

Edmund Husserl

**Cartesian
Meditations**

An Introduction to Phenomenology
Translated by Dorion Cairns

KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS

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NOTE

This translation is based primarily on the printed text, edited by Professor S. Strasser and published in the first volume of *Husserliana* (Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1950). Most of Husserl's emendations, given in the Appendix to that volume, have been treated as if they were part of the text. The others have been translated in footnotes.

Secondary consideration has been given to a typescript (cited as "Typescript C") on which Husserl wrote in 1933: "Cartes. Meditationen / Originaltext 1929 / E. Husserl / für Dorion Cairns". Its use of emphasis and quotation marks conforms more closely to Husserl's practice, as exemplified in works published during his lifetime. In this respect the translation usually follows Typescript C. Moreover, some of the variant readings in this typescript are preferable and have been used as the basis for the translation. Where that is the case, the published text is given or translated in a footnote.

The published text and Typescript C have been compared with the French translation by Gabriel Peiffer and Emmanuel Levinas (Paris, Armand Collin, 1931). The use of emphasis and quotation marks in the French translation corresponds more closely to that in Typescript C than to that in the published text. Often, where the wording of the published text and that of Typescript C differ, the French translation indicates that it was based on a text that corresponded more closely to one or the other — usually to Typescript C. In such cases the French translation has been quoted or cited in a footnote.

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. *Descartes' Meditations as the phototype of philosophical reflection.*

I have particular reason for being glad that I may talk about transcendental phenomenology in this the most venerable abode of French science.¹ France's greatest thinker, René Descartes, gave transcendental phenomenology new impulses through his *Meditations*; their study acted quite directly on the transformation of an already developing phenomenology into a new kind of transcendental philosophy. Accordingly one might almost call transcendental phenomenology a neo-Cartesianism, even though it is obliged — and precisely by its radical development of Cartesian motifs — to reject nearly all the well-known doctrinal content of the Cartesian philosophy.

That being the situation, I can already be assured of your interest if I start with those motifs in the *Meditationes de prima philosophia* that have, so I believe, an eternal significance and go on to characterize the transformations, and the novel formations, in which the method and problems of transcendental phenomenology originate.

Every beginner in philosophy knows the remarkable train of thoughts contained in the *Meditationes*. Let us recall its guiding idea. The aim of the *Meditationes* is a complete reforming of philosophy into a science grounded on an absolute foundation. That implies for Descartes a corresponding reformation of all the sciences, because in his opinion they are only non-self-sufficient members of the one all-inclusive science, and this is philosophy. Only within the systematic unity of philosophy can the sciences develop into genuine sciences. As they have developed historically, on the other hand, / they lack the scientific genuineness which would consist in their complete and ultimate grounding on the basis of absolute insights, insights behind which one cannot go back any further. Hence the need for a radical rebuilding that satisfies the idea of philosophy as the all-inclusive unity of the sciences, within the unity of such an absolutely² rational grounding. With Descartes this demand gives rise to a philosophy turned toward the subject himself. The turn to the subject is made at two significant levels.

First, anyone who seriously intends to become a philosopher must “once in his life” withdraw in himself and attempt, within himself, to overthrow and build anew all the sciences that, up to then, he has been accepting. Philosophy — wisdom (*sagesse*) — is the philosopher's quite personal affair. It must arise as *his* wisdom, as his self-acquired knowledge tending toward universality, a knowledge for which he can answer from the beginning, and at each step, by virtue of his own absolute insights. If I have decided to live with this as my aim — the decision that alone can start me on the course of philosophical development — I have thereby chosen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge. Beginning thus, obviously one of the first things I ought to do is reflect on how I might find a method for going on, a method that promises to lead to genuine knowing. Accordingly the Cartesian *Meditationes* are not intended to be a merely private concern of the philosopher Descartes, but say nothing of their being merely an impressive literary form in which to present the foundations of his philosophy. Rather they draw the prototype for any beginning philosopher's necessary meditation on the meditations out of which alone a philosophy can grow originally.³

