Studies in German Idealism Volume 12

Moses Mendelssohn

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Morning Hours

Lectures on God's Existence

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VOLUME 12

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MORNING HOURS
LECTURES ON GOD'S EXISTENCE

by

MOSES MENDELSSOHN

Translated by

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Springer

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786)

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ISSN 1571-4764
ISBN 978-94-007-0417-6 e-ISBN 978-94-007-0418-3
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011920688

To the memory of our fathers

Introduction

Morning Hours is the last work published by Moses Mendelssohn during his lifetime. Published in Berlin in the summer of 1785 as a series of lectures held at dawn, it is also the most sustained presentation of his epistemological and metaphysical views, all elaborated in the service of presenting proofs for the existence of God.[1] But *Morning Hours* is much more than a theoretical treatise in the form of reported lectures and occasional dialogue. The text was written in the thick of the *Pantheismusstreit*, Mendelssohn's "dispute"with F. H. Jacobi over the nature and scope of Lessing's attitude toward Spinoza and "pantheism." As the latest salvo in a war of texts with Jacobi, *Morning Hours* is also Mendelssohn's attempt to set the record straight regarding his beloved Lessing in this connection, not least by demonstrating the absence of any practical difference between theism and a "purified pantheism."[2]

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[1] The complete text of *Morgenstunden* and the basis for this translation are to be found in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, Band 3.2, herausgegeben von Leo Strauss (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1929 ff. [from 1974: Stuttgart u. Bad Cannstatt: F. Fromann]), 1–175. All numbers in square brackets in the body of the text refer to this German edition. All numbers in parentheses in the body of this introduction refer to the pagination of our English translation, followed by a slash and the pagination of this German edition. In the notes the respective volumes of the *Jubiliäumsausgabe* are cited hereafter as 'JubA', followed by the volume number, a colon, and page numbers.

[2] Two likely factors in the genesis of *Morning Hours* deserve mention here. First, following Lessing's death, his brother, Karl Gotthelf, corresponded with Mendelssohn, seeking his counsel on matters pertaining to the editing of Lessing's posthumous writings. Both Karl and Mendelssohn deplored the way that Lessing was being treated and viewed at the time. In this context, on April 22, 1783, Karl sent Mendelssohn a copy of Lessing's "Christianity of Reason." Upon reading it, Mendelssohn revived a long-delayed project of writing a book on Lessing's character. The text of *Morning Hours* originates in this project. Thus, Mendelssohn writes Karl Lessing of his resolve to "devote his morning hours" to the planned work in memory of Lessing; see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London/Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 591. Not coincidentally, Mendelssohn cites "Christianity of Reason" extensively on the concluding pages of Chap. 15, entitled "Lessing – His Contribution to the Religion of Reason – His Thoughts on Purified Pantheism." The second factor contributing to the genesis of *Morning Hours* is Mendelssohn's relation to Johann Reimarus. Friends of Lessing and Mendelssohn, Johann and his sister Elise Reimarus were children of the famous deist, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, whose posthumous writings contained a highly controversial fragment ("Fragment of the Unnamed") that Lessing began to publish in 1774. Altmann suggests that

Mendelssohn introduces *Morning Hours* as the fruit of his attempt to introduce his son early enough to "rational knowledge of God."[3] Ostensibly planned as the first of two volumes (though the second volume never surfaced[4]), the text is divided into two parts. In a January 5, 1784 letter to Elise Reimarus, Mendelssohn notes that the refuter of Spinozism would have to undertake the "Sisyphean labour" of thinking through the basic concepts of "*substance, truth, cause*" – and, above all – "*objective existence*" and how we arrive at them.[5] Mendelssohn undertakes at least some of these labors in the first part of *Morning Hours*, dubbed "Preliminary Knowledge of Truth, Semblance, and Error." In the second part "Scientific Doctrinal Concepts of God's Existence," Mendelssohn settles his accounts with Spinozism, sketches a "purified pantheism" and defends its innocuousness, on the way to presenting both revisions of his earlier versions of proofs and what he took to be a novel proof for God's existence.[6]

The chief aim of the following introduction is to present an overview of the themes and arguments of *Morning Hours*. But before turning to that overview, it may be helpful to situate the work in relation to previous such efforts, his own and others. At the outset of the book Mendelssohn takes pains to inform the reader that,

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Dr. Johann Reimarus is the figure in Chap. 15, identified as "friend D," who protests against presenting Lessing as the spokesperson for a refined pantheism, as Mendelssohn does in the preceding chapter. In any case, Mendelssohn sent Dr. Reimarus copies of the first and second parts of the manuscript of *Morgenstunden* separately and Dr. Reimarus replied with comments both in a supplement to a letter of June 18, 1785 (JubA 13: 283–288) and in a letter of July 28, 1785 (JubA 13: 293–296). However, neither of these letters contain the remarks published in the "Remarks and Additions" that conclude the *Morgenstuden*, and it is thought that the comments must have been a part of the supplement to the former letter that was not preserved. See Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 253f, 330, 622, 691–698, 860f, n. 70 and n. 73.

[3] In addition to Mendelssohn's son, Joseph, the other students participating in Mendelssohn's dawn lectures were Simon Veit Witzenhausen [S] (Mendelssohn's son-in-law) and Bernhard Wessely [W], nephew of the Hebrew poet and linguist Hartwig Wessely.

[4] On May 24, 1785 Mendelssohn writes Elise Reimarus, who served as something of a go-between for him and Jacobi, that he (Mendelssohn) plans a sequel containing "everything pertaining to Jacobi and Lessing" (JubA 13: 282–283); Altmann argues that this talk of a sequel is a piece of gamesmanship not to be taken seriously; see Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 649, 686.

[5] JubA 13: 168: "Aber der Widerleger hat sisyphische Arbeit. Nun gehe er wieder an die ersten Begriffe, und widerkäue sie ohne Ekel! was [sic.] *Substanz*, *Wahrheit*, *Ursache*, hauptsächlich, worauf es meistens anzukommen scheint, was *objectives Daseyn* sei, und wie wir zu diesen Begriffen gelangen." At this point Mendelssohn is urging the project on Dr. Reimarus, saying that for him [Mendelssohn] it would be "a fatal undertaking [eine tödtende Arbeit]" (ibid.).

[6] In a January 28, 1785 letter to Elise Reimarus, Mendelssohn refers to such a "revision" of the proofs of God's existence: "Vor der Hand gehet zwar meine Untersuchung nicht den Spinozismus allein an; sondern ist eine Art von Revision der Beweise vom Daseyn Gottes überhaupt" (JubA 13: 263). Other possible factors contributing to Mendelssohn's revision of these proofs is his apparent dissatisfaction with the style of his earlier discussion of the proofs, and his acknowledgement of the Herzog of Braunschweig's desire to have these proofs presented in a form similar to that of *Phaedon*; see Mendelssohn's letter of Oct. 12, 1785 (JubA 13: 311) and Leo Strauss' introduction to the volume containing *Morgenstunden* (JubA 3.2: xii–xiv).

due to a nervous illness, he has not in fact kept up with more recent developments in philosophy and that *Morning Hours* is accordingly based upon a speculative metaphysics apparently no longer in favor. He is referring to the sort of metaphysics elaborated some 20 years earlier in his *Philosophical Writings* (1761[1], 1771[2]), the Prize Essay: *On Evidence in Metaphysical Sciences* (1764), and *Phaedo: or On the Immortality of the Soul, in three dialogues* (1767).[7] In these earlier works, drawing heavily but not uncritically on the writings of Leibniz and Wolf, Mendelssohn defended a wide range of themes: the compatibility of human freedom with divine freedom and the pre-established harmony, the identity of indiscernibles, God's existence, and the simplicity and immortality of the soul. In the Prize Essay, he also argued that mathematics and metaphysics share a common analytical method, despite their differences in content and perspicuity.

Two aspects of the difference between mathematics and metaphysics in the Prize Essay continue to inform Mendelssohn's thinking in the *Morning Hours*. According to the Prize Essay, mathematics is perspicuous because it employs exact signs to investigate quantities. While the quantitative principles discerned by mathematics govern the constancy of appearances, the quantities themselves are merely possibilities and not necessarily actual. By contrast, metaphysics is less evident because it relies upon inexact signs to investigate qualities and their actual existence. Thus, in the Prize Essay, the difference between mathematics and metaphysics turns for Mendelssohn on the difference between appearance and reality and a parallel difference between exact and inexact signs. Even for the idealist, he contends in the Prize Essay, the truths of mathematics obtain as long as there is a difference between the constancy and inconstancy of appearances. By contrast, the metaphysician must establish the existence of objects and not simply a constancy in appearances. Moreover, at least for geometry, the mental signs of geometric objects are more exact than the language – the arbitrary signs – that the metaphysician must use to signify the objects of metaphysics.

In the *Morning Hours* the difference between appearances and reality takes center stage as does the plight of metaphysics, i.e., the inevitable inexactness of its signs (language). Indeed, at times Mendelssohn acknowledges misgivings that basic philosophical disputes are anything more than verbal disputes. Thus, he cites with approval his interlocutor's remark: "I fear that, in the end, the famous quarrel among materialists, idealists, and dualists amounts to a merely verbal dispute, more a matter for the linguist than the speculative philosopher" (/61).[8] Still, far from succumbing to the temptation to let linguistic ambiguities get the better of reason

[7] See Moses Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, tr. and ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). This edition also contains a translation of the prize essay. For translations of the *Phaedo* into English, see *Phaedon or The Death of Socrates*, trans. Charles Cullen (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004 [a reprint of the 1789 edition]), and *Phädon or On the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. Patricia Noble (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

[8] "You know how much I am inclined to explain all disputes among philosophical schools as merely verbal disputes or at least to derive them originally from verbal disputes" (/104).

(the arbiter of speculation and common sense[9]), Mendelssohn mounts a metaphysical argument in *Morning Hours* for maintaining a distinction between appearance and reality, a distinction in keeping with the dualism he endorses. According to Mendelssohn, a dualist holds that there is some original substance independent of the mind to which sensory phenomena or appearances pertain (41/59). By contrast, the idealist (as Mendelssohn understands him in *Morning Hours*) maintains that all phenomena of our senses are merely accidents of the mind and pertain to no material original (as opposed to the materialist who denies the existence of simple spiritual beings).

Part I: Preliminary Knowledge of Truth, Semblance, and Error

In the opening pages of the book, after contesting the fruitfulness of a purely correspondence theory of truth, Mendelssohn opts for considering truth in terms of the soul's capacities to know. Truth is knowledge grounded in a positive power of the soul, while untruth is "*any knowledge that has suffered an alteration through the incapacity, the limitations of our positive power*" (21/34). Taking his cues from the difference between the soul's rational and sensory powers, Mendelssohn accordingly grounds truth in either the thinkability or the actuality of thoughts. Thinkability is determined by conceptual analysis based upon the law of contradiction (i.e., "rational knowledge," as in logic and mathematics), and actuality by what is known immediately (i.e., "sensory knowledge") or through the mediation of the senses (i.e., "knowledge of what is actual outside us, or knowledge of nature"). What is known immediately (and, hence, indubitably, Mendelssohn contends) is that there is an alteration among thoughts; the second thing known appears to be an inference from this, namely, that there must be something that is altered with respect to these thoughts. Hence, we can distinguish between the subject or consciousness modified by changing representations and those representations themselves in the subject's inner and outer sense (5/14, 26/39, 29/43).[10] What is actual and known only in a mediated way are the objects represented by some representations. We can know the actuality of objects represented, thanks to the senses and the levels of agreement among them and, by way of causal analogies, through the degrees of agreement of successive appearances. Sometimes the resulting knowledge

[9] Mendelssohn contends that, since common sense is usually but not invariably right, reason's task is to defend speculation when it departs from common sense.

[10] Mendelssohn's considered view seems to be that knowledge of the enduring I is the result of an inference from the changing representations and the supposition that change requires a constant subject; see 29/43: "If my inner thoughts and sensations are actually in me, if the existence of these alterations of my self cannot be denied, then the I as well, to which these alterations pertain, must be admitted. Where there are alterations, there must also be a subject on hand that undergoes alteration. I think, therefore I am"; see, too, 30/44f; but he also seems to treat it at times as part of what is intuitively known; see 5/14.

of actual objects can be combined with "purely rational knowledge," but when it comes to the so-called "universal laws of nature themselves" or "the doctrine of the soul and morals," "an incomplete induction … must take the place of pure reason" (11/21). "Hence, every conviction which in the science of the actual and the non-actual is not purely rational knowledge is grounded on the agreement of diverse senses, under many different sorts of circumstances and modifications, and on the frequent outcome of diverse sensory appearances, placed after and next to one another" (12/22).[11]

Mendelssohn underscores the limitations of our capacities for determining the truth, our proneness to *error* at the rational level and to *illusion* at the sensory level, though he also stresses that, while errors are corrigible, illusions cannot be corrected, since, despite being based upon incomplete inductions that result in taking a representation (*Vorstellung*) for an exhibition (*Darstellung*) of something, they are too closely related to immediate knowledge (18/29f, 26/39). This claim is excessive, to be sure, and Mendelssohn himself appears to contradict it by elaborating the source of the illusion and ways of rectifying it.[12] So, too, he recognizes the difference between a subjective and an objective combination of representations, exemplified by the difference between a dream state and a waking state, and the necessity that our impressions of the present not be too weak to prevent imaginative flights of enthusiasm or too strong to keep us from the business of meditation. Our discernment of the objective combination of representations is relative to several factors: the number of sensations of a single sort that agree with one another, the number of different sorts of sensations that concur, and the number of times our assessment agrees with those of others, of other species, and even of "higher entities" (6f/15f, 38/54f, 41/59).

Yet in the end, much like Descartes, Mendelssohn contends that the only means of certifying the actual existence of things outside us is through the demonstration of God's existence. Hence, for Mendelssohn the demonstration of God's existence is necessary to escape or, better, to counter the challenge of (epistemological) idealism. "If we shall have convinced ourselves of the existence of the supreme being and its properties, then a way will also present itself of making for ourselves some concept of the infinity of the supreme being's knowledge and from this truth, along with several others, perhaps in a scientific, demonstrative manner, of refuting the pretentions of the idealists and of proving irrefutably the actual existence of a sensory world outside us" (38/55).

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[11] In the course of making these points, Mendelssohn explicitly draws attention to his treatise on probability; see *Philosophical Writings*, 233–250/JubA 1: 147–164.

[12] "Yet, as long as we remain with sensory knowledge, as long as we regard it not as [something's actual] exhibition [of itself] but merely as a representation, it is subject neither to doubt nor to uncertainty and has for itself a transparency of the highest degree" (26/39). "As long, however, as it restricts itself to its inner sentiments as sentiments, every semblance is a truth and I believe myself to feel just as much as I feel. Thus, the most perverted taste can neither deceive nor delude in this regard as long as we remain with the subjective sentiment" (27/41).

Part II: Scientific Doctrinal Concepts of God's Existence

On the final pages of Chap. 7, the last chapter of Part I, Mendelssohn introduces the concept of approval as a faculty irreducible to knowing or desire.[13] Our approval of certain phenomena, for example, the satisfaction that we take in the beauty of a sunset, is distinct from our knowledge of it (the truth about it) and from any sense that it is good for us, i.e., from any desire to possess it. While the concept of approval is thus particularly important for Mendelssohn's aesthetics, he introduces it at this juncture of the *Morning Hours* in order to set the stage for the opening section of Part II where he dismisses the notion of a duty to believe what is "so connected with the happiness of the human being [i.e., God's existence] that happiness cannot exist without its truth" (50/69). In addition to denying any such duty, Mendelssohn regards it as a matter of confusing an object of approval with an object of knowledge (approval of God's existence should not be confused with knowledge of it). The model for avoiding this confusion is mathematics and Mendelssohn concludes this opening section of Part II with an attempt to approximate that model by setting forth a series of axioms "that seem naturally to follow from what we have dealt with up to this point" (52/73).

Mendelssohn next turns in earnest to the ways of establishing the existence of God. Once again, he begins by comparing theology with mathematics. In both disciplines there is a level of necessary, conceptual analysis independent of any considerations of existence. But just as applied mathematics rests upon the demonstration of some existence, so the theologian must find a way of "crossing over into the domain of actual things" (56/77). Mendelssohn recognizes three, progressively more compelling ways, beginning from (a) the testimony of outer sense, (b) the testimony of inner sense, and (c) the thought of God. The first two ways provide means of demonstrating God's existence, as long as their presuppositions – the existence of a mutable world or a mutable thinking being – are admitted. At the same time Mendelssohn recognizes all too well that metaphysicians have denied things that "sound human understanding would never dream of doubting" (57/79). Whether their motives were to embarrass dogmatists or merely to test reason's capacity to keep pace with sound human understanding, Mendelssohn acknowledges a need to come to reason's aid, particularly when it comes to establishing the basis for the first sort of proof, namely, the existence of the material world.

This acknowledgement, in addition to suggesting that reason must accord with "sound human understanding," sets the stage for perhaps the most famous passage in *Morning Hours*: the Allegorical Dream that opens Chap. 10. Mendelssohn relates how a hiking party's two guides, contemplation and common sense, part ways at a fork in the path, leaving the hiking party stranded, until reason approaches, with the advice that, if they are willing to wait, the two guides will "come back

[13] See Mendelssohn's notes "On the ability to know, the ability to feel, and the ability to sense" (1776) in *Philosophical Writings*, 309f/JubA 3.1: 276f.

to let me [reason] resolve the dispute" (59/81). Though contemplation or speculation, as Mendelssohn also calls it, does not in fact always follow reason, he uses the allegory to indicate his basic rule, namely, to follow common sense and abandon it for speculation only if there is reason enough to do so. This rule supposedly works well against idealist, egoist (solipsistic), and skeptical doubts about the actuality of the material world. Yet as long as the demonstration of the reasonability of common sense is incomplete, those doubts diminish the evidence for a posteriori proofs of God's existence.[14] For this reason, Mendelssohn adds, "most rigorous philosophers always preferred the kind of proof that …. merely presupposes our own existence" (61/83f).

Mendelssohn proceeds then to argue that God must exist since God (as the sole necessary and immutable being) is the only sufficient reason for the existence of contingent, mutable beings like ourselves. But he also cautions that we thus infer God's existence from our existence insofar as the latter is an object, not of divine thought, but of divine approval and free choice, governed by an "ethical" as opposed to "blind" necessity (71/98).

> The ground for my existence must therefore be sought in a free cause that has recognized and approved me *here* and *now* as belonging to the series of the best and by this means has been moved to bring me to actuality. This free cause cannot be itself contingent since otherwise we would not have come a step closer to making the proposition comprehensible; the reason for the truth [of the proposition, 'I myself am actually on hand'] that combines the concept of the contingent being with existence would still have to be sought anew. In the end, therefore, we have to come back to a necessary being, for whom this reason for the truth lies in the thinkability of the subject itself, to a being whose objective existence is not to be separated from its thinkability, i.e., to a being which is on hand because it can be thought (72/100).

