciousness will signify
the nature of absolute knowing itself.