When we turn to the content of the *Meditationes*, so strange to us men of today, we find a regress to the philosophizing ego⁴ in a second and deeper sense: the ego as subject of his pure *cogitationes*. The meditator executes this regress by the famous and very remarkable method of doubt. Aiming with radical consistency at absolute knowledge, he refuses to let himself accept anything as existent unless it is secured against every conceivable possibility of becoming doubtful. Everything that is certain, in his natural experiencing and thinking life, he therefore subjects to methodical criticism with respect to the conceivability of a doubt about it; and, by excluding everything that leaves open any possibility

doubt, he seeks to obtain a stock of things that are absolutely evident. When this method is followed, the certainty of sensuous experience, the certainty with which the world is given in natural living, do not withstand criticism; accordingly the being of the world must remain unaccepted at this initial stage. The meditator keeps only himself, qua pure ego of his *cogitationes*, as having an absolute indubitable existence, as something that cannot be done away with, something that would exist even though this world were non-existent. Thus reduced, the ego carries on a kind of solipsistic philosophizing. He seeks apodictically certain ways by which, within his own pure inwardness, a Objective ⁵ outwardness can be deduced. The course of the argument is well known: First God's existence and veracity are deduced and then, by means of them, Objective Nature, the duality of finite substances — in short, the Objective field of metaphysics and the positive sciences, and the disciplines themselves. All the various inferences proceed, as they must, according to guiding principles that are immanent, or “innate”, in the pure ego.

§ 2. *The necessity of a radical new beginning of philosophy.*

Thus far, Descartes. We ask now: It is really worth while to hunt for an eternal significance belonging to these thoughts or to some clarifiable core that may be contained in them? Are they still such thoughts as might infuse our times with living forces?

Doubt is raised at least by the fact that the positive sciences, which were to experience an absolute rational grounding by these meditations, have paid so little attention to them. To be sure, the positive sciences, after three centuries of brilliant development, are now feeling themselves greatly hampered by obscurities in their foundations, in their fundamental concepts and methods. But, when they attempt to give those foundations a new form, they do not think / of turning back to resume Cartesian meditations. On the other hand, great weight must be given to the consideration that, in philosophy the *Meditations* were epoch-making in a quite unique sense, and precisely because of their going back to the pure *ego cogito*. Descartes, in fact, inaugurates an entirely new kind of philosophy. Changing its total style, philosophy takes a radical turn: from naive Objectivism to transcendental subjectivism - which, with its ever new but always inadequate attempts, seems to be striving toward some necessary final form, wherein its true sense and that of the radical transmutation itself might become disclosed. Should not this continuing tendency imply an eternal significance and, for us, a task imposed by history itself, a great task in which we are all summoned to collaborate?

The splintering of present-day philosophy, with its perplexed activity, sets us thinking. When we attempt to view western philosophy as a unitary science, its decline since the middle of the nineteenth century is unmistakable. The comparative unity that it had in previous ages, in its aims, its problems and methods, has been lost. When, with the beginning of modern times, religious belief was becoming more and more externalized as a lifeless convention, men of intellect were lifted by a new belief, the great belief in an autonomous philosophy and science. The whole of human culture was to be guided and illuminated by scientific insights and thus reformed, as new and autonomous.

But meanwhile this belief too has begun to languish. Not without reason. Instead of a unitary living philosophy, we have a philosophical literature growing beyond all bounds and almost without coherence⁶. Instead of a serious discussion among conflicting theories that, in their very conflicts demonstrate the intimacy with which they belong together, the commonness of their underlying convictions, and an unswerving belief in a true philosophy, we have a pseudo-reporting and a pseudo-criticizing, a mere semblance of philosophizing seriously with and for one another. This hardly attests a mutual study carried on with a consciousness of responsibility, in the spirit that characterizes serious / collaboration and an intention to produce Objectively valid results. "Objectively [*objektiv*] valid results" — the phrase, after all, signifies nothing but results that have been refined by mutual criticism and that now withstand every criticism. But how could actual study and actual collaboration be possible, where there are so many philosophers and almost equally many philosophies? To be sure we still have philosophical congresses. The philosophers meet but, unfortunately, not the philosophies. The philosophies lack the unity of a mental space in which they might exist for and act on one another.⁷ It may be that, within each of the many different "schools" or "lines of thought", the situation is somewhat better. Still, with the existence of these in isolation, the total philosophical present is essentially as we have described it.