God's representation or knowledge of things and the best combination of them, together with his approval of them as such, is a "*vital knowledge*" on the basis of which God creates and sustains them "as limited substances outside himself" (73f/102).

As indicated by the passage quoted at length in the last paragraph, Mendelssohn ultimately endorses (as he did in the Prize Essay[15]) two arguments for God's existence: an argument from our certain but contingent existence, based upon the principle of sufficient reason, and an argument from the thought of God. However, that same passage also makes clear that it is the latter argument that clinches matters in his eyes. Nonetheless, after making the former argument (Chaps. 11 and 12), Mendelssohn does not turn directly to the argument from the thought of God to God's existence. Instead he first discusses at length (Chaps. 13–15) Spinozism and a purified or refined pantheism.

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[14] Similarly, in the Prize Essay Mendelssohn contends that, while probable arguments for God's existence based upon beauty, order, and design are more eloquent and edifying, they are less certain and convincing than strict demonstrations; see *Philosophical Writings*, 291–294/JubA 2: 311–315.

[15] *Philosophical Writings*, 281, 289/JubA 2: 299–300, 308–309.

The context for this discussion is the so-called *Pantheismusstreit*, Mendelssohn's dispute with Jacobi over Lessing's attitude toward Spinoza.[16] Indeed, after iterating familiar arguments, his own and Wolf's, against Spinozism (e.g., its inability to explain the source of the body's motion and form or the mind's desires), Mendelssohn takes the bold step of presenting Lessing as the spokesperson for a refined version of pantheism. As this spokesperson, Lessing concedes the need to endow the sole substance not only with infinite force (as a source of motion) and goodness (as a source of desire and approval) but also with the ability to represent to itself "in the clearest and most exhaustively detailed manner all possible contingent things, along with the infinite manifolds and alterations of them, together with their diversity and goodness, beauty and order and that, by virtue of the divinity's supreme capacity to approve [the best represented by it], it has given preference to the best and most perfect series of things" (84/115). But then, Lessing asks, why presume that this series of things exists outside the divine intellect?[17]

Mendelssohn contends that the presumption is justified on the basis of the following considerations. Being thought by God is hardly sufficient for existence since each determinate thought excludes its opposite. What does suffice is God's approval of certain thoughts, an approval that leads to creation of the best. On the one hand, the best finite things cannot, strictly speaking, "exist" in God since they fall short of God as the "absolutely best." On the other hand, it would be inconsistent with God's efficacy if the best finite things, whose existence he approves, did not come to exist. In other words, what God approves and is, accordingly, the best is not simply the thought of the best in the divine mind but the actual existence of what corresponds to that thought.

Yet, after defending the existence of things outside God in this way, Mendelssohn raises the question of just how much, in the end, separates the theist from the refined pantheist. For if the refined pantheist acknowledges that there is a best combination of things and that a human being's happiness depends upon how much he strives to love God, then this refined version of pantheism secures religion and morality no less than theism does. The difference between them thus turns, Mendelssohn suggests, on a subtlety, namely, on the practically fruitless interpretation of the image of the divine light or source (*Quelle*), i.e., "whether God has let these thoughts of the best connection of contingent things beam forth, stream forth, flow out … whether he has let the light of itself flash outward or only glow internally? That is to say, whether it has remained merely a source or whether the source has gushed forth into a stream?" (90/124).[18]

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[16] See Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 92–108.

[17] As Altmann points out, in these passages Mendelssohn paraphrases Lessing's study, "On the Reality of Things Outside God"; see "*Über die Wirklichkeit der Dinge ausser Gott*" in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann and Franz Muncker, vol. XIV (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 292–293; see Altmann, op. cit., 692f.

[18] After proposing this practical rapprochement of theism and refined pantheism in Chap. 14, Mendelssohn follows in Chap. 15 with a closer discussion of Lessing's own thinking, prompted by "friend D's" objection to making Lessing the spokesperson for refined pantheism (see n. 1 above).

Following this extended consideration of refined pantheism and Lessing, Mendelssohn returns, in the penultimate section of *Morning Hours*, to the demonstration of God's existence, offering what he takes to be his own novel proof. The proof starts out, not from "the immediate feeling of my own existence," but instead from "the imperfectness of our self-knowledge" (103/141, 107/147). Mendelssohn takes it to be evident that neither individual contingent beings nor even "all contingent beings together" can know everything that pertains to an actual existence, its own or any other. This observation, together with the allegedly "plausible" assumption "that everything actual must be thought to be actual by some thinking being," yields the conclusion that there is "an infinite intellect" that does represent everything to itself (104/142f). The plausibility of this assumption is, of course, precisely the rub and, fully aware that many will find it unconvincing, Mendelssohn devotes the rest of the section to shoring it up.

In the final section of *Morning Hours*, Chap. 17, Mendelssohn reviews Descartes' a priori proof for God's existence as necessary, infinite, and perfect. The proof is the unique case of a legitimate inference from possibility to actuality. Mendelssohn then argues that Leibniz's demand for a demonstration of this possibility can be met since there is nothing unthinkable, i.e., nothing contradictory in the concept of "the sum-total of all perfections," one of which is existence (110/150). If opponents charge, as Kant did originally in his 1763 essay *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* [The only possible basis for a demonstration of the existence of God], that existence is not just any perfection or property but the positing of them all, Mendelssohn is willing to concede the point. Or rather, whether existence is so defined or remains undefinable (as Mendelssohn himself prefers), it suffices for the proof that contingent beings can be thought without existence, the necessary being cannot. For those troubled by an "indefinable existence," Mendelssohn cites his Prize Essay proof that starts out from the notion that "what is not must be either impossible or merely possible" (112/153).

Notes on the Translation

One difficulty in translating *Morgenstunden* is the frequent lack of quotation marks or other indications of direct address on the part of Mendelssohn's interlocutors in the German original, where the text takes the form of a dialogue. When it seemed evident to us that a passage was meant as a form of direct address, we placed the passage in double quotation marks. For example, when Mendelssohn writes: "answers the dualist" (*antwortet der Dualist*) or "the adversaries continue" (*fahren die Gegner fort*), the corresponding passages are placed in double quotation marks (see 39/57 and 113/154). In cases where the text is ambiguous or Mendelssohn is speaking, we simply follow the German original and do not try to sort out any forms of direct address through quotation marks.

Most of our decisions regarding translations are evident from the glossary appended to the text. But a word is in order about one decision in particular. Mendelssohn is adept at playing on word-families and this adeptness in the case of

terms based upon *Bild*, translated 'image,' presents a particular challenge. The terms in question are 'copy' (*Abbild*), 'depiction' (*Abbildung*), 'reproduction' (*Nachbild*), 'prototype' (*Urbild*), and 'paradigm' (*Vorbild*). Of all these terms, perhaps the most problematic is *Urbild*, for which there does not appear to be an ideal English counterpart. An argument can be made for translating it as 'archetype,' since Baumgarten, a possible source for these distinctions, employs a Latinized version of the Greek root of this term for this purpose.[19] However, whereas 'archetype' frequently signifies an idea or ideal according to which something is made, Mendelssohn employs *Urbild* to designate not merely an idea but something that exists, a divinely created existence, of which there are possible copies, depictions, and reproductions. Since 'prototype' designates something created that exists independently of its creator and can serve as the existing model for copies, reproductions, etc., it strikes us as a less misleading translation of *Urbild*.

Acknowledgements We are grateful to Gideon Freudenthal, Manfred Kuehn, and Reinier Munk for their counsel and critical readings of parts of this volume.[20] We would also like to thank Anita Fei van der Linden, Willemijn Arts, and Pavitra Arulmurugan for their considerable patience and assistance with the production of this translation.

[19] Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, 3rd ed. (Halle: Hemmerde, 1757), §346: "EXEMPLAR est, cui simile intenditus, et causa impulsiva cum sit, est causa, quae exemplaris dicitur, eiusque causatum EXEMPLATUM (ectypon, copia) vocatur. EXEMPLAR, quod non habet aliud, est ARCHETYPON (originale)."

[20] See Gideon Freudenthal, *Mendelssohn's Enlighted Judaism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2011); see, too, the forthcoming volume of essays on Mendelssohn's thought, *Mendelssohn's Metaphysics and Aesthetics*, edited by Reinier Munk (Amsterdam: Springer, 2011).

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Preliminary Report

The following discourses *on God's existence* contain the result of everything that I previously read and myself thought about this important object of our research. For 12–15 years I find myself utterly incapable of expanding my acquaintance [with ongoing research]. A so-called neurological infirmity to which I have succumbed during this time prevents me from any mental exertion and, what the doctors find particularly strange, reading others' thoughts aggravates me almost even more than my own reflections do. Thus, I am acquainted with the writings of great men who have distinguished themselves in metaphysics during this time, the works of Lambert, Tetens, Platnner and even the all-quashing Kant, only from insufficient reports of my friends and from learned reviews that are rarely more instructive. For me, then, this science still stands at present where it stood around 1775, for this is as long as it has been that I have been compelled to keep my distance from it. Indeed, in better times it was my most faithful companion, my only consolation amidst all that is repugnant in this life, and now I had to evade it like a mortal enemy on every path I trod. Or, what is even harder, I had to shun it like a contaminated friend who herself warns me to avoid all contact with her. I did not have enough self-denial to obey her. From time to time clandestine breaches ensued, albeit never without remorseful atonement.

In the meantime my son J was growing up and the good disposition that he showed, made it my duty to introduce him early enough to rational knowledge of God. At first I let him read for himself at his own pleasure and gather ideas. I am of the opinion [4] that in the case of studying philosophy, as is in the case of learning languages, one must begin and as a rule end with use. The study of the form is neither useful nor pleasant if the application does not constantly proceed side-by-side, and how is this possible if no useful materials have been procured? So I let him first draw [aspects of] the matter together and it was now time to bring form and rules into it and to provide him with the requisite guidance for the orderly and methodical reflection on this important matter.

I decided to devote to him for this purpose the few hours of the day which would still be clear and cheery, the *morning hours*, and I was pleased that my son-in-law, S and also W, the son of a family with whom I had a friendly bond for many years, also wanted to take part in our efforts. These three youths, all with estimable mental gifts and even better hearts, visited me in the morning hours. We talked among

ourselves about the truths of natural religion and, if I was in the mood for it, I held lectures for them about one point and another from those truths, but as one might readily surmise, without the constraints of any school. They had the freedom to interrupt me, to bring up objections, to answer the latter among themselves, and I occasionally broke off my discourse in order to let them dispute among themselves. In this way these essays arose, the first part of which I hereby set before the public.

I know that my philosophy is not the philosophy of the times. Mine still has all too much the smell of that school in which I educated myself and that in the first half of the century wanted to dominate, perhaps all too high-handedly. Despotism of every sort invites resistance. Respect for this school has since sunk quite considerably and in its downfall has drawn down with it respect for speculative philosophy. In recent times, Germany's best heads speak of all speculation with contemptuous disdain. One presses for facts, clings merely to the evidence of the senses, gathers observations, heaps up experiences and experiments, perhaps with all too great a neglect of universal principles. In the end the mind accustoms itself so much to touching and gawking that it deems [5] actual only what lets itself be treated in this manner. Hence, the penchant for *materialism* that threatens in our days to become so universal and, from the other side, the desire to see and touch what, given its nature, cannot befall our senses, the penchant for *fanaticism*.

Everyone confesses to himself that the evil is fast becoming a bad habit, that it is time to give the wheel a push in order to bring up again what has been put under our feet too long by the cycle of things. But I am all too conscious of my weakness even to have merely the intention of effecting such a potent, general change. The business may be left to better heads, to the profundity of a Kant who will hopefully build up again with the same spirit with which he has torn down. I content myself with the limited intention of leaving behind to my friends and posterity an accounting of what I have held to be true. I also had a particular incentive for making this writing known, an incentive that I will have an opportunity to spell out in the part that follows [the present part]. I cannot yet determine for now how soon this [second part] will appear. It will chiefly depend upon the approval with which the public will take up this first part. [9]

Part I [9]
Preliminary Knowledge of Truth, Semblance, and Error

[10]

Chapter 1
What is truth?

When we set out to seek truth, my dears, we assume truth is there to be found and that there are sure characteristics to distinguish it from untruth. Before setting out, then, we have to answer these questions: (1) What is truth? (2) By what characteristics will we recognize it and distinguish it from semblance and error?

He who says nothing other than what he thinks, speaks the truth. Truth in speech, therefore, is the agreement between words and thoughts, between a sign and the thing designated by it. Because our thoughts relate to a certain extent to objects, as signs relate to what they designate, some have wanted to make this definition universal and locate the essence of truth in the agreement among words, concept, and things. All things possible and actual, they have said, are as it were the prototypes, our concepts and thoughts the depictions, and words like the silhouettes of thoughts. If the depiction contains nothing more and nothing less than what pertains to the paradigm, and the silhouette correctly indicates what is contained in the depiction, then there is the most perfect agreement among all three and this we call *truth*.

While this definition is not incorrect, still it does not seem fruitful. If truth is agreement, then untruth is discordance. Therefore, untruth in our thoughts is disagreement of thoughts among themselves or with their prototypes, the objects to which they pertain. Now there is no means of comparing thoughts with their objects, that is, of comparing reproductions with their prototypes. We have only reproductions before us, and we can make judgments about the prototypes solely by means of them. Who tells us whether these reproductions are faithful, whether or not they contain more or less than in fact pertains to their prototypes, whether there are everywhere prototypes that they are like? One thus sees that, from this side at least, no characteristics are provided for recognizing the truth and for distinguishing it from untruth: let us try another way. [11]

With regard to truth in speaking, we can let the matter rest with the previous definition. We do have it in our power to compare words with thoughts and see how far they agree. Thoughts themselves can be considered from two different sides. They concern either the *thinkable* and *not thinkable* or the *actual* and *not actual*. First, then, we will consider thoughts insofar as they are thinkable or not. These divide once more into (1) concepts, (2) judgments, and (3) inferences. Concepts are true if they contain characteristics that do not cancel one another and, hence, can be

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_1,

thought at the same time. The concept of a circle is true because the characteristics that are given of it do not contradict one another. So, too, for example, the concept of doubt is a true concept inasmuch as a limited being could lack the reasons necessary for affirming a proposition's truth rather than denying it. The concept of justice, indeed, of the most perfect justice, is a true concept insofar as all the characteristics taken together in it do not cancel one another and are, therefore, simultaneously thinkable. The greatest speed, however, is a false concept since the largest space and the smallest [moment of] time (taken together here) can be thought neither individually nor in combination. The concepts of supreme injustice, of an absolute depth or height, of a desire for evil as evil, and the like are also false concepts since we can see that, in these words, characteristics are taken together which contradict themselves when combined into concepts and, hence, are not thinkable together.

In judgments, the characteristics contained in the total concept of the subject are merely asserted individually of it. Judgments are true, then, if they assert of the concepts of the subjects no characteristics other than those that find place in those concepts. Therefore, truth in judgments, just as in concepts, can be placed in the agreement of the characteristics which are thought together in a concept and individually asserted of it.

All rational inferences are grounded upon a correct analysis of concepts. One can represent to oneself the entire sum-total of human knowledge in the image of a tree. The [12] furthest tips of the tree come together in buds, these unite in branches, the branches in limbs, and the limbs meet together finally in a trunk. One might suppose that the fibers of the trunk run through all limbs, branches, and buds just as the fibers of the limbs and branches run through all of their subdivisions, but that in every lower division they take up such fibers which they did not have in the division from which they originally stem; in this way, one has a very fitting image of the kinship of our concepts. All individual things come together in different kinds, kinds in species, and species in classes, and classes are unified ultimately in a single stem-concept, the characteristics of which run through all of the others. What is asserted of a higher concept must also pertain to all the lower concepts; however, what is maintained of the lower concepts as peculiar to them can only be ascribed with the same right to one subdivision of the higher concept, not to all. All the trenchancy of our rational inferences rests on this. The characteristics of the trunk pertain to all the limbs as well, the characteristics of the limbs pertain to all the branches that spring from them, and so forth out to the furthest tips or individual things. Proceeding backwards, by contrast, the characteristics peculiar to the branches can only be ascribed to one subdivision of the limbs, just as the characteristics peculiar to the limbs can only be ascribed to a part of the universal trunk.

The truth of rational inferences consists, therefore, in nothing less than the possibility or impossibility of unifying certain concepts and characteristics in thought. Insofar, then, as our thoughts are considered thinkable or not, their truth consists in the agreement of their characteristics among themselves and with the consequences that are drawn from them. All human knowledge that merely concerns what can and cannot be thought, like mathematics and logic, preserves its certainty through the principle of contradiction, which carries with it the highest degree of evidence. In these strict kinds of proof we merely analyze concepts, pursue the characteristics

of the trunk through all limbs and branches, compare the common characteristics with those peculiar only to some, and convince ourselves, by this means, that they are thinkable or not.

All knowledge of this kind, insofar as it concerns what is and is not thinkable [13], is a consequence of the correct use of reason. Only a lack of reason or an incorrect use of it can lead us astray into untruth and have us confuse the thinkable with the unthinkable. Further, truths belonging to this genus have the common characteristic feature that they are necessary and immutable and thus independent of time. With regard to them it is not fitting to speak of either a *was* or a *will be* – everything is or is not. Concepts that are compatible with one another never cease to be so and those that flee from one another can never be brought into combination with one another.

However, as necessary and immutable as these truths are in and for themselves, we nonetheless realize that they are not always present to us with the same liveliness. Their presence in us is bound up with time and is subject to change. At one point we did not have the concepts, then they came to be, and perhaps there will come a time at which they will disappear again. They are alterations within us as thinking beings and as such an ideal actuality can be ascribed to them. But they are also not necessary but rather contingent and mutable beings, just as we are ourselves, the subject of this alteration; they are necessarily thinkable but are not necessarily thought by us, just as we are immutably thinkable beings but not immutably actual beings ourselves. The sphere of the actual is thus more narrowly limited than the sphere of the thinkable; everything actual must be thinkable, but a great many things must be able to be thought to which actuality will never pertain. Hence, the source of the actual is not the principle of contradiction; not everything that does not contradict itself and thus is thinkable has, for that reason, a well-founded claim to actuality. We have to look for another basic principle that might provide the boundary-line between the actual and non-actual with the same precision that the principle of contradiction distinguishes what can be thought from what cannot.

Let us see how we arrive at the idea of the actual and with what reason, for many things, we are convinced or believe ourselves to be convinced that they possess actuality. A human being is himself the first source of his knowledge; he thus needs to begin with himself if he wants to give an account of what he does and does not [14] know.