In this unhappy present, is not our situation similar to the one encountered by Descartes in his youth? If so, then is not this a fitting time to renew his radicalness, the radicalness of the beginning philosopher: to subject to a Cartesian overthrow the immense philosophical literature with its meditations

of great traditions, of comparatively serious new beginnings, of stylish literary activity (which count on “making an effect” but not on being studied), and to begin with new *meditationes de prima philosophia*? Cannot the disconsolateness of our philosophical position be traced back ultimately to the fact that the driving forces emanating from the *Meditations* of Descartes have lost their original vitality — lost it because the spirit that characterizes radicalness of philosophical self-responsibility has been lost? Must not the demand for a philosophy aiming at the ultimate conceivable freedom from prejudice, shaping itself with actual autonomy according to ultimate evidences it has itself produced and therefore absolutely self-responsible — must not this demand, instead of being excessive, be part of the fundamental sense of genuine philosophy? In recent times the longing for a fully alive philosophy has led to many a renaissance. Must not the only fruitful renaissance be the one that reawakens the impulse of the Cartesian *Meditations*: not to adopt their content but, in not doing so, to renew with greater intensity the radicalness of their spirit, the radicalness of self-responsibility, to make that radicalness true for the first time by enhancing it to the last degree, / to uncover thereby for the first time the genuine sense of the necessary regress to the ego, and consequently to overcome the hidden but already felt naiveté of earlier philosophizing?

In any case, the question indicates one of the ways that has led to transcendental phenomenology.

Along that way we now intend to walk together. In a quasi-Cartesian fashion we intend, as radical beginning philosophers, to carry out meditations with the utmost critical precaution and a readiness for any — even the most far-reaching — transformation of the old-Cartesian meditations. Seductive aberrations, into which Descartes and later thinkers strayed, will have to be clarified and avoided if we pursue our course.

FIRST MEDITATION

THE WAY TO THE TRANSCENDENTAL EGO

§ 3. The Cartesian overthrow and the guiding final idea of an absolute ⁸ grounding of science

And so we make a new beginning, each for himself and in himself, with the decision of those philosophers who begin radically: that at first we shall put out of action all the convictions we have been accepting up to now, including all our sciences. Let the idea guiding our meditations be at first the Cartesian idea of a science that shall be established as radically genuine, ultimately an all-embracing science.

But, now that we no longer have at our disposal any already-given science as an example of a radically genuine science (after all, we are not accepting any given science), what about the indubitability of that idea itself, the idea namely of a science that shall be grounded absolutely? Is it a legitimate final idea, the possible aim of some possible practice? Obviously that too is something we must not presuppose, to say nothing of taking any norms as already established for testing such possibilities — or perchance a whole system of norms in which the style proper to genuine science is allegedly prescribed. That would mean presupposing a whole logic as a theory of science; where that logic must be included among the sciences overthrown in overthrowing all science. Descartes himself presupposed an ideal of science, the ideal approximated by geometry and mathematical natural science. As a fateful / prejudice this ideal determines philosophies for centuries and hidden in it determines the *Meditations* themselves. Obviously it was, for Descartes, a truism from the start that the all-embracing science must have the form of a deductive system, in which the whole structure rests, *ordine geometrico*, on an axiomatic foundation that grounds the deduction absolutely. For him the role similar to that of geometrical axioms in geometry is played in the all-embracing science by the axiom of the ego's absolute certainty of himself, along with the axiomatic principles innate in the ego — only this axiomatic foundation lies even deeper than that of geometry and is called on to participate in the ultimate grounding even of geometrical knowledge.⁹

None of that shall determine our thinking. As beginning philosophers we do not as yet accept any normative ideal of science, and only so far as we produce one newly for ourselves can we ever have such an ideal.

But this does not imply that we renounce the general aim of grounding science absolutely. That aim shall indeed continually motivate the course of our meditations, as it motivated the course of the Cartesian meditations; and gradually, in our meditations, it shall become determined concretely. Only then we must be careful about how we make an absolute grounding of science our aim. At first we must not presuppose even its possibility. How then are we to find the legitimate manner in which to make it our aim? How are we to make our aim perfectly assured, and thus assured as a practical possibility? How are we then to differentiate the possibility, into which at first we have a general insight, and thereby mark out the determinate methodical course of a genuine philosophy, a radical philosophy that begins with what is intrinsically first?

Naturally we get the general idea of science from the sciences that are factually given. If they have become for us, in our radical critical attitude, merely alleged sciences, then, according to what has already been said, their general final idea has become, in a like sense, a mere supposition. Thus we do not yet know whether that idea is at all capable of becoming actualized.¹⁰ Nevertheless we do have it in this form, and in a state of indeterminate fluid generality; accordingly we have also the idea

philosophy: as an idea about which we do not know whether or how it can be actualized.¹¹ We take the general idea of science, therefore, as a precursory presumption, which we allow ourselves tentatively by which we tentatively allow ourselves to be guided in our meditations. We consider how it might be thought out as a possibility and then consider whether and how it might be given determinate actualization. To be sure, we get into what are, at first, rather strange circumstantialities — but how can / they be avoided, if our radicalness is not to remain an empty gesture but is to become an actual deed? Let us go on then with patience.

§ 4. *Uncovering the final sense of science by becoming immersed in science qua noematic phenomenon.*

Obviously one of the first things we must do now is make distinct the guiding idea that, at the beginning, floats before us as a vague generality. The genuine concept of science, naturally, is not to be fashioned by a process of abstraction based on comparing the de facto sciences, i.e. the Objectively documented theoretical structures (propositions, theories) that are in fact generally accepted sciences. The sense of our whole meditation implies that sciences, as these facts of Objective culture and sciences “in the true and genuine sense” need not be identical and that the former, over and above being cultural facts, involve a claim, which ought to be established as one they already satisfy. Science as an idea — as the idea, genuine science — “lies”, still undisclosed, precisely in this claim.

How can this idea be uncovered and apprehended? Even though we must not take any position with respect to the *validity* of the de facto sciences (the ones “claiming” validity) — i.e. with respect to the genuineness of their theories and, correlatively, the competence of their methods of theorizing — there is nothing to keep us from “immersing ourselves” in the scientific striving and doing that pertains to them, in order to see clearly and distinctly what is really being aimed at. If we do so,¹² if we immerse ourselves progressively in the characteristic intention of scientific endeavor, the constituent parts of the general final idea, genuine science, become explicated for us, though at first the differentiation is itself general.

Here belongs, first of all, an initial clarification of “*judicative*” doing and the “*judgment*” itself along with the discrimination of *immediate and mediate judgments*: mediate judgments have such sense-relatedness to other judgments that judicatively believing them “presupposes” believing the others — in the manner characteristic of a believing on account of something believed already. Also clarification of the striving for *grounded judgments*, clarification of the grounding doing, in which the “*correctness*”, the “*truth*”, of the judgment should be shown — or, in case of a failure, the incorrectness, the falsity, of the judgment. Where mediate judgments are concerned, this showing is itself mediate; it rests on the showing that pertains to the immediate judgments involved in the judgment-sense and, as concrete, includes their grounding too. To a grounding already executed, or the truth shown therein, one can “return” at will. By virtue of this freedom to reactualize such a truth with awareness of it as one and the same, it is an abiding acquisition or possession and, as such, called a *cognition*.

If we go further in this manner (here, naturally, we are only indicating the procedure), then, explicating more precisely the sense of a grounding or that of a cognition, we come forthwith to the idea of *evidence*. In a genuine grounding, judgments show themselves as “correct”, as “agreeing”; this is to say, the grounding is an *agreement* of the judgment with the judged state of affair [Urteilsverhalt] (the affair or affair-complex [Sachverhalt]) “*itself*”. More precisely stated: Judging is meaning — and, as a rule, merely supposing — that such and such exists and has such and such determinations; the judgment (what is judged) is then a merely supposed affair or complex of affair, an affair, or state-of-affairs, as what is meant. But, contrasted with that, there is sometimes a prominent judicative meaning [Meinen], a judicative having of such and such itself. This having is called *evidence*. In it the affair, the complex (or state) of affairs, instead of being merely meant “from afar”, is present as the affair “*itself*”, the *affair-complex or state-of-affairs “itself”*; the judgment accordingly possesses it itself. A merely supposing judging *becomes adjusted* to the affairs, the affair

complexes, themselves by conscious conversion into the corresponding evidence. This conversion is inherently characterized as the fulfilling of what was merely meant, a synthesis in which what was meant coincides and agrees with what is itself given; it is an evident possessing of the correctness of what previously was meant at a distance from affairs.