My thoughts and representations are the first things of whose actuality I am convinced. I ascribe an ideal actuality to them insofar as they dwell inwardly in me and are perceived by me as alterations in my faculty of thinking. Each alteration presupposes something that is altered. I myself, then, the subject of this alteration, have an actuality that is not merely ideal but real. I am not merely a modification but the modified thing itself; I am not merely thoughts but a thinking being whose state is altered by thoughts and representations. Here we have, then, the source of a two-fold existence or a two-fold *actuality*: the actuality of representations and the actuality of the representing thing – alterations and a subject of the alterations – and we at least believe ourselves to be sufficiently convinced of both.

Just as I am not merely a changing thought but a thinking being who endures, so it is possible, too, to think of various representations that they are not merely

representations in us or alterations of our faculty of thinking but rather that these representations also pertain to external things as their objects, distinct from us. Just as the thinking being, as we have seen, is not merely thought but instead possesses its own constancy and real existence, *what is thought* can also have an actuality that obtains for itself and is not merely ideal. Several things are thinkable that have an enduring actuality, as I do, and whose copy in us is partly present, but can partly also perhaps be absent. We would, therefore, have three sorts of things to consider: (1) the thought that is merely a change and whose actuality we have called an ideal actuality; (2) the thinking thing, or the enduring substance in which the change happens and to which a real actuality must already be ascribed; and finally (3) what is thought, or the object of thoughts to which in many cases we are inclined to ascribe a real existence just as we do to ourselves. But how are we convinced that these things outside of us also have an actual existence and are something more than mere thoughts in us? As much as our nature compels us to assume this confidently of many things, we would nonetheless eagerly like to know the reason [15] why we have no doubts regarding them.

First of all, the senses and their manifold appearances. We are inclined to regard what makes an impression on our senses as something actual outside us; yet we are also aware that the senses occasionally deceive. At times they seduce us into believing that an object [*Subjekt*] of appearance is present, and afterwards we realize that these appearances were merely representations in us and that they did not have an object outside of us. These appearances were something imagined, dreams, illusions, to which merely an ideal actuality pertains and whose object, at least for now, is nowhere to be met with outside of us.

We ordinarily take the following paths in order to rid ourselves of this doubt. We look first to the agreement of different senses. The more that diverse senses assert the existence of a certain object, the more securely do we believe in its actuality. I see the image of a rose, reach for it, and feel it, bring it up to my nose and smell the very same thing that I have felt and smelled in many cases, combined with the sight of a rose. I look at the same object at various distances, in many different settings, through various media, all of which, I know, alter the sensory appearances. I look at objects of sight through water, through air, through glasses that magnify it or make it smaller; I discern objects of hearing through instruments that amplify or weaken them; I bring the objects of touch into contact with various parts of my body and attend to the impressions which these objects make upon me in all these diverse ways, distinguishing similarities from dissimilarities in them. I inquire about the impressions that these same objects make upon other people when they come into the sphere of their sensations. The more agreement that is found in all of this, the more we believe ourselves to be assured of an external actuality. The more discord, the greater the doubt, or better, the more we are persuaded that the sensory appearances of which we are conscious are merely thoughts in us and that they likely have nothing outside of us as their object.

Now if we are convinced in this way of the objective actuality of a sensory object, we apply to the same object [16] all the truths of mathematics and logic

known to us. First, we assign it all the predicates that necessarily pertain to the concept of that object by virtue of these irrefutable truths, just as we remove from it all the properties that cannot pertain to it by virtue of the basic principle of contradiction. In such a way we form true propositions, the subject of which possesses for itself the evidence of sensory knowledge, the predicates of which, however, by virtue of these applied mathematical and logical rules, can be thought in this and no other way. We proceed from these propositions to rational inferences, and so the learned institutions of applied mathematics and logic arise within physics. Furthermore, the more often two sensory appearances have followed upon one another in time, the more often we have seen that on the occasion of a sensory appearance *A*, a sensory appearance *B*, distinct from *A*, occurs, the more grounds we have for inferring the constant combination of these appearances. Whenever we become aware of the sensory actuality of appearance *A*, we confidently expect the appearance *B* as well. The more often we have seen that an object similar to bread in its look, touch, and taste would also provide the body with healthy nourishment, the greater the conviction with which we expect this result even now of those sensory objects that are similar to bread, although we have not yet had this experience of them. The more often we have perceived that an object with the visual and tactile properties of a rose tends to produce a certain olfactory sensation in its vicinity and, upon tasting it, tends to produce a certain flavor, the more confidently we expect these sensations of smell and taste of any flower that presents itself as a rose to our senses of sight and touch. By this means, the number of fundamental principles and postulates used by us in physics as well as in ordinary life multiplies *ad infinitum*. From the actuality of an appearance we infer the co-actuality of all remaining sensory appearances that tend to be combined with it. This is not an inference with the irrefutable certainty that can be called ‘mathematical’ or ‘logical’ but instead an inference with a degree of conviction that is founded upon the doctrine of probability [17] and called ‘induction.’ In the following, we will consider more closely the ground of this conviction as well as the degree of evidence it can supply. For today, I am content to illustrate these general conceptions of truth by means of an example. I sample a bit of food and it affords my palate the taste of salt. The people with whom I am dining feel the same sensation, and to our sight it appears in the shape of ordinary salt. I observe it under the microscope and its parts have the form of salt. I place it in water and it dissolves just as salt tends to do, and now I expect that in chemical investigations it will also exhibit the same appearances that are bound up with salt in accordance with the laws of this art. I do not rest content with this merely conjectural expectation; instead I actually investigate a part of this body through chemical processes. If my expectation is confirmed, then with that much greater conviction I infer the effect that the remaining parts of the object will produce in my body, on the basis of the amount of experiences which have been set in motion by similar means in similar human bodies. On the basis of the amount of agreement that I have experienced, I also expect similar agreement in similar cases, with more or less evidence, the greater or smaller the amount of cases in which I have experienced agreement.

[18]

Chapter 2
Cause – Effect – Ground – Power.

I continue to track down the first source of our knowledge of things, although I am in danger of tiring you out with intricacies. But if one wants to escape the snares of sophism, at least once in one's life one has to work meticulously through all sorts of subtleties and make them clear. We have seen that the very frequent succession of one appearance upon another provides us with the grounded supposition that they stand in some connection with one another. We call the foregoing appearance the *cause*, the subsequent appearance the *effect*, and are convinced that they can both be combined in a logical proposition. That is to say, in the concept of the cause as subject, something will necessarily be found, on the basis of which the effect can be conceived as [its] predicate. This *something* or the characteristic in the cause, from which the effect may be inferred, we call the *ground* and say: every effect is grounded in its cause. With the same grounds of the truth, we conclude from two appearances accompanying one another, that they must be subject to a third, common cause, without deciding whether they are immediately or mediately subject to it.

One may detect here a threefold source of knowledge. Even an animal expects similar consequences in similar cases but not on the basis of the same ground of knowledge. In such cases the mere association of concepts does for animals precisely what experience does for the common mass of humanity and what reason establishes for philosophers. Even animals, for example, shy away from entrusting themselves to a surface lying on an incline and fear sliding down. The frequent repetition of the same case has combined the ideas in the animal soul to such an extent that, at the sight of the surface on an incline, the idea of plummeting and sliding down becomes the liveliest of ideas and produces fear. Human beings, by contrast, are not ruled merely by a representation that has become lively. Instead, on the basis of experiences that they have often had, they form for themselves the universal rational proposition: "all heavy bodies slide down surfaces on an incline." They suppose, as the reason for the truth, that once the idea of a surface on an incline has been unraveled, [19] something is to be found in it, on the basis of which the possibility of plummeting can be made comprehensible. The philosopher adds the knowledge of the ground, i.e., reason on the basis of mechanics, and brings the general proposition closer to purely rational knowledge.

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_2,

In the fear, common to animals and human beings, of entrusting themselves to a steeply sloping surface, there lies hidden a formal inference that can be gradually elevated from the knowledge proper to an animal to a purely rational truth. The minor premise "this is a surface with a steep slope" is provided by the sense of sight. Without further development, by means of the combination of ideas that the frequent perceiving has established in the animal, the representation of a fall awakens in the animal; it becomes the dominant conception in its soul and has an effect on its capacity to move. Reason, however, finds much to unravel and develop here. Sight provides us with the appearance of a surface on an incline. – But how would it be, if sight were to deceive us? It is not impossible for this to be case since it has often tricked us. Yet the more frequent agreement of appearances justifies our expectation that, insofar as they are instructive regarding what is spatial and extended, those appearances will occur and appear in no other way (1) at every other distance, (2) in a different situation, and (3) via different means of seeing (that the appearance befalling such a surface no less yields), (4) to the touch and every other sense of living beings. In a word, [that agreement justifies the conclusion] that it not merely *seems* to be but *actually is* a surface on an incline. Where so much is in agreement in cases so often repeated, under altered circumstances, we make the inference to an object that finds itself outside us and contains the ground for this agreement. Here philosophical knowledge adds nothing further to common evidence than to seek to account, in keeping with the fundamental principles of the art of reason, for our right to make this inference, for the use we make here of the kinds of inference called 'induction' and 'analogy.'

The look of the steeply sloping surface awakens the representation of sliding down, a representation that has often been combined with that look. The most thoughtless human being does not let himself be governed merely by a representation that has become lively. Instead he abstracts for himself the experiential proposition: *A surface on an incline…etc.*, of which he provides [20] no further ground, i.e., reason, than the fact that he has so often seen it. From the repetition he infers the connection and forms for himself a universal proposition that he uses as a major premise in cases that occur. If a similar experience teaches him, for example, that one may split bodies more easily with a wedge and that one can set them in motion more easily by means of a screw, then these are for him individual propositions, of which he makes use, without having an inkling of anything rational in it. The philosopher traces his knowledge back further and attempts to combine it, as much as he can, with purely rational knowledge. He finds, for example, in these three experiential propositions the same universal laws of nature, the law of the weight of bodies and communication of movement, diversely altered merely by the diversity of the figures. What enters into the alterations that these natural laws must undergo through the figure of the surface on an incline, the wedge, and the screw, he explains these to himself according to geometric principles, i.e., according to the laws of the thinkable and unthinkable, and finds that wedge and screw, along with the surface lying on an incline, can be made intelligible on the basis of the same principle. From this side, then, his knowledge is [a] pure truth of reason. From this side at least, he distinctly discerns the connection between subject and predicate, without relying on the expectation that experience justifies him in having.

But as for the universal laws of nature themselves, the laws of gravity and motion, back to which we trace these particular cases, we do not know those laws so scientifically, in so purely rational a fashion as we are capable of knowing the consequences and alterations of them by means of the figure at hand. The sensory appearances and their agreement have allowed us to make the inference to an object that contains the ground of them. We call this object the 'body'; but the characteristics of it that are familiar to us do not yet suffice to infer a universal weight or even a law of motion that is supposed to be combined with it [the body] into a logical proposition. Those characteristics can communicate to this or that wise individual the propositions: 'all bodies have a weight; all bodies have a power of movement.' Yet even for the philosopher these universal laws of nature remain from the outset merely experiential propositions that he has made universal by means of [21] an incomplete induction. Since they recur each time under similar circumstances and are never absent, he concludes to an inner causal connection between subject and predicate, even though he cannot discern this connection distinctly. Reason helped him merely transform the individual experiential propositions into universal laws of nature. The ground of the universal claim, however, is not scientific, not a purely rational knowledge but instead an incomplete induction which must take the place of pure reason.

It is not that this incomplete induction should be lacking in persuasive power or evidence. In many cases it perfectly suffices to provide us with complete assurance and set aside all doubt. Each of us expects with undoubted certainty, for example, that he will die, although the ground for the conviction is merely an incomplete induction. No one has the slightest hesitation about carrying out some secret business, upon which his life or fortune depends, in the presence of an infant, without worrying about being betrayed by the child or by a pet who sees him. On what does the doubt-free certainty rest here? Not on scientific rational knowledge, but instead merely on an incomplete induction that so approximates the complete induction that it is sufficient to make us fully convinced of it.

The same connection holds with respect to our knowledge in the doctrine of the soul and morals. As soon as we come to the science of the actual and the non-actual, our knowledge has a mixed make-up. In part, immediate experience or sensory perception of it [the actual] proceeds within us; in part, we compare these immediate observations, unraveling them, noticing their similarity, tracing them back to general principles grounded sometimes on reason, sometimes on complete or incomplete induction and a greater or lesser conviction, the more or less complete the induction itself is. This conviction can also grow here to such a degree of evidence that it allows no further room for reservations and provides us all the certainty that we can always expect only from pure reason. Unpacking [22] what in this act is to be ascribed to the inner sense, to pure reason, or to mere experience is a task of the doctrine of the soul and morals that we cannot pursue further here. If that Macedonian hero took the medicine from the hand of his doctor, regardless of how suspicious he had become of his friend's honesty, doing so without hesitation and free of any suspicion, and expressed so innocent a trust in a tried and true friendship, his ethical conviction was of a very mixed nature. It was grounded in part on a familiarity with human beings in general and with the effect that motivations have

on the human will; it is also grounded on the experiences and observations of the friendship that he himself and others had gathered; and, finally, it is grounded on the repeated demonstrations of uprightness given him [the hero] by the sage, of whom the calumny was intended to make [the hero] suspicious.[1] All these instances of knowledge are put together from inner perceptions, scientific development of the latter, more frequent experiences, and the inductions formed from them; and from the integral sum of these inductions there grew up in him a firm conviction so innocent and elevated beyond all doubt that it falls only marginally below mathematical evidence.

Hence, every conviction that in the science of the actual and the non-actual is not purely rational knowledge is grounded on the agreement of diverse senses, under many different sorts of circumstances and modifications, and on the frequent outcome of diverse sensory appearances, placed after and next to one another. We thus have reason to investigate with what right we are justified to infer in these cases. In my essay on probability I unpacked this quite clearly and showed the grounds for the truth with which we consider ourselves convinced in such cases by analogy and induction. In the interest of the connection here, I want to repeat briefly the essentials of that essay. But I recommend that, for a better understanding, you read through and put to an exact test the reasons that come up there and that will be useful to us in what follows.

If the characteristics of an object A leave undecided whether it possesses B or not and whether this depends upon external, contingent determinations that can produce an instance of the negation just as much as the affirmation of this, then the proposition is in doubt and has [23] the same degree of probability for and against it. If it is just as possible for the picture side as for the shield side of a coin to turn up and if this depends on contingent movements of the hand that I unintentionally make, then it is equally correct for me to bet on the one or the other side. If it is thrown several times, the probability is that one case will be turn up just as often as the other. Two players have the same reason to hope, if one places a bet on the shield side, the other on the picture side. If the same result always comes about in several throws, then we suppose some internal determining reason favors this result. If in throw after throw by my opponent, the same side of the coin always turns up, then I suspect that he is not leaving the outcome to chance, according to the rules of the game, but instead has intentionally determined the outcome through some secret spin that he knows how to give the coin. My suspicion increases with the amount of throws. Let us try to indicate the degree of my supposition more precisely.

My opponent has as many instances [that count] against him as he has throws. Since he bets, for example, on the shield side turning up each time, he then has two

[1] Mendelssohn is referring to the following incident. Alexander the Great was languishing with a fever and, while his trusted physician Philip of Acarnania was preparing a purgative, he received a letter stating that Philip had been bribed to poison him. Alexander read the letter and, taking the purgative, gave the letter to Philip to read, demonstrating his trust of his friend and fearlessness in the face of death. See Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, trans. P. A. Brunt (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), II, 4 (pp. 135–7).

such instances against him in two throws and only one in which he can hope to win. Hence, he can posit (1), that in both throws the result is the shield side; but I can posit (2) against him that in one of the two throws the picture side will turn up. His hope of winning is proportional to certainty as one is to three; but mine is two to three. If we wished to divide the stakes up among ourselves without waiting for the result of chance, then he would rightly be able to demand 1/3, but I would be able to demand 2/3.

If we bet on three throws, then his hope would be 1:4, but mine would be 3:4. Each instance brings him one more instance of the loss, just as it brings one instance more of winning for me. For, according to the presupposition, I win the stakes if the picture side turns up only once. His hope, however, is always only the sole instance in which the shield side always turns up. Thus, in a hundred throws, my hope = 100 : 101, but his = 1 : 101 and, in general, in n throws, my hope = n : n + 1; but the hope of my opponent = 1 : n + 1.

Thus, if the result is nevertheless in his favor, then it is, of course, possibly the case that he honestly went to work and left the [24] game to chance. The probability of this case is = 1 : n + 1. But with the probability = n : n + 1, it can be supposed that, either in the coin itself or in a spin that my opponent secretly gave the throw, a ground, i.e., reason for the correspondence [of the throw with his bet] may be found, a ground that has brought about that instance that is contrary to the [usual] supposition. The greater the number of throws, the smaller the ratio of 1 : n + 1; my opponent's hope accordingly disappears all the more and, as a result, the greater the supposition of some reason for the correspondence, in the case that he is lucky. But this supposition of certainty cannot be equal, if n is not infinitely large. Only in this instance is 1 : n + 1 = 0 : 1; that is to say, only in this instance is my expectation completely certain and the hope of my opponent equal to zero. As long, however, as n is still finite, there still remains always a slight degree of expectation in favor of my opponent, and the presupposition of a reason for the correspondence, in case he is lucky, has still not reached the level of irrefutable certainty.

The greatest part of our knowledge concerning the actual and the non-actual rests upon these simple laws of supposition.

The more often the appearance B follows upon or accompanies the appearance A, the more cause we have to assume a reason for the connection between them. If they had been brought together merely by contingent causes, then each time the attempt was repeated, the opposite could also take place. Altered circumstances would have brought in their path an alteration of the outcome. Since this did not happen, we supposed a reason for the connection and did so with the degree of conviction that is proportional to certainty as the amount of observed instances n is to the same amount n + 1. Thus, if the appearance B follows upon the appearance A every time, then we locate the reason for the connection in the constant properties of A. For the changing properties would again not exclude the opposite. We suppose, therefore, that the inner, constant properties of A have brought about the appearance B. That is to say, we infer a causal connection; let us call A the cause, B the effect, and let us call the constant properties of A or their enduring presence in A [25] the power. If we see the bodies expand whenever they are brought close

to fire, then we locate the reason for the expansion in the constant properties of the fire, attribute to the fire a power of expanding bodies, and expect precisely this outcome of the fire and the bodies, an outcome which we have not yet experienced. The degree of certainty increases with the amount of observed instances and, as we have seen, if the number of instances is very large, that degree of certainty is simply not distinct from perfect evidence in any noticeable way.

We consider (with precisely this legitimacy) two appearances constantly accompanying one another to be the mediate or immediate effect of a common cause and expect the one whenever we perceive the other. The combination of the color and the feel of bread with this taste, with this influence on the nourishment of our body, has been registered so often that we rightly consider both the consequences of an internal make-up of the bread. We also expect the same taste and the same nourishment from every bread that we see and feel. 'Power' is what we call that inner make-up by virtue of which the bread brings about these effects attributed to it.

This is the source of all the laws of nature assumed by us. They are universal propositions into which we have brought the specifically observed or inferred connections of causality, through the application of which we reckon on the outcome in each case that presents itself. Similar subjects will have also similar predicates by virtue of the inner ground, i.e., reason for the connection. Thus, the law of weight is a law of nature, that is, a universal proposition into which we managed to bring all observed diversities in the falling and rising of bodies. The Newtons, Galileos, and other discoverers combine theorems of the thinkable and unthinkable with this natural law. That is to say, they apply the principles of mathematics and logic to the law of weight, invent the entire theory of the gravitation of bodies, and expand our knowledge in a way that surpasses every expectation.

If diverse cases a, b, c, d can be derived from one and the same source e and can be derived in turn from just as many different sorts of sources, then it is probable that they have a common source [26] and this probability increases in turn with the number of cases and can be brought very near to certainty. I see that a number of human beings run towards a certain region or, at least, direct their eyes towards it. Each of them has his particular causes. Yet the agreement of many allows me to infer a common ground. I observe many actions of a human being. Each of them can perhaps be derived from different motives. But if, for example, I ascribe ambition to him, then all those actions can be grasped in a very natural way. I thus infer with a degree of probability that increases with the number of observed actions: the human being is ambitious.

The doctrine of hypotheses and their veracity rests on this ground. The more and the more manifold natural events can be grasped on the basis of a presupposition and the simpler the presupposition through which this can occur, the more ground or probability this presupposition has for itself and the greater the legitimacy with which it is assumed to be true. One might suppose believing that this criterion for the hypotheses could only be valid if we ascribe the world's arrangement to a rational and wise cause who must have chosen the shortest means to reaching its goal. "Only in this case," writes a sophist of modern times, "do you have a right to prefer

a simple arrangement to a complex one and to trust wisdom that it will have managed to accomplish much with little means. Your criterion for the hypotheses is thus itself a hypothesis." However, according to the concepts presented above, this hypothesis is not necessary here, regardless of how much we are otherwise persuaded of its certainty. It is in keeping with the nature of the human intellect, not to ascribe a detected agreement to blind chance but instead, wherever a manifold concurs, to seek the ground of the concurrence. The convincing power of the probability with which we assume the ground of this agreement increases with the manifoldness of what is in agreement, on the one hand, and with the simplicity of the agreement, on the other. That convincing power can, as we have seen, approximate the highest sort of evidence to such a degree that its difference is no longer noticeable. Manifold appearances of nature [27] that can be explained on the basis of a simple presupposition yield a recognizable agreement, the ground of which we find in this hypothesis. If this hypothesis were not true, there would be no common ground and the diverse appearances would have to be actually explained on the basis of just as many diverse hypotheses. The agreement of those appearances would then be a matter of mere chance. But it is against the nature of things as well as human reason, it is against the laws by which we applaud the truth and prefer the probable to the improbable, for us to entrust this to chance and to have the agreement emerge arbitrarily.

[28]

Chapter 3
Evidence – Of immediate Knowledge: Rational Knowledge – Knowledge of Nature.

Now we are already coming closer to answering both questions posed at the outset: what is truth and how can we assure ourselves of it?

The sum of our knowledge can be divided into three classes. (1) Sensory knowledge or immediate consciousness of the alterations which occur in us while we see, hear, feel, and so forth, while we experience pleasure or displeasure, while we desire or are repulsed, judge, infer, hope, fear, and so forth. All this I count as the immediate knowledge of the outer and inner senses, although for the most part a considerable amount of judgment after the fact, of correction and improvement by the understanding is so intimately bound up with the sensory that their boundaries are hardly recognizable. (2) Knowledge of the thinkable and unthinkable, or judgments and inferences that are drawn from that immediate knowledge through the correct use of our understanding; thoughts, into which we analyze those feelings; *rational knowledge*; and (3) Knowledge of what is *actual* outside of us, or the representations which we have in virtue of finding ourselves in a physical-actual world in which we act and undergo, accept and produce change.

This mass of knowledge borders, from all sides, on doubt and uncertainty, and it is also inwardly pervaded by error, prejudice, and uncertainty. From this we recognize that the powers of our souls are limited, that the capacities of our souls are bound up with weakness and incapacity, and thus that among their consequences and effects is knowledge grounded in part upon the soul's capacities and in part upon its incapacities. All illusions of sight and hearing are due to the fact that our power of sense is limited and must conform to the position and constitution of our sensory organs. Any falsity of rational knowledge is grounded in the weakness of the intellect and the limitedness of the power of distinct knowledge; our [29] errors regarding the actual and not actual flow from the same source, as I will show further below. We can, therefore, let the general proposition stand: *truth* is any item of knowledge, any thought, which is an effect of the positive powers of our souls; however, insofar as a thought is the result of incapacity, insofar as it has suffered an alteration through the limitations of our positive powers, we call it *untruth*. Indeed, if the incapacity of the higher powers of the soul – a lack of understanding or of reason – is at fault for untruth, then we call what is false in knowledge *error*; if we are misled by the illusion produced by the so-called lower powers of the soul, however, then what is false

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_3,

in knowledge is called *illusion* or *deception of the senses*. Any given item of human knowledge is, therefore, partially true and partially untrue, since it is the effect of a power that has its own bounds and limitations. Yet, the untrue is either error or an illusion of the senses, or a composition of both.

The illusion of the senses has at bottom the same source as error does, only the former lies in the region of undeveloped, the latter in the region of developed or analyzed concepts. The former, namely, the illusion of the senses, comes close to immediate knowledge and thereby becomes even more irresistible. Incorrect judgments and false inferences can be improved and transformed into truthful ones through the correct use of the understanding. Yet, the illusion of the senses remains unalterable, however much we are convinced that the color green is composed of blue and yellow, or that a tower seen in the distance is not as round as it seems to us; however certain we might be with Copernicus that it is not the sun but the earth that rises, the illusion of the senses always remains the same and is not changed by our conviction otherwise. The illusion is too closely related to immediate knowledge to be able to be corrected through the use of understanding and reason.

Incomplete induction is a principal source of the deception of the senses. We combine the impressions of diverse senses and expect the impression of the one whenever we become aware of the impression of the other. Sight and touch have been combined so often that we expect a similar feeling whenever a similar object comes into view. We suppose an internal similarity where [30] we perceive an external one. We infer similar outcomes because we have so frequently perceived the connection of two appearances. We infer from signs to the designated thing, from a succession of things following upon, and next to, one another to their being grounded in one another; we rely on incomplete inductions that in principle can still be deceiving. All these are consequences of the incorrect use of our powers, logical fallacies of inference actually which, when fully developed, are of the very same make-up as errors. As long, however, as they remain undeveloped, as long as they are immediately combined with sensory knowledge in this way, they have the irresistible force of sensory conviction and are not altered by any use of the soul's higher powers. Why is it, for instance, that I believe that a tower that in the distance appears round to me actually has this shape? It is obviously due to the illusion that an object of sight is not altered through being distant; that it would not appear otherwise to my sight even if it were closer or to my sense of touch if I could touch it; and, finally, it is due to the agreement, so often perceived, that other people will also find it to be just so. These are nothing but incomplete inductions which I let stand as complete. Why do I trust a piece of bread which might contain poison inside and partake of it without a second thought? It is indisputably because I rely upon the internal connection so often noticed between the bread's nutritive powers and its external appearance, because I suppose an internal similarity where an external similarity is apparent to my senses. Again, these are incomplete inductions that have deceived me. I see the picture of a rose floating in the air and grab for it with the certain expectation that it will also not appear otherwise to my sense of touch and smell [than an actual rose normally does]. In what way is this deception distinguished from the deluded expectation of similar cases that is at bottom a logical

fallacy? It differs only in that this expectation has established itself in my soul to such an extent that no rational conviction can expunge it. It lies in the region of undeveloped concepts and no unraveling of these concepts can eradicate it.

That illusion, by means of which one believes that he senses a pain in a body-part lost long ago, seems peculiar but it is nevertheless to be explained on the same basis. [31] Strictly speaking, the sensation of pain does not have a determinate site. In it there is no characteristic of the space or location, no characteristic of the extended or of the figurative. It is only through combination with sight or touch that we mistakenly locate the pain in a specific place in our body. And how would it even be possible otherwise? All of the images that we have of the limbs of our body are at bottom nothing other than appearances of sight or touch.

Whenever we sense a pain in some place accessible neither to sight nor to external touch, the seat of that pain is undetermined. We sense the pain but do not know in what part of the body [if any, we do]. If you want to learn which tooth it is that causes you such an intense pain, you have to feel around with your finger in order to find out which tooth, upon being touched, causes the pain to undergo some alteration. Of course, we have often perceived a change somewhere on our body during the sensation of a certain pain. We have touched this spot and found the pain modified by doing so. A pain has been increased or diminished by touching it, by applying pressure, by rubbing it, and so forth; thus we assigned this spot on our body to the pain as its site. This is to say that we have combined, in the most intimate manner, this sensation of pain with this image or spatial representation which we have of a part of our body through sight and the sense of touch. Now, whenever we have the sensation of this pain again not only does it reawaken the image of the limb through the combination of ideas, but we also expect the exact same effect again from touching the limb or from any other handling of it. That is to say, we take the limb to be the cause of the pain. For this reason children, in whom this combination of ideas is not yet established well enough, are seldom able to say just what hurts them or where it does so.

If the location of a pain is merely an effect of the combination of ideas, if it arises merely from the fact that two appearances quite frequently accompany one another and from the supposition that the one will be the cause of the other, then it follows quite readily, first, that this supposition, like any other inference from an incomplete induction, [32] can also be deceiving; hence, we very often locate a pain in the wrong place. For this combination of ideas, then, the actual presence of the limb is not necessary. When the figurative representation of the limb has been so tightly bound up with a certain pain such that it becomes an immediate sensation following the pain, then the figurative representation of the limb is reawakened whenever we have the sensation of that pain. The limb might actually still be there or we may have been convinced that we do not have it anymore by the external senses of sight and touch; in any case, the sensory succession of ideas continues on its way without being hindered by this more distinct conviction, and the pain is transported to a location that is no longer there.

If natural scientists want to give an account, in physiology, of this phenomenon, they are content with saying that the seat of the pain is to be found not in the external

limbs but in the brain where the nerves jostle together, or in the place where all sensations gather. A sensation, therefore, can remain the same, unchanged even if the outer end of the nerve from which it arises is no longer there. This explanation suffices for the physiologist. But the philosopher goes further. He notices that even the figurative image that we have of the nerves and brain is to be ascribed merely to sight and external touch. The inner sensation of pleasure and displeasure, of well-being and pain, has nothing in common with the spatial and the figurative. It is merely through frequent repetition and through diverse appearances frequently being together and following upon one another that they become so firmly combined in our soul that we infer the causal connection between them. By frequent repetition and by early habituation, this inference almost becomes an immediate sensation and follows its path in spite of the better conviction provided by distinct senses. The inference is made, the illusion is complete before more ponderous reason could drive it away; as happens in so many cases, habit rushes ahead of reason and brings about what reason can only disapprove of afterwards.

All illusions in the fine sciences and arts flow from the same source. They are all founded upon the connection between the sign and what is designated and on the inference that [33] we tend to draw from incomplete inductions. If these have become habit through frequent and early repetition, if the succession of ideas becomes as it were an immediate sensation, then our senses proceed unhindered, inferring what is designated from the sign and expecting the former whenever they perceive the latter. However much a more lucid knowledge of the actual might convince us of the opposite, the sensory illusion has its own way of inferring and concluding, and the imitation has had its effect even though reason recognizes it as mere imitation. We may be so certain that this actor here is not the jealous Moor who kills the innocent Desdemona; we know that this marble Laocoon does not feel the snakes' bite, whose effect the artist has conveyed in even the outermost toes of Laocoon's feet; as long as we merely bring with us the intention to let ourselves be deceived in an agreeable fashion, then sensory knowledge will play its usual game, letting us infer from signs of passion to passion, from signs of voluntary actions to intention and motive, and in this way we become interested in persons who are not there. We actually take part in sensations and actions that are not actual because we resolutely abstract from this non-actuality for our own pleasure.

If my aim here were to deal more with the psychological dimension, I would take the opportunity, based on this consideration, of talking to you about the sensory faculty of abstraction and showing you, through a number of examples, that our sensory knowledge is mixed with a variety of the soul's functions that are commonly credited to reason alone. Sound human understanding, which seems to act alone during the enjoyment of the beautiful, presupposes the operations of reason, which must transpire in us unconsciously. I would continue the comparison, and show you through a profusion of examples, that sound human understanding and reason are at bottom one and the same, and that what happens thanks to reason in the course of thinking must also transpire in sensory knowledge in the course of having a sensation or feeling. The difference is merely this: in the course of having a sensation or feeling, human understanding takes hasty steps and rashly goes

forward without being made tentative by the fear of falling [34]. By contrast, reason fairly taps around, as it were, with a staff before it dares to take a step; it totters along the same path, no doubt more carefully, but not without fear and trembling. Both can land in wayward paths, both can stumble and fall and, when this happens, it sometimes becomes more difficult for reason to get back on its own feet once again.

Yet, since this would lead me too far from my present aim, I will content myself with having shown that there is an underlying logical mistake in the illusion of the senses. The false semblance of things flows from the same source as the error of rational knowledge. Through an incorrect inference from an incomplete induction, an inadequate analogy, a causal connection presupposed without reason, our sensory knowledge infers an object when none is actually on hand, or it attributes to the object properties that do not actually pertain to it. In short, the illusion of the senses and the error of reason have one and the same origin; both flow from an incapacity of knowing, from the limitation of our power of representation. In the one case, this limitation brings about falsity in sensory knowledge and in the other incorrectness in rational knowledge, in the one case it produces a false semblance of things and in the other error. Thus, as an answer to our first question, we can let this general proposition stand: *Truth is any knowledge insofar as it is grounded in a positive capacity of our soul; untruth, by contrast, is any knowledge that has suffered an alteration through the incapacity, the limitations of our positive power.*

[35]

Chapter 4
Truth and Illusion.

As I came up the hedge, my dears, you seemed to me to be caught up in a lively dispute. Was its content perhaps the opening up of the Schelde[1] or some other theme of this sort that is for now irrelevant to us or did it have some relation to our usual conversations in the morning hours?

"You know," answered J., "that concerning this time, as Pope says, we *leave princes' trivialities to their ambition and pride* and begin each day with the sort of thoughts that matter more to us." – So speaks an English poet, I replied. A Viennese might say in his poetic language: what is spoken of here is not the princes' ambition or avarice but instead the liberation of the river goddess whose eyes in previous centuries were blindfolded by superstition and whose hands were tied up by Mercury and who now is to be set free again by statesmanship with the help of Eris or Belona. – "He [the Viennese] may be granted this," he said. "But we who are not Viennese devote our morning meditation, in a similar poetic language, to that heavenly divinity who is supposed to have its temple on earth, even though only very few mortals know how to find the path that leads up to it. In their own interest, the princes should actually never have drawn a sword, even though they had to provide the pretext for many a bloody scene. Neither Eris nor Bellona is ever permitted to enter the temple itself. Yet the former occasionally set herself up as a guide and she often actually managed to bring the Goddess' friends up to the outermost gate of the temple. But not always; it depends, as one says, on what clue she follows herself. If it is the heavenly amor who dawdles flirtatiously ahead of her and shows her the tracks, then she actually proceeds to the temple and modestly retreats from the gate. If, however, ambition gallops ahead of her, his turbulence stirs up a cloud of dust that obscures the view completely and one is in danger, just before the gate of

[1] The opening of the river Schelde was a matter of considerable political and trade disputes at the time. The year before *Morgenstunden* was published, Nicolai published the following work: *Betrachtungen über die Folgen der Eröffnung der Schelde in Absicht auf den Rheinischen Handel und den Handel von Franken, Schwaben und der Schweitz. Nebst einer genauen Karte des Auslaufs der Schelde, der Maas, und der Merwe, und der anliegenden Gegend, als eines Theils der vereinigten Niederlande, der Generalitätslande, des Oestreichischen Brabants und Flandern, und des Französischen Flandern* (Berlin, Stettin: Nicolai, 1785).

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_4,

the temple, of turning one's back towards it. Indeed, even if this gate were opened, [36] ambition would also slip in unnoticed in order to lead the mortal following him back out again through a detour and deliver him again into the hands of Eris."

You have plowed with my calf, I answered, and so I can easily find the answer to your riddle, my son! The truth was the content of your dispute and I hope that this time Eris should follow the clue of that amor, for which the morning hours are sacrosanct. And, in order to bring the allegory to an end, did it concern the definition of truth that I dared to give you yesterday? "Exactly this," he replied. "It seemed to some of us as if the characteristics of truth that you provided were not always sufficient to distinguish it from the deception of the senses. Did you not say, 'knowledge is truth in so far as it follows the positive power of our soul, but in so far as it undergoes an alteration through the limitation of this power, it becomes an untruth?' " – Correct! – "This untruth, you continued, is called 'error' if it is a consequence of the intellect and reason; but if it flows from the limitation of the sense faculties, then it is called a deception of the senses or illusion. Was it not like this [what you said]?" – To be sure. – Now, my dear S., tell us yourself through what example you have managed to arouse doubt with this definition.

S. "Here in the water I saw the image of my friend; if I turn to the right, I see him actually standing next to me. The very same sense that provided me with the semblance here, shows me the truth there. We cannot say that in the one case the positive power and in the other case the limitation of it produced the appearance. Both the sense and the organ of sight did their duty in both cases and established what they are determined to establish. On what does it rest, then, that, disregarding as much, I must consider that a semblance and this the truth? – One other instance! Is it not by virtue of the positive power of sight in us and in accordance with the true laws of optics, that I see a rainbow glistening in those clouds over there? Nevertheless, the rainbow, as we know, is mere semblance; no actuality, no truth. But if the criterion that you have provided of the truth is supposed to be decisive, then it would have to be possible for it to be brought to bear usefully on all these and like cases." [37] Of course!, I responded. A criterion that is placed in our hands must suffice in all cases to distinguish the authentic from the false, if we are to rely upon it with any certitude. – And you, my friends, who have heard the complaint which S. has brought forward against my definition, did you know what, if anything, to say in its defense or did you leave it over to its fate?

At this point W. chose to speak: "We did not let it be knocked out of play completely. It seemed to us as if you yourself had cited similar observations in your presentation and discussed them with application to your criterion. At the same time we wished to hear from your own mouth the clarification, in more detail, of the doubts raised by S. If it so pleases you, let this to be the first theme we discuss today!" – Gladly, I said; precisely a discussion of this will be the most fitting way of entering into the material that I intended to present today.