When we proceed thus, fundamental components of the final idea governing all scientific doing come immediately to the fore. For example, the scientist intends, not merely to judge, but to ground his judgments. Stated more precisely: He intends to let no judgment be accepted by himself or others as "scientific knowledge", unless he has grounded it perfectly and can therefore justify it completely at any time by a freely actualizable return to his repeatable act of grounding. De facto that may never go beyond being a mere claim; at all events, the claim involves an ideal goal.

Yet there is one more thing that should be brought out, to supplement what we have said. We must distinguish the judgment in the broadest sense (something meant as being) and evidence in the broadest sense from pre-predicative judgment and from pre-predicative evidence respectively. Predicative includes pre-predicative evidence. That which is meant or, perchance, evidently viewed receives predicative expression; and science always intends to judge expressly and keep the judgment of the truth fixed, as an express judgment or as an express truth. But the expression as such has its own comparatively good or bad way of fitting what is meant or itself given; and therefore it has its own evidence or non-evidence, which also goes into the predicating. Consequently evidence of the expression is also a determining part of the idea of scientific truth, as predicative complexes that are or can be, grounded absolutely.

§ 5. Evidence and the idea of genuine science.

As we go on meditating in this manner and along this line, we beginning philosophers recognize that the Cartesian idea of a science (ultimately an all-embracing science) grounded on an absolute foundation, and absolutely justified, is none other than the idea that constantly furnishes guidance to all sciences and in their striving toward universality — whatever may be the situation with respect to the *de facto* actualization of that idea.

Evidence is, in an *extremely broad sense*, an “*experiencing*” of something that is, and is thus; it is precisely a mental seeing of something itself. Conflict with what evidence shows, with what “*experience*” shows, yields the negative of evidence (or negative evidence) — put in the form of a judgment: positive evidence of the affair’s non-being. In other words, negative evidence has as its content evident falsity. Evidence, which in fact includes all experiencing in the usual and narrow sense, can be more or less perfect. *Perfect evidence* and its correlate, *pure and genuine truth*, are given as ideas lodged in the striving for knowledge, for fulfilment of one’s meaning intention. Even by immersing ourselves in such a striving, we can extract those ideas from it. Truth and falsity, criticism and critical comparison with evident data, are an everyday theme, playing their incessant part even in prescientific life. For this everyday life, with its changing and relative purposes, relative evidences and truths suffice. But science / looks for truths that are valid, and remain so, *once for all and for everyone*; accordingly it seeks verifications of a new kind, verifications carried through to the end. Though *de facto*, as science itself must ultimately see, it does not attain actualization of a system of absolute truths, but rather is obliged to modify its “truths” again and again, it nevertheless follows the idea of absolute or scientifically genuine truth; and accordingly it reconciles itself to an infinite horizon of approximations, tending toward that idea. By them, science believes, it can surpass the *infinitem* not only everyday knowing but also itself; likewise however by its aim at systematic universality of knowledge, whether that aim concern a particular closed scientific province or presupposed all-embracing unity of whatever exists — as it does if a “philosophy” is possible and in question. According to intention, therefore, the idea of science and philosophy involves an *order of cognition, proceeding from intrinsically earlier to intrinsically later cognitions*; ultimately, then, *beginning and a line of advance* that are not to be chosen arbitrarily but have their basis “in the nature of things themselves”.

Thus, by immersing ourselves meditatively in the general intentions of scientific endeavor, we discover fundamental parts of the final idea, genuine science, which, though vague at first, governs that striving. Meanwhile we have made no advance judgment in favor of the possibility of those components or in favor of a supposedly unquestionable scientific ideal.

We must not say at this point: “Why bother with such investigations and ascertainments? They obviously belong to the general theory of science, to logic, which must of course be applied both now and later.” On the contrary, we must guard ourselves against just this matter-of-course opinion. Let us emphasize what we said against Descartes: Like every other already-given science, logic is deprived of acceptance by the universal overthrow. Everything that makes a philosophical beginning possible we must first acquire by ourselves.¹⁴ Whether, later on, a genuine science similar to traditional logic will accrue to us is an eventuality about which we can at present know nothing.