You said, my son, that the sense of sight proceeds according to the same laws of optics and yet gives you here a mere image of your friend, but there informs you of him actually. Thus, both are the effect of the positive power of the senses and, nevertheless, both are not the *truth*. Was it not this that made you suspicious of my sentence? – "Just this!" – You know how the defense attorney would justify an

accused person. They deny the facts or blame someone else. I will seize upon the latter strategy. I maintain that the sense of sight is not responsible for the illusion and rather in both cases asserts the pure truth as much as it can. As an appearance involving this sense, the image that you see here in the water has no less truth than that [actual sight of your friend]. Both are effects of the positive power of the senses and can, in keeping with my conception of the matter, neither deceive nor delude. – "Who else then, however, should be responsible for the bewitchment?" he asked. "If both images of sight assert the truth, how does it happen that that image shows me my friend there, where he is not while this informs me of him here, where he is actually on hand?" – *Is on hand*, I answered. Here, then, lies the knot. What do you understand by 'to be actual,' 'to be on hand'? He seemed to reflect a little and finally spoke: "If you do not ask me, as that man [Augustine] answered to a similar question, [38] then I know it."[2] – From the outset, I replied, I, too, have not been pressing for some academic definition. I want merely to know the characteristics in terms of which you know that this image here is an illusory one, but that one is an actual image of your friend. Do you not know this somehow from the fact that the familiar voice of your friend comes to you, not from the water, but here from the side; that you would have to stretch out your hands to the right here if you want to embrace your friend or receive something from his hand? Is it not in terms of these and similar identifying marks that you distinguish semblance from existence, mere semblance from actual substance? – This was conceded and I continued: The sense of sight was, thus not responsible for the illusion. It was a subsequent judgment by the soul that deceived you. From each image of sight you expect as well the appearance of sound and touch that are very often combined with it and this time the expectation was not met. The reason for this expectation was, as we say, an incomplete induction, a conclusion *from many to all*, from *often* to *always*, and if this inference deceives, then it is apparently an effect of our feebleness, of the deficiency, and of the limitation of our powers of knowing.

The same relationship holds with the second instance cited by you, the rainbow. The bright gleam of the colors that it beams permits you to expect a stable object that wears these colors. Both theory and experience persuade you that they merely hover back and forth in the misty haze that makes up the clouds and that they change their place with every other position that you assume. Here, too, it is not sight, insofar as it is an effect of your positive power of knowing, that deludes you. Habit and the expectation of something similar have deceived you and you relied on a kind of inference that is not binding in every case. Thus, truth remains always a result of the positive power of knowing; untruth, by contrast, is the result of the incapacity that is bound up with it.

And now to answering our second question that I deemed to be the object of our discussion this morning. With what degree of certainty can we assure ourselves of the truth? Where is the criterion for being able to test [39] whether a [purported] instance of knowing that we possess or believe to possess is a result of the power of thinking or its limitation?

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[2] The reference here is to Augustine's *Confessions*, XI, 14.

I come back to my threefold division of our modes of knowing, a division that you will still remember. Sensory knowledge, rational knowledge, and knowledge of what is actual outside us, or knowledge of nature. – All immediate sensory knowledge or, as others call it, all *intuitive knowledge*, be it sensation of the outer sense or perception of the inner sense, brings with it the highest degree of conviction. Neither error nor illusion takes place in them, considered as representations in the soul. If I hear and see and feel, then it is beyond any doubt that I actually hear and see and feel. So, too, if I feel pleasure and pain, if I hope, fear, sympathize, love, hate and so forth, no error takes place in them. For this follows, as we have seen, from an incorrect use of higher powers of the soul, which must co-operate and perform their services merely in regard to reason and knowledge of nature. The immediate, intuitive knowledge requires neither reason nor understanding and, hence, cannot be misled by any incorrect use of them. And the illusion or deception of the senses? We have seen that these, too, can only be deceiving, if we make inferences to objects outside us; that is to say, if our knowledge is supposed to be not mere *representation*, but instead also *exhibition*. In this case the same inferential fallacies that take place in rational knowledge find a point of entry in regard to sensory knowledge and occasionally lead to erroneous results. Just as they produce error in regard to rational knowledge, so do they produce error in regard to sensory knowledge through habit, illusion, and deception of the senses. Yet, as long as we remain with sensory knowledge, as long as we regard it not as [something's actual] exhibition [of itself] but merely as a representation, it is subject neither to doubt nor to uncertainty and has for itself a transparency of the highest degree.

What is inferred from these first, fundamental concepts according to the rules of thinking, in other words, what follows from immediate, intuitive knowledge according to the principle of contradiction, is to the same degree beyond all doubt. The principle of contradiction is a condition without which thinking does not take place anywhere. We must, therefore, surrender all thinking, all investigating, [40] if we do not allow the necessary condition of thinking to stand and do not consent to all the consequences to which we are led by means of it. To be sure, errors can slip in but only as mistakes in calculating, insofar as we somehow make incorrect use of the laws of the thinkable. In the common art of calculating, through incorrect use of the most infallible rules we can come to erroneous results as is familiar to each of us. The practical answer to every question thus requires the test as well as the proof. The proof genuinely indicates how the result must come out, if one proceeds according to the rule of the analysis. By contrast, the test is supposed to show in each case at hand whether what was supposed to have happened, according to the requirements of the proof, actually happened. As is obviously the case in the common art of calculating, the proof can be convincing in the highest degree but all tests are insufficient to remove from us the doubt that we have proceeded correctly. The same relationship holds for all sciences that undertake rigorous proofs, sciences to which one ascribes the highest degree of evidence, namely, mathematics and logic. The rules of thinking, on which they are based, and the forms of inference through which truth is derived from truth have a certainty that is transparent to the highest degree. However, as for whether these rules, these forms of inference, have

also been correctly applied, tests are required for this and if they are lacking, then a small degree of certainty inevitably remains. The theory is beyond all doubt; but in the application many a mistake in calculation can slip in and produce errors.

The certainty of immediate, sensory knowledge extends also to the region of beauty and moral sentiments. Taste also has a kind of infallibility here. Where you have a sentiment of beauty, the beauty must be there to be encountered; and if a thought or an action uplifts our soul and permits it, as it were, to sense its own worth, then that thought or action must be in fact uplifting, i.e., sublime. Since taste and moral feeling are not types of rational knowledge, neither error nor a mistake in inference occurs in them. And illusion? We have seen that this is only a concern where the soul, as it were, moves out beyond itself and [41] infers from its knowledge to the object; in other words, only where representation is distinguished from exhibition. As long, however, as it restricts itself to its inner sentiments as sentiments, every semblance is a truth and I believe myself to feel just as much as I feel. Thus, the most perverted taste can neither deceive nor delude in this regard as long as we remain with the subjective sentiment. Falsehood also takes place here only in the case of the judgment where a kind of mistake in calculation can undermine it and lead to erroneous paths. The correct taste weighs, namely, all parts of a thought or object, compares the chief and ancillary concepts, sets each in its proper light, assesses beauty over against mistakes, and gives its judgment in keeping with its impression of the whole. The mistaken taste, by contrast, divides up light and shadow according to an incorrect equilibrium, clings to an ancillary concept, overlooks what should not be overlooked, and judges according to an incorrect assessment of the value of the whole, on the basis of one of its parts. His sentiment has evident truth, but his judgment is illusory.

In one of Helvetius' posthumous writings,[3] he seeks to maintain the misunderstood sentence that all human knowledge springs from sensory feelings or sensations [*aus sinnlichen Empfindungen*]. As he limits this merely to the effect of the outer sense and wants to explain the entire mass of our concepts from a play of the fibers in the brain, he believes he must deny the soul all universal concepts. Everything in the brain is a sensory impression and, in order to remove the difficulty that language (in which all words mean universal concepts) creates for him, he says that language is mere knowledge of signs; just as in algebra, e.g., the signs or the numbers in the common art of calculating convey nothing intuitive with them and can lead merely as symbols to correct conclusions through transposition and comparison, so can the words as mere signs and symbols become in the language a means of assistance to thinking and form a rational discourse. Just as we satisfy ourselves there [in algebra] with the conviction that we can supply each symbol with a definite value whenever we want, and that the result of the definite value will follow just as correctly as the calculus has brought it from the signs; in a similar way, he thinks, we satisfy ourselves [42] in the use of language with the assurance that we can supply each word a sensory impression of a certain genus without in

[3] Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *De l'homme* (Paris: Librairie Arthème-Fayard, 1989 [reprint of the 1773 edition]); Sect. 2, Chap. 5.

fact thereby thinking or imagining something more than an empty sign. We reckon merely on the fact that the sensory impressions stand among themselves in the same relations into which we have brought the words or signs of the same, but think for now merely the sensory impression which the words as signs make. – According to this hypothesis the entire language of human beings would be a mere collection of empty, algebraic signs that we transpose and combine according to certain rules.

I think that if this hypothesis were true, we would, to be sure, make rational inferences by means of the language but not be able to arouse any sentiments. Mere symbolic knowledge, like that in the art of calculation and algebra, leaves the mind unmoved; it can produce neither love nor hate, neither fear nor sympathy, neither pleasure nor pain at all. In a representation given by the most splendid actor, in the reading of a poem or an address, we would remain as cold and indifferent as we are in an algebraic calculation. But how does it come about that we are able, nonetheless, to produce the greatest effects of this kind by means of language? Sentiments cannot deceive. Where there is a sentiment, we infer with the greatest certainty to intuitive, immediate knowledge. Our universal notions and the words that represent them, must not consist merely in the knowledge of signs. Something intuitive, something immediately recognized must attach to them, something by means of which they can awaken the mind to participation and arouse a sensation of pleasure and pain.

[43]

Chapter 5
Existence – Being Awake – Dreams – Rapture.

When the poet returns to dear mother-earth, his homeland, having roamed long enough in the boundless realm of his imagination, he strikes up the joyous song:

Greetings! I lay my eyes on you again
Earth, my maternal land! [1]

From a similar journey, from the land of possibility and of ideas, we come back to this actual life where we believe ourselves to be more at home. We could strike up a similar song and continue on our way with a confident spirit had not the skeptic dug up most of the path right here and set most of his traps. Right here, then, we will have to be most careful, setting not one foot before the other until we have assessed the ground.

Let us pursue the concept of existence down to its first seeds, not in order to define it through words but instead merely to try to find out how it arises and to investigate how it has gradually taken root in us over time.– Our thoughts, considered as thoughts, are what first impose themselves on us. We cannot for a moment doubt that they are actually on hand in us, that they are alterations of us, or that they have at the very least a subjective actuality. After this, our own existence too is a necessary condition without which no investigating, indeed, no doubting or thinking at all can take place. Descartes rightly presupposed the inference *I think, therefore I am* as the foundation of all reflection. If my inner thoughts and sensations are actually in me, if the existence of these alterations of my self cannot be denied, then the I as well, to which these alterations pertain, must be admitted. Where there are alterations, there must also be a subject on hand that undergoes alteration. I think, therefore I am.

The philosopher could have said with equal right: I hope, therefore I am; I fear, therefore I am, and so forth. Only, according to his theory, all those alterations [44] that transpire within us possess the common characteristic that he calls 'thought.' He thus included them all in the general phrase, *I think*. And existence? If we begin from ourselves, as we must necessarily do in all our knowledge, then

[1] F.G. Klopstock, *Messias* in *Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock Werke und Briefe Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe* Bd. IV.1, ed. Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974); Dritter Gesang, verses 1–2 (p. 45).

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existence is merely a common word for *acting* and *undergoing*. We are conscious of acting or undergoing something every moment of our life and the characteristic that these two have in common we call 'existence.' I have concepts and sensations, therefore I am a conceptualizing and sensing being. I act or undergo something, therefore I am actually on hand. If I must, on account of the most transparent and convincing corroboration, concede the former, then the latter, as a necessary consequence, cannot to be drawn into doubt.

All of this follows completely naturally according to our definition of truth and untruth. Our immediate sensations of the inner and outer senses as well as everything that, according to the rules of thinking, can be inferred from them cannot merely be the consequence of our incapacity but indisputably presuppose a faculty of thinking. Just as little can the subject in which this transpires be mere incapacity, mere limitation. Limits presuppose a being that is limited. Alteration is not thinkable without something enduring that is altered. All my subjective knowledge, considered as subjective, has indisputable truth; its ideal existence can be neither semblance nor error. My own actuality is neither illusion nor error and is, therefore, truth.

Do not believe, my dear ones, that I have the aim of making the first elements of our knowledge more intelligible through all these abstract words. I am quite convinced that such verbal pomposity often only renders these even more obscure. Explaining by means of words must have its limits somewhere if we are to advance in our knowledge and not always as it were be led around in a circle. My efforts are aimed only at exciting in you, through various manners of speaking and turns of phrase, the same thoughts that I have in myself and find suited to my aim. If the discussion turns to sensory things and, for instance, I want to make an explanation from natural history intelligible to you, then I would bring different individuals [45] of the same kind for you to inspect for so long until I am assured that you have abstracted their common characteristic and thus have formed a concept of the kind. However, because we are here dealing with supersensory things, which can be laid before us in no other way than through words, I must employ words and manners of speaking and present them to you from different sides until just what I am aiming for transpires in your soul. Thus, I am far from wanting to give you scholastic definitions of thought, existence, the I, and so forth. Through my words, I merely want to lead you to reflect and, while you listen to these words and compare the different expressions, I want to awake in you thoughts that accord with my purpose.

Hence, the existence of my representations, considered merely as subjective, is beyond all doubt, as is my own existence and everything that can be concluded from these by means of the laws of what can be thought. The former, as immediate sensory knowledge, leave behind no fear of a calculative error. However, insofar as it is combined with pure rational knowledge through the laws of what can be thought, doubt whether the rules have been correctly applied and whether a fallacy or error in calculating has misled us is not to be completely ignored.

In the region of concepts of which I am conscious, I am also aware of some which cannot be allowed to count merely as representations but must be taken at the same time as exhibiting external objects. They are not merely alterations of me,

to be met with uniquely and alone in me as their subject; rather, I must acknowledge that they are at the same time imprints of external objects that have their own existence for themselves. While I am awake and so long as I am healthy, nothing is easier for me than to recognize this genus of concepts and to distinguish it from others. This genus brings with it a transparency that imposes itself on healthy human sensibility [*Menschensinn*] and brooks no contradiction. In dreams, in drunkenness, in craziness, and in rapture, by contrast, we tend to confuse these two genera and take a series of subjective representations to be exhibiting external objects. We recognize our state while we are awake and distinguish it from dreaming, but in dreams that last, we are not up to this. Very often, to be sure, even in this [46] state weak doubts arise whether what we see and hear might not be mere dreams. Yet these doubts are quickly overpowered by the seeming evidence of the outer senses and disappear without instructing us about our true state. Each of you will have had the opportunity to make this observation on your own. Whenever there occurs in a dream some circumstance that seems absurd and conflicts with the known laws of nature, we pay attention and ask ourselves: could this merely be a dream? Doubt arises, but just as easily passes away in turn without providing us any further light on our state. The question is: can the criterion be given distinctly according to which representation is to be distinguished from exhibition? Can that pronouncement of sound human understanding, so irresistible while we are awake, be transformed into rational knowledge? And how does it happen that precisely this criterion loses its infallibility in persisting dreams and is no longer in a position to snatch us from this confusion?

From the doctrine of the combination of our concepts that I presented to you at a different time, you will still recall that these concepts tend to follow upon one another and next to one another according to different rules of their ordering. Sometimes this is according to a subjective order, according to the law of wit, of imagination, or of reason. Concepts that we have previously had simultaneously, that contain similar characteristics, or that follow from one another according to the law of reason, bring one another forth in dreams as well as in the waking state, and this we call ‘the subjective combination of ideas.’ If, however, they [these concepts] stand among themselves in a causal connection independent of us, then these concepts follow upon and alongside one another because they are linked as causes and effects according to recognized laws of nature. We call this ‘an objective combination of ideas’: a series of concepts that does not depend merely upon the powers of our soul and its actions and limitations, but that instead presupposes the external objects that these concepts portray and in whose powers, reciprocal influence and interconnection, they [these concepts] are grounded.

‘Being awake’ is what we call that state of our soul in which the objective combinations of ideas are predominant. By far, the [47] greater part of our representations in this state follow upon and next to one another neither in accordance with laws of the powers of our soul, nor because we have had them simultaneously some other time, nor because our wit notices a similarity in them or because our reason finds them thinkable in this and no other way. Instead, it is because they stand in a causal connection among themselves according to the laws of nature familiar to us.

We have already seen in the foregoing how we attain knowledge of the laws of nature and this causal connection. It is supported principally by an incomplete induction, by a kind of inference from *often* to *always* that in many cases can almost border on infallibility, on the most perfect degree of evidence. This is then, in a continuous waking state, the order and combination of the better part of our concepts. To be sure, our soul is inclined to deviate at any moment from this objective series and to pass over into the subjective combination of ideas peculiar to it. Since, however, in a continuous waking state the objective order of concepts prevails, the soul is very soon recalled from its subjective digression and brought back to the series of things. The more interest we take in a representation, however, the longer and more persistent is the wayward path on which we are led by the subjective combination of ideas [and] the more our waking state is bound up with a kind of dreamy reverie, the effect of which one notices in episodes of distraction, enthusiasm, or rapture. At times, a certain representation's power to captivate us is so great that it overpowers the objective series of things and leads us completely out of the order of nature and into a subjective combination of ideas that is like a waking dream. This is the state of violent emotions, fanaticism, and enthusiasm, often imitated by the writers of odes.

We Germans call this state *rapture*, a word with much significance. The soul is as it were withdrawn from this sensory, present series of things and transported into another series of its own. For the same reason, in the case of those who have lost their wits, we call this state *madness*.

The soul's propensity to follow its subjective combination of ideas and abandon itself to wit or imagination is so [48] strong and natural to it that, without powerful reminders of the present, actual world, it can hold fast to its course and pursue no other series of concepts than such as are combined by wit and imagination. Only through meditation, or through persistent rational reflection on one and the same object can the soul render this propensity ineffective. In meditating, the soul fixes its attention upon an object, breaks the concepts down to their characteristics, and reflects on their combination according to the laws of what can be thought. This is the order of reason that the soul must follow with steady, unwavering steps if the meditating is to make any advance. It is only that the interest in rational knowledge is for the most part too weak to bind the soul to its order and let it make steady strides. With every step the soul would take evasive flight into the neighboring paths of wit or imagination and never again be reminded of its resolution to meditate if a mighty consciousness of the present did not at once recall the soul to the actual world and remind it again that it had resolved to meditate. One thus sees why meditation proves so troublesome for the soul and what particular sort of mental disposition is required if the soul is to succeed at it. Rational knowledge and the order in which it serially places concepts one after another holds no other interest for the soul than the interest proper to this resolve [to meditate]. It follows this series of thought because it seeks to obtain a determinate end by this means. For the most part this resolve, this final purpose, is a supersensory object that is seldom mighty enough to resist the charm of the imagination's rich imagery. Hence, the soul would not long remain faithful to its resolve if an obscure consciousness of the

present did not restrain it from its wayward path. But it is also necessary that the consciousness of the present not be mighty enough to captivate the soul entirely and render obscure the concept of the resolve [to meditate] along with the thoughts that lead to it. The present should merely remind the soul of its actual state and, by this means, of its resolve so that, undisturbed, it can pursue the order of reason. The impression of the present must be neither too strong nor too weak, neither too lively nor too feeble, if the soul is to be able to maintain itself in a disposition conducive to meditating [49]. All-too-strong impressions of the present overpower rational knowledge too much; by contrast, those that are all-too weak abandon the soul to the play of the imagination, and it takes flight into reveries. Not everyone has the predisposition to strike this moderate chord in their sensory impressions as often as necessary, and no one has it at all times and under all circumstances. A Malebranche will avoid all strong sensory impressions, and even have to close the drapes to dim the daylight, if he is going to be able to follow, undisturbed, the sequence of his meditations; an Euler, by contrast, has the extra-ordinary facility to solve the most difficult algebraic problems and to write his much-admired essays amidst the clamor of children and household staff.

Where have we come to? Indeed, have I not through my own example just confirmed the very doctrine I wanted to present? I began by stating the difference between subjective and objective representations in order to find the identifying marks by which we can distinguish the state of being awake from a dream. Without having fully attained this final purpose, the soul has followed the path of the imagination, engaged in describing rapture and enthusiasm, and slipped away from these to the requirements of meditation; and just now I was of a mind to digress even further into the rules of lyric poetry. As something in the middle between meditation and enthusiasm, lyric poetry has its own path that can be determined quite well on the basis of the proceeding. The beginning, where the poet's interest breaks out into words; the development, where he pursues his concepts according to an order composed of meditation and enthusiasm; and the leaps or sudden transitions from one series of concepts into the other, so very distinctive of the inspired poet's path. I was of a mind to explain all this to you in this order and so to follow the path of the lyric poet more than that of the philosophical teacher. Luckily, a glance at you has called me back from this digression and reminded me again of my resolve. To imitate the writers of odes completely, then, let me abruptly snip the thread here in order to retie it in the next hour at the point where it began to fray.

[50]

Chapter 6
Combination of Ideas – Idealism.

Are not metaphysicians, indeed, a strange kind of human being? So might many say. They forsake the pleasure of sleeping in the morning, interrupting perhaps the most beautiful dream in the morning hours in order here, under a linden tree, to discover with one another the important truth that sleeping is not being awake and being awake is not dreaming. A truth as familiar to every child on its nurser's lap as it is to them. As ridiculous as this might be, everything ridiculous nevertheless has, as we know, a serious aspect as well and what matters is the side from which one wishes to regard it. Sound sense and reason both flow from one source; they are one and the same cognitive power. Reason merely proceeds slowly and, as Fontenelle puts it, with ponderous, elephant steps, whereas sense hurries, as it were, as if on wings to its goal. It is not unworthy of the philosopher to try and see how far he might be able to reduce the claims of human sensibility to rational knowledge. The geometer does not hold back from rigorously proving that the straight line is the shortest path between two points, even if the cynic rightly reproaches him that this must also be familiar to the dog who seeks to chase his prey in a straight line. Even animal sense, the geometer would answer, has a reason grounding its knowledge and we want to see if we can reduce it to a kind of rational knowledge. Thus, we continue our consideration from yesterday without shying away from the ridiculousness that seems to attend it. As we have seen, being awake, insofar as it concerns the soul, is a condition in which the objective combination of concepts, the order of causality or of natural laws, is the most illuminating and takes, as it were, the predominant lead in the soul. It shows every subjective combination of ideas its place in time and space and imparts to them the proper degree of illumination and force. It directs attention, governs the tools of motivation, and even directs the path of reason in ongoing reflection. All the workings of the soul find themselves in a well-tuned harmony as long as the total impression of the present sets the tone on which they rest.

[51] This harmony and the economy of the soul's functions arranged in accord with it can be shattered and brought into disorder if either the objective order of ideas is too weak or the subjective order becomes proportionately too powerful. The latter happens in a state of passion, drunkenness, rapture, or craziness. In all these states certain conceptions are so irresistibly alluring for the soul that it pursues them on every errant by-way they lead it down. Consciousness of the present or of the causal

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_6,

order always has enough power remaining to sometimes direct attention as well as the means of motivation at will. But sometimes interest in a subjective series of concepts seizes the upper hand, leads the soul along the path of the subjective order, and gives it thoughts and actions that do not correspond to the actual state of things. To be sure, whenever the sensory impressions become powerful enough to lead the soul back from its errant by-way, reason recognizes the error of its ways and even in a state of drunkenness or craziness resolves to avoid it in the future. But the resolution does not last. As soon as the interest becomes lively once again, it weakens the impression of the present and attributes that impression once more to its incapacity. The soul is no longer capable of rational reflection and abandons itself to the guidance provided by its fanatical order of ideas.

In sleep the sensory impressions are weakened but so too, proportionately, are the images of the imagination. Neither the past nor the present is lively enough to bring about consciousness in the soul or to stir the organs of motion. Everything appears in a very weakened light but in the same harmony of light and shadow, brightness and darkness, nearness and remoteness; it is somehow like a region in the twilight or a painting that has been covered over with a transparent glaze. The lighting is muted, the impression not overpowering and captivating and yet still always the same and with a similar effect. If, however, in this state some image of the imagination, a concept of the past, manages by chance to acquire somewhat more liveliness, a subjective series of ideas can be awakened in the soul by this means and joined with consciousness. Not [52] called back by a more robust consciousness of the present, the soul will pass over from one subjective series of concepts to another, according to a law of the imagination or the dictate of interest, and consider things to be actually joined that stand in no causal connection among themselves. The conflict of this appearance with the laws of nature will, to be sure, call attention to itself and occasionally produce doubt; but it is an inescapable property of rational reflection, as we have seen, for the soul to be dominated by the impression of the present. But if it manages to follow its subjective series of ideas, then the very next instant the resolution to reflect and deliberate is already disappearing again. The soul has already abandoned this entire series [afforded by reflection] and finds itself instead in a completely different combination of things in which there is not the slightest trace either of its reflection or of its resolution. We call this state of the soul ‘dreaming’. Dreaming is also a kind of eccentric move into a series of things, different from that surrounding us. The only difference is that in a dream the representations do not have enough might at all to have an effect on the organs of movement. However, it is possible that, in sleep, the images of the imagination become so lively that they work on the organs of movement and produce spontaneous actions. During this process, sensory impressions can remain weakened completely or to a great extent; at least they do not attain the sort of liveliness that is required in order to be fully awake, and thus leave to dreaming a free play of putting the organs in motion and doing things that we otherwise will only be able to do while awake. This state is an illness that is called ‘somnambulance’. The spontaneous actions that occur in this state are the outcome of a subjective joining of ideas. From what is actually present, they take up only as much as is immediately

pertinent to their purpose. Somnambulists will seek to avoid or move out of the way the objects that immediately touch them or at least are in the way and they will do this all the sooner if they are things that they are accustomed to treating in this way while awake, unconsciously. It is still always possible, in each case, to lack the total impression through which the soul orients itself, as it were, in the present world and is made fully awake. [53]

The soul's reflection, we have seen, is disturbed if an image of the imagination becomes more lively or an interest of the soul becomes more powerful than the resolution to follow the path of meditation. Yet, whenever this does not happen, the soul can remain faithful to its resolution and continue its meditation, uninterrupted, according to the law of reason. One sees that this can also happen in the case of dreaming or craziness whenever neither the interest nor the liveliness of an image collides with the requirements of rational reflection. The examples are not rare that crazed individuals, in things that do not require an overview of the present and merely continue along the path of strict reason and reflection, often manage quite well and are in a position to work out the most sensible meditations in a rational and orderly way. One even has phenomena where individuals who are dreaming have carried out a proof in the dream that they previously had no success in carrying out while awake. As strange as all this appears, it can still be rendered understandable to some extent if one heeds the distinction given between dreaming and being awake and takes into consideration the genuine hindrances that in a dream otherwise stand in the way of rational reflection.

Democritus says, not without reason, that each of us in dreaming has his own world and, when we awake, we all pass over into a common world. In a dream each of us thinks a different series of things as objectively true, a series of things that did not actually come to be, at least not in the way that we imagine them, and that follows merely subjective rules of the combination of ideas with respect to the order that combines them. They are fragments, taken from various systems, that together do not make up a whole. Every objective truth that they contain is the existence of the one dreaming himself, an existence which, even in the dream, has its evidence and is beyond any doubt. All the rest are mere alterations of this dreaming being and possess merely an ideal existence devoid of any external object. Each passes over into his own world.

The representations of someone awake are, by contrast, depictions of the things that are actually on hand outside us, in keeping with the rules of the order in which they actually bring themselves about outside us. [54] They all belong to a common world. To be sure, they are not the same in all subjects but instead are diversely altered according to the respective subject's situation and standpoint. But this diversity itself shows the unity and identity of the object that they exhibit. They are like diverse depictions of a region, taken from diverse viewpoints. They must be diverse if they are to be true; but only what is similar in them is objectively true, while what is dissimilar is, by contrast, a result of the perspective. It is true insofar as it is a depiction and false if we want to take it as exhibiting the region.

In a similar way, in the representations of someone awake, we will have to distinguish the true from illusion. What we know through a sensation alone has for

itself merely the supposition of actuality, a supposition grounded on the customary combination of sensory appearances. These can deceive and perhaps be a consequence of the perspective that in the case of a painting we consider, without reason, to be an exhibition [of something]. The more senses agree in the exhibition, considered at diverse distances and through many different sorts of media, the more certain our conviction of its actual existence becomes. The ground of our supposition can no longer lie in the limitation of one sense alone; for the agreement leads to a common ground. Still, there remains the doubt that the limited sphere of knowledge on the part of our senses in general might be the source of this common ground and thus occasion illusion. Perhaps the situation in which I find myself is alone responsible for the fact that I see and hear and feel and thus regard as things what merely transpire in me and have no objective reference outside me.

The more, however, that fellow human beings agree with me in finding these things to be so, the greater becomes the certainty that the ground of my belief is not to be found in my particular situation. It must lie either in the positive power of thinking and thus be a true exhibition [of something] or in the common limitations of all human knowledge. The probability of the latter case decreases if I become convinced that even animals know things in this way and not otherwise. To be sure, each does so according to its standpoint and [55] according to the perspective from which it regards things. Yet all in all they do so in such a way as to convey the identity of the object, portraying diverse sides of it. If we could be convinced that even beings of a higher order than ourselves think the things in this way and not otherwise, with the alteration that befits their standpoint, then the certainty with which we know the existence of things outside us would increase to the highest degree of evidence. We would have for ourselves an almost complete induction that the sureness with which we assume the existence of things outside us is not a consequence of our limited viewpoint, not an effect of our limitation, but is grounded instead on the positive aspects of our power of thinking, aspects common to every thinking being. This alone can be the common reason for the agreement, so widespread, that so many different sorts of beings, by means of many different means of knowing, each from his standpoint, always knows the same [thing] and considers it true. But if knowledge of what is actual is a consequence of our power of thinking, then its truth is not to be doubted; if it is otherwise correct what we have determined above about truth's difference from error and illusion.

If we could be persuaded that the supreme intellect exhibited to itself the things outside us as actual objects, then our assurance of their existence would have attained the highest degree of evidence and there would be no further increase that it might undergo. This is no idle speculation to which I lead you out of boredom. If we shall have convinced ourselves of the existence of the supreme being and its properties, then a way will also present itself of making for ourselves some concept of the infinity of the supreme being's knowledge and from this truth, along with several others, perhaps in a scientific, demonstrative manner, of refuting the pretentions of the idealists and of proving irrefutably the actual existence of a sensory world outside us. First, however and before this can happen, we confine ourselves merely to the propositions in which the idealist agrees with us. He acknowledges

that the thoughts that come about in him, as alterations of himself, have an ideal existence of their own. Consequently, he also cannot deny that he himself, as the subject of these alterations, is actually on hand. Other beings, different from him and limited just like [56] he is, can also, like him, have their own existence and be actually on hand outside him, just as he himself is. If he does not lapse into the absurdity of the egoist who ascribes an actual existence only to himself alone, he also does not deny their existence. Later I will have an opportunity to say to you why I call this view straightaway an absurdity. First I have to deal merely with the idealist who allows for thinking beings outside himself and does not claim for his little existence alone the prerogative of being the only substance that has become actual. In everything that he is himself acquainted with and other thinking beings know, the idealist distinguishes with us the subjective series of things that are true only in him from the objective series of things that is common to all thinking beings according to their standpoint and viewpoint. The characteristics in terms of which he recognizes this in a waking state are as undeniable to him as they are to us. But do these characteristics also assert the truth? Outside us, are there actually sensory objects that contain the reason why, in a waking state, we think the series of objective concepts so and not otherwise? The full repertoire of our objective ideas also contains life-less substances, corporeal entities, that exhibit themselves as something to be found outside us. Is this exhibition of them also true for itself? "No!" answers the idealist, "it is the shortsightedness of our sensory knowledge that we think so; it is a sensory illusion, the ground of which is to be found in our incapability. My better reason persuades me that no substance could be corporeal." By contrast, the dualist believes that the idealist's reason has misled him, through faulty inferences, into an error. There are corporeal as well as spiritual substances; the former not completely in the way they exhibit themselves to us, since the limitations of our knowledge have altered much in the representation of them. Meanwhile, not everything in the manifold depictions of them is perspective; not everything is the outcome of our limitedness and our confined viewpoint. What agrees in them leads rather to a common ground of agreement, a ground that finds itself outside us, which is the prototype for it [the agreement]. He acknowledges, to be sure, that his senses are occasionally illusory but not everything that they assert is held by him to be mere illusion. He believes rather [57] that much in the senses follows from his soul's positive power of thinking and thus is the truth.

The idealist says: "In me I have an immediate concept of a substance who can think and be thought, because I know my own existence. I have an adequate concept of other substances who also think and are thought, represent and are represented, and can be and actually are alongside me. But what kind of a concept do I construct for myself of a substance that has merely material properties, that is supposed to be merely thought without itself thinking?"

"All this," answers the dualist, "still provides your reason with no ground for denying their existence. Just as there are substances who think and are thought and just as there is, as all of us acknowledge and believe, a unique, supreme being who merely thinks and cannot be thought in its unlimitedness by any other, so, too, from the other side there are substances that are to be found outside us that are the prototypes for

sensory feelings and thought without having representations themselves; material beings that can merely be thought, but cannot think."

"But what sort of properties," asks that idealist, "do you attribute to this substance? Are not all sensory properties that you ascribe to it mere modifications of what transpires in you yourself? You say, for example, that matter is extended and moveable. But are extension and movement something more than sensory concepts, alterations of your power of representation, of which you are conscious? And how are you able to transpose these properties, as it were, from yourself and ascribe them to a prototype that is supposed to be found outside you?"

"If this is the difficulty," the dualist replies, "then it lies more in the language than in the thing itself. If we say, a thing is extended, is moveable, then these words have no other meaning than this: a thing is constituted in such a way that it must be thought as extended and moveable. It is one and the same, according to language as well as the concept, to be *A* and be thought as *A*. Thus if we say that matter is extended, is moveable, is impenetrable, we are of course saying nothing more than that there are prototypes outside us that exhibit themselves as extended, moveable, and impenetrable, and exhibit themselves as such in each thinking being.

"It has not occurred to any of us, however, to transfer these sensory [58] concepts or appearances, i.e., the depictions of matter, into matter itself. We merely say that the representation that we have of material beings as extended, moveable, and impenetrable is not a consequence of our weakness and our incapacity. This representation flows far more from the positive power of our soul, it is common to all thinking beings, and thereby not merely subjective but instead objective truth."

[59]

Chapter 7
Continuation. The Idealist's Dispute with the Dualist. Truth-Drive and Approval-Drive.

In the last lecture, I attempted to clear up the dispute between the spiritualists and the dualists, and to show you the subtle distinction on which it ultimately turns. The supporters of idealism take all of the phenomena of our senses for accidents of the human mind, and deny that a material prototype in which these accidents inhere as qualities is to be found outside the mind. By contrast, the dualist says: in these sensory appearances, which you call accidents of the soul, I find so much agreement among different kinds of senses and between one human being and another, indeed, even between human beings and animals, that I consider myself justified in positing the ground of this agreement not in me myself but instead in something that is to be found outside of me. As accidents in me, sensory phenomena are depictions of this something outside of me and, like all depictions made from a certain point of view, they have, to be sure, some perspectival aspect, but are no less true on account of this. The material prototype contains the ground of the truth and agreement of all these depictions. It arouses in us the representation of extension, movement, figure, impenetrability, and so forth. Therefore, this prototype is itself something extended, moveable, impenetrable, and assumes certain shapes. One lets oneself be deceived and led into error by empty words if one wants to understand something more by the expressions 'extended,' 'moveable,' and 'impenetrable'.

Recently, an adherent of the spiritual system with whom I engaged in debate about this matter said: "Is it not rather you yourself who occasions this linguistic confusion and seeks to entangle us in it? All of the properties ascribed by you to this prototype are, by your own admission, mere accidents of the soul. We want to know, however, what this prototype itself is, not what it might do." Friend, I answered, if you are serious on this point, then it seems to me that you demand to [60] know something that is in no way an object of knowledge. We stand at the boundary not only of human knowledge, but of all knowledge in general; and we want to go further without knowing where we are headed. If I tell you what a thing does or undergoes, do not ask further what it is. If I tell you what kind of a concept you have to make of a thing, then the further question "What is this thing in and for itself?" is no longer intelligible. And so from this point on philosophers have long tormented themselves with questions that are in principle unanswerable because they consist of empty words which convey no sense. Thus if the atheist asks,

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"What then is God actually?", show him what God has done, show him the entire magnificence of Creation and all the beauty and perfection that it contains. Say to him that God has done all of this and done so wisely, say to him that God preserves and governs all of this according to the laws of wisdom and goodness, of which he will find traces in each speck of dust just as he will in himself. But all of this will not satisfy him. He will press on to ask: "But what is God himself then?"

Recall, I continued, that the materialists, who take all simple spiritual beings to be mere fantasies, thought to drive us into a corner through a similar question. "What is it then," they commonly say, "what is your simple, spiritual being that is supposed to have neither magnitude nor figure, neither color nor extension?" In vain do you lead the materialist back into himself and get him to attend to what goes on within him while he thinks and senses, desires and abhors, acts or undergoes. None of this satisfies him or resolves his question as to what a soul might be if it is not corporeal. He does not reflect on the fact that we know nothing more of body itself than what it does or undergoes, and that outside of the acting and suffering of a thing, nothing further can be thought of it.