By this / preliminary work, here roughly indicated rather than done explicitly, we have gained a measure of clarity sufficient to let us fix, for our whole further procedure, a *first methodologic*

principle. It is plain that I, as someone beginning philosophically, since I am striving toward the presumptive end, genuine science, must neither make nor go on accepting any judgment as scientific *that I have not derived from evidence*, from “experiences” in which the affairs and affair-complexes in question are present to me as “*they themselves*”. Indeed, even then I must at all times reflect on the pertinent evidence; I must examine its “range” and make evident to myself *how far* that evidence, how far its “perfection”, *the actual giving of the affairs themselves*, extends. Where this is still wanting, must not claim any final validity, but must account my judgment as, at best, a possible intermediate stage on the way to final validity.

Because the sciences aim at predications that express completely and with evident fitness what is beheld pre-predicatively, it is obvious that I must be careful also about this aspect of scientific evidence. Owing to the instability and ambiguity of common language and its much too great complacency about completeness of expression, we require, even where we use its means of expression, a new legitimation of significations by orienting them according to accrued insights, and fixing of words as expressing the significations thus legitimated. That too we account as part of our normative principle of evidence, which we shall apply consistently from now on.

But how would this principle, or all our meditation up to now, help us, if it gave us no hold for making an actual beginning, that is, for starting to actualize the idea of genuine science? Since the form belonging to a systematic order of cognitions — genuine cognitions — is part of this idea, the idea emerges, as the *question of the beginning*, the inquiry for those cognitions that are first in themselves and can support the whole storied edifice of universal knowledge. Consequently, if our presumptive aim is to be capable of becoming a practically possible one, we meditators, while completely destitute of all scientific knowledge, must have access to evidences that already / bear the stamp of fitness for such a function, in that they are recognizable as preceding all other imaginable evidences. Moreover, in respect of this evidence of preceding, they must have a certain perfection, they must carry with them an absolute certainty, if advancing from them and constructing on their basis a science governed by the idea of a definitive system of knowledge — considering the infinity presumed to be part of this idea — is to be capable of having any sense.

§ 6. Differentiations of evidence. The philosophical demand for an evidence that is apodictic and first in itself.

But here, at this decisive point in the process of beginning, we must penetrate deeper with our meditations. The phrase *absolute certainty* and the equivalent phrase *absolute indubitability* need clarifying. They call our attention to the fact that, on more precise explication, the ideally demanded *perfection of evidence becomes differentiated*. At the present introductory stage of philosophic meditation we have the boundless infinity of prescientific experiences, evidences: more or less perfect. With reference to them *imperfection*, as a rule, signifies *incompleteness*, a one-sidedness and at the same time a relative obscurity and indistinctness that qualify the givenness of the affairs themselves or the affair-complexes themselves: i.e., an infectedness of the “experience,” with *unfulfilled components*, with *expectant* and *attendant meanings*.¹⁶ Perfecting then takes place as a synthetic course of further harmonious experiences in which these attendant meanings become fulfilled in actual experience. The corresponding idea of perfection would be that of “*adequate evidence*” — and the question whether adequate evidence does not necessarily lie at infinity may be left open.¹⁷

Though this idea continuously guides the scientist’s intent, a *different perfection* of evidence has for him (as we see by the aforesaid process of “immersing ourselves” in his intent) a higher dignity. This perfection is “*apodicticity*”; and it can occur even in evidences that are inadequate. It is *absolute indubitability* in a quite definite and peculiar sense, the absolute indubiability that the scientist demands of all “*principles*”; and its superior value is evinced in his endeavor, / where groundings already evident in and by themselves are concerned, to ground them further and at a higher level by going back to principles, and thereby to obtain for them the highest dignity, that of apodicticity. The fundamental nature of apodicticity can be characterized in the following manner:

Any evidence is a grasping of something itself that is, or is thus, a grasping in the mode “it itself with full certainty of its being, a certainty that accordingly excludes every doubt. But it does not follow that full certainty excludes the conceivability that what is evident could subsequently become doubtful, or the conceivability that being could prove to be illusion — indeed, sensuous experience furnishes us with cases where that happens. Moreover, this open possibility of becoming doubtful, of non-being, *in spite of evidence*, can always be recognized in advance by critical reflection on what the evidence in question does. An *apodictic* evidence, however, is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair-complexes (states-of-affairs) evident in it; rather it discloses itself, to a critical reflection, by having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time the absolute unimaginalness* (inconceivability) of their *non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as “objectless and empty. Furthermore the evidence of that critical reflection likewise has the dignity of being apodictic as does therefore the evidence of the unimaginalness of what is presented with <apodictically evident certainty. And the same is true of every critical reflection at a higher level.”¹⁸

We remember now the Cartesian principle for building genuine science: the principle of absolute indubitability, by which every imaginable doubt (even though it were in fact groundless) was to be excluded. If, by our meditations, we have acquired that principle in a clarified form, there arises the question whether and how it might help us make an actual beginning. In accordance with what has already been said, we now formulate, as an initial definite question of beginning philosophy, the question whether it is possible for us to bring out evidences that, on the one hand, carry with them -

as we now must say: apodictically — the insight that, as “first in themselves”, they precede all other imaginable evidences and, on the other hand, can be seen to be themselves apodictic. If they should turn out to be inadequate, they would have to possess at least a recognizable apodictic content, they would have to give us some being that is firmly secured “once for all”, or absolutely, by virtue of their apodicticity. *How*, / and even *whether*, it would be possible to go on from there and build an apodictically secured philosophy must, of course, remain for later consideration.¹⁹

§ 7. *The evidence for the factual existence of the world not apodictic; its inclusion in the Cartesian overthrow.*

The question of evidences that are first in themselves can apparently be answered without any trouble. Does not the *existence of the world* present itself forthwith as such an evidence? The life and everyday action relates to the world. All the sciences relate to it: the sciences of matters of fact relate to it immediately; the apriori sciences, mediately, as instruments of scientific method. More than anything else the being of the world is obvious. It is so very obvious that no one would think of asserting it expressly in a proposition. After all, we have our continuous experience in which the world incessantly stands before our eyes, as existing without question. But, however much this evidence is prior in itself to all the <other > evidences of life (as turned toward the world) and to all the evidences of all the world sciences (since it is the basis that continually supports them), we soon become doubtful about the extent to which, in this capacity, it can lay claim to being apodictic. And, if we follow up this doubt, it becomes manifest that our experiential evidence of the world lacks also the superiority of being the absolutely primary evidence. Concerning the first point, we note that the universal sensuous experience in whose evidence the world is continuously given to us beforehand is obviously not to be taken forthwith as an apodictic evidence, which, as such, would absolutely exclude both the possibility of eventual doubt whether the world is actual and the possibility of its non-being. Not only can a particular experienced thing suffer devaluation as an illusion of the senses; the whole unitarily surveyable nexus, experienced throughout a period of time, can prove to be an illusion, a coherent dream. We need not take the indicating of these possible and sometimes actual reversals of evidence as a sufficient criticism of the evidence in question and see in it a full proof that, in spite of the continual experiencedness of the world, a non-being of the world is conceivable. We shall retain only this much: that the evidence of world-experience would, at all events, need to be criticized with regard to its validity and range, before it could be used for the purposes of a radical grounding of science, and that therefore we / must not take that evidence to be, without question, immediately apodictic. It follows that denying acceptance to all the sciences given us beforehand, treating them as for us, inadmissible prejudices ²⁰, is not enough. Their universal basis, the experienced world, must also be deprived of its naive acceptance. The being of the world, by reason of the evidence of natural experience, must no longer be for us an obvious matter of fact; it too must be for us, henceforth, only an acceptance-phenomenon.

If we maintain this attitude, is any being whatever left us as a basis for judgments, let alone for evidences on which we could establish an all-embracing philosophy and, furthermore, do so apodictically? Is not “the world” the name for the universe of whatever exists? If so, how can we avoid starting in extenso, and as our first task, that criticism of world-experience which, a moment ago, we merely indicated? Then, if criticism were to yield the result considered likely in advance, would not our whole philosophical aim ²¹ be frustrated? But what if the world were, in the end, not all the absolutely first basis for judgments and a being that is intrinsically prior to the world were the already presupposed basis for the existence of the world?

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