I will avail myself of the same weapons with which we together dispute the materialist, I continued, in order to counter your objection as well. What is the prototype of all of those sensory properties, outside of accidents, that are to be encountered in thinking beings? I answer: something that cannot be questioned because it is supposed to lie outside of the concept and, therefore, there cannot be an object of knowledge in the sense of the question itself. You [61] are inquiring about a concept that is actually no concept and therefore something contradictory is supposed. Here we stand at the limits of knowledge, and any further step we might want to take is a step into emptiness that cannot lead to any destination. "Let us break off here," my philosopher replied. "I fear that, in the end, the famous quarrel among materialists, idealists, and dualists would amount to a merely verbal dispute, more something for the linguist than the speculative philosopher." That would not surprise me much at all. It would not be the first famous disputed question over which human beings became divided, and even hated and persecuted one another, and which in the end amounted to a mere row over words. Language is the element in which our abstracted concepts live and breathe. Concepts can alternate their places in this element for a change, but they cannot abandon it without the danger of surrendering the spirit.

Insofar as my lectures here are intended to be accounts of knowing preliminary [*Vorerkenntnisse*] to the discourse on God, I could conclude them here if I did not still have to touch on another aspect which I expect to be considerably useful in what follows. What we have investigated until now merely concerned our knowledge insofar as it is true or false. Instances of true knowledge, however, distinguish themselves from one another through the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they arouse in the soul. The beautiful, the good, the sublime are all known with pleasure and satisfaction by the soul. The ugly, the evil, and the imperfect, by contrast, arouse displeasure and revulsion.

Typically, one tends to divide the faculties of the soul into the faculty of knowledge and the faculty of desire and to reckon the sensation of pleasure and displeasure as already part of the faculty of desire. Yet it occurs to me that between

knowing and desiring there lies the approving, the approbation, the satisfaction of the soul, that is still genuinely far removed from desire. We consider the beauty of nature and art with pleasure and satisfaction, without the least stirring of desire. It seems rather to be a particular characteristic mark of beauty that it is considered with tranquil satisfaction, that it pleases even if it is not in our possession, and that it is even far removed from any longing to possess it. It is only when we consider the beautiful in relation to ourselves and regard its possession as a good [62] that the desire first awakens in us to have it, to bring it to us, and to possess it: a desire that is distinct, by far, from the enjoyment of beauty. But as this possession as well as the relating to ourselves does not always take place, and even where they do take place they do not always incite the true friend of beauty to a greedy craving to acquire it, so the sensation of the beautiful is also not always tied up with desire and cannot therefore be considered an expression of the faculty of desire. As far as the tendency to consider the same object is concerned, insofar as our attention receives that tendency from the sense of satisfaction, if someone would want in any case to call this an effect of the faculty of desire, then I would have nothing against it in principle. However, it seems more fitting to me to designate this satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the soul, which is without doubt a seed of desire but not yet desire itself, with a particular name and to distinguish it from the restlessness of the mind, associated with the name of desire. In the following, I will call it *the faculty of approving* in order by this means to separate it from the knowledge of truth as well as from the longing for the good. It is, as it were, the transition from knowing to desiring, and it combines these two faculties through a gradation so fine that it only becomes noticeable once we have gained a certain distance.

We can accordingly consider the soul's knowledge in diverse respects. We can consider it either insofar as it is true or false, and I call this 'the material [aspect]' of knowledge, or insofar as it arouses pleasure or displeasure, or has approval or disapproval as a consequence, and this can be called 'the formal [aspect]' of knowledge. For, by this means, knowledge can be distinguished from knowledge, and truth from truth.

The material [aspect] of knowledge does not admit of any gradation. One concept cannot be more or less true than another. If it is the case [*Wenn es andem ist*] that truth is always the consequence of the soul's positive power of thinking, then no more or less can have place here. Truth is to be compared with an immutable magnitude; it is an indivisible unity that is encountered either as a whole or not at all. Thus even in our speech the adjective 'true' seldom allows for comparison. The comparative form 'truer' is just as uncommon as the superlative 'truest'.

The formal [aspect] of knowledge, however, not only has its gradation, [63] but its essence consists principally in comparison, in [being] more or less. Every item of knowledge, if considered fundamentally, already conveys with itself a kind of approval. Every single concept, insofar as the concept is merely thinkable, has something pleasing to the soul, something that occupies its activity, and is thus known by it with satisfaction and approval. Nothing is supremely evil; nothing is supremely ugly. However, just as the soul can find one concept more satisfying, more agreeable to deal with than another, so the soul might want to have the former concept rather than the latter and prefer it to the latter. The essence of the beautiful

and ugly, good and evil, perfect and imperfect consists in this comparison, and in the preference that we give an object. What we know to be the best in this comparison acts on our faculty of desire and, when it finds no resistance, stimulates it to activity. This is the side on which the faculty of approving borders on longing or desiring.

Furthermore, the material aspect of knowledge separates the thinkable from the unthinkable, the actual from the not actual. The false, as a consequence of the limitation of the faculty of thinking, not only cannot actually be on hand, but also, under a certain condition, cannot be thought. With the formal aspect of knowledge, however, things are quite different. Only the highest degrees of ugliness and evil can neither be thought nor be actually on hand. Each gradation of these, however, not only can be thought with equal truth, but can also, under certain circumstances, become the best and attain to actuality. The false is a mere negation and can never be met with. But the ugly and the evil, insofar as it receives these names merely in comparison, can be actually on hand, nevertheless on the condition, as we will see further, that somewhere and at sometime, that is, under certain determinations of time and space, it becomes the best by comparison.

I will give you one more notable distinction between these different respects of knowledge, a distinction which seems to me to have important consequences. Both faculties – the faculty of knowledge as well as the faculty of approving – are, as we know from psychology, expressions of one and the same power of the soul, though they differ [64] with regard to the goal of their striving. The former faculty proceeds from things and comes to an end in us, whereas the latter faculty takes the opposite path, proceeding from us and having external things as its goal. I will explain myself.

Every single power conveys with itself the endeavor to bring thinkable accidents to actuality either in the substance itself in which this power inheres or in a substance that is to be found outside it which is then called the passive [*leidende*] substance. The knowledge-drive is of the first sort. It presupposes the truth as immutable and seeks to make the soul's concepts agree with it. The goal of its activity is objective truth, and it proceeds to bring such predicates to actuality in the thinking being as are in keeping with this truth. By virtue of the drive for truth, we seek to bring our knowledge into agreement with the immutable truth without regard for satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This is not the case with the expression of the approval-drive. When this drive is set into motion, its goal is not within us but rather is to be found in things outside of us, and in the same things[1] it proceeds to make actual those predicates that agree with our approval, our satisfaction, and our wishes. The former drive wants to reshape human beings according to the nature of things, the latter drive wants to reshape things according to the nature of human beings.

On the basis of this rather striking distinction, I believe that I can explain many a phenomenon that is otherwise beset with difficulty. How does it happen that a human being loves the truth and fiction at the same time? How can such contradictory inclinations be together in one subject? One moment the truth is dearer to him than his peace of mind, dearer to him than his life; the very next moment he has a

[1] Reading 'in denselben' for 'in demselben'.

willing ear, letting himself be beguiled by the silliest of children's fairy tales and put into the most turbulent and restless state of mind. As much as he loves the truth, he wishes just as much to be deluded now and then.

It seems to me that it depends upon the aim that we have with respect to any sort of knowledge. Either we want to set our knowledge-drive in motion in order to make it perfect thereby or we have the same aim with the approval-drive. If it is the former, then truth is the goal that we wish for and any other consideration, no matter how dear and important to us, must give way.

[65] We want to know how things are constituted, not how we wish them to be. The geometer should sacrifice none of the strictness of his proof to accommodate our lackadaisical moods, and the writer of histories should not conjure up circumstances in order to pander to our inclination. If we seek truth, then only the truth can satisfy us. It is, by contrast, a different matter if our aim is to engage our faculty of approving and make it more perfect by this means. It is in this respect that someone will love fiction. He reshapes things as they suit his inclination and as they set satisfaction and dissatisfaction into an agreeable play. He does not want to be instructed, he wants to be moved. Thus, he eagerly lets himself be deceived, allowing things to be exhibited as actual that do not comply with his better judgment and with the truth. As long as merely his inclinations are supposed to be engaged in a charming way, his reason remains silent.

Whenever we take an interest in the thing itself and in its actuality, we resist all illusion, however happy it might also make us, and strive for the truth. Upon hearing wind of the unhappiest of news, we press to be convinced of it even though we suppose beforehand that it will bring us only great misery. With what dismay does the miser, who would have perhaps never dug up his hidden treasure, rush to it as soon as the slightest suspicion arises that it could have been stolen; with what impetuous fervor does he seek to ascertain the truth [when] he could have been so happy with an ongoing illusion! – The friend believed his friend to be alive and well in America and was happy [for him], without perhaps the hope of ever seeing him again, but then receives the sad report of a life-threatening situation in which his friend in America found himself, and from this point on he can no longer remain in his happy delusion; he presses for convincing corroboration even if he has only the confirmation of his misery to expect. "Unlucky one", the jealous Moor says to Desdemona's slanderer, "Unlucky one, bring proof! Give me convincing corroboration of Desdemona's infidelity or you will curse your birth! Ha! I was happy as long as I believed that I possessed her fidelity. That she might have squandered her charms on each soldier [who comes along]! I knew it not, suspected naught of it, and was happy. You have set an adder in my [66] chest! Give me convincing proof or you will wish that you had never seen the light of the sun!"[2] Amidst his violent mental agitation, he recognizes that his peace of mind depends merely upon an opinion, and that he could be happy if he could remain in the delusion of his beloved's fidelity. Yet he senses the impossibility. His drive aims at the fact of the

[2] *Othello*, act III, scene iii.

matter, not at the opinion. The goal of his wishes is outside of him, it lies in the object. Desdemona should not merely seem innocent, she should be innocent, and if she is not, then he wants to be convinced of her infidelity and to be miserable.

My dear ones, no one of us, I hope, will hesitate for a moment to lose his life rather than, for instance, set fire to a city or lead an entire host of innocent youths to the slaughter-house out of sheer malice. But if such an evil has occurred and if it can no longer be remedied, then each of us will sense an irresistible desire to undertake a journey, even a difficult one if need be, in order to take in the devastated city and the corpse-strewn battlefield with our own eyes. How is this to be comprehended? On the basis of our previous consideration, even this can be easily explained. As long as it depends upon us whether something should actually come to be, it is a matter of our approval, our assessment, and we refrain from evil insofar as it is practically recognized as such by us. As soon as the evil has occurred and can no longer be changed for the better, it ceases to be an object of our faculty of approving and from then on appeals to our knowledge-drive which wants to know the things just as they are, not as we wish or prefer them to be. As long as we can still act, the good is the object of our wishes and the best is the object of our practical will. We wish to be able to do everything that we hold to be good, and we actually do what seems to us to be the best for now. As soon, however, as we can no longer change things for the better in accordance with our wishes, nothing more remains for us than to satisfy our knowledge-drive and to experience the truth, even if it were to contain the greatest misfortune for us. In short, a human being is someone who searches for the truth, approves the good and the beautiful, wants everything that is good, and does what is best.

Part II
Scientific Doctrinal Concepts of God's Existence

[68]

Chapter 8
Importance of the Investigation. On Basedow's Principle of the Duty to Believe. Axiomata.

As I now step closer to my goal, my children and fellow researchers of the truth, as I now think of carrying out the plan of investigating together with you *the doctrine of God and his properties*, I find myself embarrassed in a way that I cannot conceal from you, given the way in which I am accustomed to working with you.

Should I present you with the importance of this doctrine and the influence that it has on the happiness and peace of human beings, presenting it completely in the way that I believe and am convinced of it? Truly, as far as I am concerned, if I were not convinced of this truth, life would have no enjoyment for me and fortune itself would hold no joys. In the way that I now think and feel, I have only this conviction to thank for all my good cheer in merry, happy days and, if you have perceived in me some tranquility of mind in the face of the repugnant aspects of a human life, there, too, I have solely this conviction and it alone to thank for this tranquility. Without God, providence, and immortality, the value of all life's goods is in my eyes despicable and life here below seems to me, to employ a familiar and often misused simile, like hiking in the wind and bad weather without the consolation of finding lodging and shelter in the evening. Or, as Voltaire says, without this consoling outlook, we all swim against the tides, having to fight ceaselessly with the waves, without hope of ever reaching shore.

If I should try to put you in this frame of mind, then I am in danger of upsetting the state of equilibrium into which we must transport ourselves if we want to investigate the truth. Our inclination alters the weight of the grounds of truth. [69] The advantage that we take in the result sometimes adds some weight to the grounds and at another time detracts something from it. It is difficult in matters of our own to execute the office of judge impartially; but it is just as difficult from the other side to do justice to us, as a party, as soon as the judge begins to become suspicious. Everything depends upon the mood in which we find ourselves. In cheerful, jovial hours, we are easy to satisfy. We believe what we hope. In a sad state of mind, by contrast, we are more inclined to believe what we fear. But the Areopagus of reason [*Vernunft*], before whose tribunal we have to make our case here, should weigh the reasons [*Gründe*] and make a judgment not according to inclination but according to the strictures of the truth.

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_8,

Basedow once attempted to introduce a new principle of knowledge into philosophy, a principle that he calls the *duty to believe*.[1] If there is a proposition, he says, that is so connected with the happiness of the human being that that happiness cannot exist without its truth, human beings are obliged to assume it as true and endorse it. He then seeks to prove that without the existence of God, providence, and immortality, no human happiness can occur and he believes that, by this means, he has sufficiently demonstrated these three consoling doctrines and made them certain against all doubt.

As much as this method seems to recommend itself, thanks to the ease and usefulness that it actually has in many cases, it is just as little usable when we are speaking of the existence of a supreme being. In general I acknowledge no duty with regard to opinions, no obligation if truth is supposed to be distinguished from untruth. If one assumes a reason for approving to be a reason for knowing and considers true what one has found good and desirable, then one seems to confuse the two faculties of the soul that we so carefully distinguished from one another in the foregoing account. For we saw in our account of Preliminary Knowledge that our faculty of approving proceeds from us ourselves and has its goal in the objects that we strive to reshape according to our wishes, while the faculty of knowing proceeds, by contrast, from the objects and their objective truth, and aims to make our thoughts and representations [70] agree with them. Thus, it is an obviously mistaken passage from one faculty of the soul to another for us to recognize as true what meets simply with our approval, for us to believe and assume what we wish and hope for.

Duty and obligation only occur in regard to the faculty of approving things. We are obliged to do what is in keeping with our happiness, to refrain from what is opposed to it. In regard to knowledge, by contrast, we have no other duty than the duty to investigate. Investigating the truth is a freely willed action that is governed by knowledge of good and evil and, hence, recognizes an ethical necessity, allows for an obligation. But knowing and assuming are not dependent upon our wills. The necessity of assuming is not an ethical, but a physical necessity. We endorse what is known to be true, not because we want to or are supposed to, but because we simply cannot do otherwise.

The reason advanced by Mr. Basedow for the knowledge [in this case] can be countenanced, meanwhile, if we have been previously convinced by other reasons of the existence of a supreme being and of the fact that his providence holds sway over the fate of human beings. If it is true that an all-benevolent and all-wise being has produced us, then, by virtue of its immutable properties, it cannot have predetermined us to anything else but happiness. If this happiness cannot exist unless

[1] Johann Bernhard Basedow, 1723–1790, introduces the notion of a duty to believe in certain propositions essential to human ends in his *Theoretisches System der gesunden Vernunft* (Altona: Iversen, 1765).

human beings are called to endure endlessly, then their annihilation conflicts with the recognized properties of God and one has legitimate grounds to consider the souls of human beings immortal. And so it will be for the make-up of every truth of which we can demonstrate that, without it, human beings would not be capable of happiness and God would not be able to have the properties of whose reality we are convinced. Only in this case can the reason for approving also become the reason grounding knowledge. A supremely good being can only have approved and produced as the object of his will what is, according to his omniscience, the best and most perfect. If, however, we are talking about the existence of this supremely good being itself, then the source of the knowledge parts ways with the source of the [71] approval. Each principle proceeds down its own path and leads to a different goal. If we are used to expressing both, i.e., our approval of the good and beautiful, and our recognition of the truth, by the words 'applaud' or 'endorse', then this is an ambiguity of the language to which the philosopher has to pay attention warily.

Thus, if we want to be assured of the truth, in the course of the important investigation that we have before us, then we have to leave out of consideration the stake that we have in the result and not allow our wishes to have any influence on our convictions. In order to approximate the evidence of the mathematicians, we also have to try to imitate their equanimity. Untroubled as to what the result might be, the geometer sacrifices hecatombs if he has simply arrived at a certainty that is convincing; he wishes merely to make necessary assumptions but does not assume because he wishes to. To be sure, this undivided love of truth is not so difficult for him since it costs him no effort at overcoming [a contrary drive], no self-denial. The result changes nothing in the system of his happiness and his wish is fulfilled if only he can exclaim "I've found the answer!" In the case before us, by contrast, our entire well-being depends on the result of our investigation. We tremble at the truth itself if it does not agree with our well-being. Every doubt threatens to make our peace disappear, to topple our entire system of happiness. Who can impassively see the scale swing if the outcome is life or death? Who entrusts his hand enough with the steadiness to cut open his beloved son's flesh in order to find the seat of an illness? Thanks be to providence that it from time to time provides truth's friends with the strength of spirit, sacrificing and denying themselves, to test the propositions upon which their own happiness depends! They exert their powers in order to arouse doubt that costs them their own peace and in order to bring to light objections to assumed theorems, objections through which they perhaps embitter themselves for their entire lives here below. Without this sacrifice for the truth, all knowledge of it would very soon degenerate into prejudice and blind belief. The spirit of the investigation must again and again be aroused anew and maintained if the truth that we recognize is to have any value. [72] Knowledge without investigation has at times far worse consequences than investigating without knowledge or, rather, it ceases to be knowledge of the truth as soon as the proposition is assumed as settled and becomes popular, without it being found necessary any further to test the reasons on which it rests. It is true, the doubts that

have been aroused by that [spirit of investigation] occasionally lead to the denial of all fundamental principles and not infrequently have a frightening influence on the ethical life and actions of human beings. But the prejudices into which the truth itself is transformed by lethargy in the process of investigating, the blind belief with which we cling to certain propositions without testing them, leads to superstition and fanaticism that are no less dangerous to human happiness. Atheism and superstition, despair and fanaticism are both illnesses of the soul that threaten it with ethical death. Often providence prescribes an illness in order to remove one opposed to it, in order to give the body back its health. Hence, we must listen with composure to each doubt that is presented to us, we must welcome every objection even if it threatens to reduce our entire system to rubble. In keeping with the natural cycle of things, truth leads to tranquility, tranquility to lethargy, and lethargy to superstition. It is then a benevolent act of providence if the spirit of doubt and of the most subtle sort of investigation is aroused, in order, through the rejection of all fundamental principles, to head down the path back to the truth again.

Should reasons that are persuasive be put forward in a useful way at all, this happens merely in the popular method of presenting the truths of natural religion, where one aims not so much at finding the truth as at disseminating a truth that has been found and giving it life and the power to move [us]. The fundamental principles that we constantly need should be constantly at hand, they should work on our inclinations, drives, and passions without letting up. Hence, through the power of persuasion as it were, they must have sunk down into the ground of the soul and been transformed into a kind of immediate knowledge that, while not attaining, to be sure, the lucidity of mathematical evidence, is superior to the latter in its power and efficacy. Later I will take the opportunity of discussing at greater length the limits as well as the usefulness of this popular kind of knowledge. [73] For now, we want to try to see how far, in the scientific method of reflecting on God's existence, we are able to approximate the evidence of the mathematician and attain scientific conviction. Here are some axioms that seem naturally to follow from what we have dealt with up to this point. I recommend that you subject them to exact assessment so that in what follows we may make use of them without further hesitation and be able to refer to them whenever it is useful to do so.

Axioms

I.

What is true must be able to be known to be true through a positive power of thinking.

This is clear from above and holds as much for concepts as for judgments and inferences; as much for truths of reason as for truths of experience.

Every truth is known by the supreme intellect, if there is one, with the supreme degree of evidence. Every truth is known by every other intelligent being according to the standards of its capability and insofar as it is not prevented from knowing by error or illusion in the knowledge.

II.

If something's existence cannot be known by any positive power of thinking, then it is not actually on hand.

Let us suppose A to be a concept in the soul, thus, something which, insofar as it is a representation in a thinking being, has an ideal existence. That is to say, it is an accident of a thinking substance, an alteration of a faculty of thinking. If no intelligent being can, by means of its positive power, know that this A has an actually objective existence, then its allegedly objective, actual being is an untruth; either error or illusion.

III.

If something's not-being is not comprehensible to any intelligent being, then it is actually on hand.

Its not-being would have to be an untruth, that is, error or illusion. [74] Therefore, if it can be proven that some thinkable concept A cannot be thought without real objective existence, then it is proven at the same time that it must be objectively actual.

IV.

If the proposition 'A is B' is supposed to be true, then it must be possible, by virtue of the positive power of thinking, to recognize a connection between the subject A and the predicate B.

V.

This connection rests upon either the material aspect in the knowledge of the subject A or the formal aspect of the knowledge.

The reason why the predicate B is ascribed to the subject A lies either in the make-up of the subject, as thinkable or not, or in its make-up as good or bad, desirable or undesirable.

VI.

If, then, actual existence is asserted of a concept A, then A is for that reason actually on hand either because it cannot be thought other than with this predicate or because it cannot otherwise become an object of approval and appreciation.

The endeavor of the power that we have in regard to truth or the material aspect of knowledge aims at producing in us predicates that agree with the objective constitutions of things. In regard to the good or the formal aspect of knowledge, our power has the aim of bringing the best to actuality in the object of that power under the same thinkable predicates. This has been adequately elaborated in the foregoing. Thus, if a thinking being is supposed to recognize and claim that the proposition 'A is B' is true, then the reason grounding the knowledge or claim lies either in the thinkability of A and is an eternal, necessary truth (A is on hand because A is a true concept) or in the formal aspect of the knowledge, in A's make-up, such as to become an object of approval, able to be cherished and produced by a free cause.

VII.

[75] *It immediately follows from this that if the proposition 'A is not B' is just as thinkable as the proposition 'A is B', then 'A is B' can be true only insofar as it is best and could be approved and brought to actuality by a cause with the power of choosing; or, in other words, of two equally thinkable or possible things, only that which is the best can become actual*.

If the concept A is as thinkable with as without objective existence, then the reason for its existence lies not in the material known but in the formal make-up as good and desirable. This make-up or its goodness and perfection inheres in it either all the time immutably or only under certain circumstances and conditions. In the first case the proposition is a universal, immutable truth, a *law of nature*; in the latter case, by contrast, it can, as belonging to what is best, itself become best and attain actuality only *at some place* and *at some time* under certain circumstances. Individual historical occurrences are of this kind, the *news* that happens to appear only here and there, *at some place* and *time*. If, for example, bodies universally could just as well not have as have a weight, then the proposition 'All bodies are heavy' can only become true insofar as, without respect to time and place, this is recognized and approved in this way and not otherwise as best. This makes weight a *universal law of nature*. If, however, gun powder is found at a certain time, then the reason why this invention became best at that time, under such determinations of time and space, must be contained in the time and things that were actual at the time, taken as a whole. Both are *contingent* truths but the former is a *contingent, eternal* truth; the latter, by contrast, a *contingent*, *temporal* truth that has made its appearance at a certain time and place. But what can be thought otherwise and under no condition is approved as better than something else, can also under no condition become actual and make its appearance. It has no reason for existence either in the material or in the formal aspect of the knowledge and thus rather its opposite, as comparatively better, will have to be asserted of the subject.

[76]

Chapter 9
The evidence of the pure and the applied doctrine of magnitudes. Comparison with the evidence for the proofs of God's existence. Different methods of those proofs.

Pure mathematics proves its doctrines merely in accordance with the laws of thinking, or a priori as one often calls it, without the help of experience and sensory knowledge. The power of its proofs rests upon the articulation of concepts. One analyzes the concept A, and finds a necessary connection between its characteristics and the concept of a predicate B. This yields an affirmative proposition [i.e., A is B; B is included in A]; the exclusion [of predicate B from the concept A] yields a negative proposition. Both, however, assert nothing further than the combination of concepts or ideal beings in accordance with the laws of what can be thought.

The propositions of the mathematician only admit of a conditional application to those things that are actually found outside of us. The actual things outside of us depend just as much on the laws of what can be thought as do the ideal essences of concepts. Things that are inseparable in thought are just as incapable of being separated by actual existence, and things that cannot be thought at the same time also cannot be actually on hand at the same time. Therefore, all of the propositions of the mathematicians admit of a secure application to actually existing things, given the presupposition of their actuality. If the subject is actually on hand, the predicate that the affirmative proposition ascribes to it must actually pertain to it objectively, just as the predicate of the negative proposition cannot be ascribed to it in actuality.

If, however, a practical use and application is to be made of these conditioned theorems, the geometer must convince himself of the actual existence of his subject through sensory knowledge in order to be able to affirm the predicate of the subject with certainty. His pure rational knowledge leads him no further than to conditioned propositions. If a figure is a triangle, then it has the properties of the triangle; if a sphere is actually [77] on hand, then it casts the same shadows from every side. That the figure before one is an actual triangle or that the body before one is a sphere, however, must be accepted on the testimony of the senses. The security with which the geometer proceeds in the execution of his science is no longer that of the pure evidence of reason; rather, it is mixed with the reliability of sensory knowledge, the evidence of which is different in make-up from the evidence of pure reason, even if it does not sacrifice anything in terms of reliability. In our previous hours of conversation, we have treated in detail the nature and make-up of the evidence of these different types of knowledge.

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In the doctrine of God there is a speculative part which, I think, can be treated with all the rigor of the scientific method. Here as well, with the evidence appropriate to pure mathematics, concepts can be unpacked and analyzed into their simplest characteristics and relations. But here, too, the application to actual existence is only conditional. If a necessary being is on hand, then one property or the other must necessarily pertain to it; if a contingent thing (according to the definition presupposed) is on hand, then it does not have the reason for its existence in itself, and so forth.

One sees that all of this, just as was the case with the theorems of pure mathematics, leads no further than to the combination and separation of concepts, to the dissection and analysis of characteristics according to how they are ordered under or next to one another. Yet even the atheist can concede all these speculations without being able to be convinced of the existence of a divinity. You must convince him first of some actuality or other and then seek a transition from the realm of ideal beings into the realm of actualities in order to be able to apply your speculative theorems fruitfully. Where is the bond that binds concept up with existence, that ties actuality to possibility? Should we, like the geometer, trust the testimony of our senses, or is there another way of crossing over into the domain of things?

There are three different methods of answering these questions. First, one builds on the testimony of the outer senses and, confident in what they assert, accepts an external, sensory world as actual [78] and seeks to prove that such a sensory world is not thinkable without a necessary, extra-worldly being; and as such, all of the propositions that were established in the speculative part of the doctrine can be maintained of this necessary being with reason. The sensory world is actual outside of us; therefore, there is a God actually on hand outside of us and the world.

According to the second method, one trusts only the testimony of inner sense and, on the basis of what it says, assumes our own existence as an irrefutable truth in order to infer the actual existence of God from it: *I am, therefore there is a God.*

The third method discards both, the testimony of the inner as well as of the outer sense, and proceeds with bold steps from the realm of ideal being into the realm of actuality. It dares to prove that a necessary being must be on hand because a necessary being can be thought; it infers real existence from a mere concept, and purports to have found the bond that connects possibility and actuality. *A God can be thought, therefore a God is also actually on hand.* A bold step indeed, since in the entire region of our scientific knowledge there is no example of this kind of proof – actuality cannot be inferred from the concept. It is only when talking of the necessary being that this is supposed to be possible to do reliably. Contingent, finite things can be thought without actual existence, without real, objective actuality; nonetheless, they have an ideal existence. This is not the case with the necessary, infinite being. If it can be thought, then it must also have an actual existence as something objective. The first two methods, in accordance with which an existence is presupposed, are called the *a posteriori* kind of proof; the latter method, however, that of inferring from the idea of a necessary being to its existence, is called an a priori kind of proof, the admissibility of which continues to be doubted by various philosophers.

A posteriori kinds of proof are related to the procedure of the practical geometer. Just as the latter assumes the actuality of his subject on the testimony of outer sense and infers from this to the actuality of the predicates without which the subject cannot be thought, so in both *a posteriori* kinds of proof, the existence [79] of a mutable world or the existence of a mutable thinking being is assumed on the basis of the testimony of the outer or inner sense, and from this the actual existence of an immutable, necessary being is inferred without which the mutable cannot be thought. Were this beyond all doubt, one is supposed to believe, the proof of the philosophers would have precisely the reliability and transparency that are ascribed to the procedure of the practical geometer. That an actually sensory world is on hand outside of us, that not everything in this world remains the same but is subject to change, that we ourselves are thinking beings that never cease to change and do not always remain the same: who has ever seriously doubted these things – who has doubted these things any more than the existence of a triangle or a sphere which the practical geometer presupposes? If, therefore, it can be established that no mutable thing may be thought without the existence of an immutable being, then the existence of an immutable being would be irrefutably demonstrated, and the entire speculative part of the doctrine could be reliably applied to it.

Meanwhile, you all know that these presuppositions themselves, as undeniable as they seem, are not admitted by all philosophers. Metaphysicians do not shy from denying those things which the sound human understanding would never dream of doubting. The idealist denies the actual existence of a material world. The egoist, if there has ever been one, denies the existence of all substances except himself and the Spinozist says that he himself is no being that subsists for itself, but a mere thought in God. Finally, the skeptic finds all of this still uncertain and subject to doubt. I cannot believe that any of these absurdities has ever been seriously maintained. Some wanted, it seems, merely to put reason to the test and assess whether it could keep pace with the sound human understanding, i.e., whether it could irrefutably demonstrate, in accordance with the laws of what can be thought, all that sound human understanding takes to be settled, as immediate knowledge, as it were. Some wanted merely to cast the scientific aspect of knowledge into doubt in order to embarrass the dogmatist who credits his doctrine with the highest transparency of pure rational knowledge. As long as reason remains so far [80] behind the sound human understanding, or even diverges from it entirely and is in danger of landing on errant pathways, the philosopher himself will not trust his reason and contradict common human understanding. Instead he will enjoin reason to be silent when the effort to lead it back to the well-worn path and to reach sound human understanding does not succeed. Let us try, therefore, to see how far we can come to the aid of reason and, on the basis of reliable grounds, replace what here still seems to be missing.

[81]

Chapter 10
Allegorical Dream. – Reason and Common Sense. Grounds for the Proof of God's Existence, according to the System of the Idealists, on the basis of our own Existence. – Also, in any case, on the basis of the ideal Existence of an objective world of the senses.

Yesterday I concluded my lecture with thoughts of reason and human understanding. After becoming entangled in the story of a trip in the Swiss Alps with which our guests entertained us in the evening, these thoughts developed in my imagination into a dream that has almost allegorical significance. We traveled together between the Alps with two persons as guides, one male, the other female. The male was a young, blunt Swiss with a muscular build but not the sharpest intellect; she was tall, slender, and earnest, with a deeply introspective look and a visionary physiognomy; dressed in a fantastic manner, she had something on the back of her head that looked similar to wings. We followed our guides for a while until we came to a fork in the road. Here they seemed to part ways. He hurried with quick strides to the right, she flitted with her wing-like being to the left, and we stood downcast on the path, uncertain whom we should follow; that is, until one of us looked around and saw a rather elderly matron approaching us with measured steps. As she got close enough for us to hear her voice, she said: "Be consoled, hikers! you will not remain long without a guide. The persons given to you as guides are called *common sense* (*sensus communis*) and *contemplation* (*contemplatio*); sometimes they part ways for a short time, often for insignificant reasons. If those traveling with them are steadfast enough to wait at the fork in the path and to follow neither of them, they come back to let me resolve their dispute. In most cases he tends to be right and, contrary to what one might expect, the female person tends to let herself be instructed. On the other hand, if, as sometimes also happens, she is in the right, then he, the [82] obstinate one, cannot be brought to yield. In the face of the most convincing reasons that I lay before him, he laughs at me in his peasant manner, mumbles some rustic platitude, and stubbornly goes his way once more. Meanwhile, the travelers who trust me know what they have to hold onto." "What then is your own name, you who decide their dispute?" asked one of us. "On earth," she said, "I am called *reason*; in heaven…" – Here, suddenly, she was interrupted by an awful clamor. A fanatical swarm of locals from the region had gathered around the lady, *contemplation*, and resolved to drive away both *common sense* and *reason*. Shouting and raging, they pressed upon us, we were in a state of fright – and I awoke.

Truthfully, this rule also tends to serve me as the right guide when I am awake. Whenever my speculation seems to lead me too far from the main street of common

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_10,

sense, I stand still and seek to orient myself. I look back to the point from which I started out and try to compare my two guides. Experience has taught me that in most cases common sense tends to be right and reason must speak very decisively for speculation if I am to leave common sense and follow speculation. Indeed, to convince me that common sense's insistence is merely uninstructed stubbornness, reason must place plainly before my eyes how common sense managed to depart from the truth and land on an errant path.

If we apply this rule to the doubts that have been advanced by idealists, egoists, and skeptics against the actuality of a material world, then we find that their reasons certainly do not suffice to elicit from us complete approbation. Instead we have the substantial supposition that, with continued reflection, we will find the truth on the side of common sense. As long, meanwhile, as this has not yet occurred, their doubts nonetheless diminish the evidence of the proofs that we base on the assertion of common sense. Since, then, the proofs for God's existence (in the first genus of such proofs) assume that a material world is actually on hand, then their power to convince seems to suffer some decline from the alleged doubts and not even approximate the evidence that the practical [83] geometer has for himself in his procedure. This can be illuminated from the following consideration.

Let us suppose that the subject that the geometer has before him and to which he wants to apply his theorems has no objective actuality but is far more a mere, subjective appearance, in keeping with the presupposition of the idealists. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the practical geometer from proceeding with all requisite confidence. He is assured that the sensory properties and appearances among themselves stand in precisely the relation and in precisely the combination as do the concepts that he has developed in his pure theory. Through his results he intends to make out mere appearances and present them in a determinate way. Hence, he may only presuppose the sensory appearance connected with them in order to be assured of his results. Whether these [results] also have an actual, material object outside him, whether what the sensory appearances ascribe to this external object actually also pertain to it, this is as little consequence to the practicing geometer as it is to the purely theoretical geometer. In natural theology, however, matters are otherwise. Here the objective existence of an entity is supposed to be inferred. If this can occur only on the basis of the presupposition of an objective, material world, then, to be sure, it is necessary first to remove every doubt and reservation that those philosophers may have about conceding such a presupposition. Through the agreement of the inner and outer sense, the agreement of all senses, indeed, the agreement of all human beings and other living entities familiar to us, sound human understanding assumes the actual being of such an object and is very much justified in assuming as much. Nevertheless, this agreement does not lift these doubts with geometric precision, they do not fully remove their possibility. They have, to be sure, a presumption of the highest degree working against them. But it is not obvious that it is impossible for this harmonious assertion of an actual, material world to rest upon a limitation of sensory powers common to all human senses, perhaps all animal senses, and thus is mere illusion. But if it were this, then the result, too, would be the mere consequence of a sensory illusion and thus an *untruth*.

You see from this why the most rigorous philosophers always preferred the [84] kind of proof that belongs to the second genus. Without submitting themselves to the thorny investigation with the idealists over whether the sensory properties in us also have a material object outside us – an investigation that only prolongs the dispute – the second method merely presupposes our own existence, *my* own existence, if we are talking with the egoist who does not want to concede any plurality with regard to actuality. Our immediate sensations have, as we saw in the Preliminary Knowledge, the most evidence. The subjective, considered as subjective, suffers no doubt. The inference: 'I think, therefore I am' must be conceded even by the egoist, as has even been shown with several. Hence, I can assume my actuality without fearing the slightest contradiction and if the objective existence of an immutable, necessary entity can be inferred from the existence of a mutable entity, then my proof for the existence of God has the requisite transparency.

For not even the most adamant doubter will likely be able to dispute that I am myself a mutable entity. If I am myself conscious that alterations proceed in me, then this is subject to no further doubt. With regard to myself, the subjective and the objective coincide, semblance and truth are not separate from one another. What I immediately feel cannot be mere illusion but instead must actually proceed in me and cannot be denied with regard to me myself, even to me as object. Hence, my existence as well as my mutability are beyond any doubt.

Also in this respect the second method [of proving God's existence] maintains an advantage over the first. If the actuality of a material world is presupposed according to the first method and its mutability is assumed from everyday experience, the Spinozist, even if he concedes the existence of the material world, nevertheless finds in its assumed mutability something arbitrary that he believes himself not permitted to allow. The material world is for him, in terms of its substance, eternal and immutable. In his view, merely the form or the impression of the same in us is subject to alterations and thus contingent. Now, to be sure, it is not to be denied that the first method can also easily dispel this doubt. We ourselves [85] always remain parts or characteristics of the whole, belonging together to the universe, the existence of which is supposed to be necessary. But a substance that is mutable and thus contingent in any of its parts or characteristics will have to be so in terms of the whole as well.

Yet this conclusion is far more transparent according to the second method [of proof] which assumes merely my own existence. My own inner feelings tell me that I do not always myself remain the same. Subjectively considered, this assertion on the part of inner feelings is supremely evident and, if said of me as an object, it is also an objective truth. Whoever thinks himself to be mutable, is so.

If I am mutable, then diverse, opposite predicates are at the same time thinkable with me as subject. If I am internally conscious that I previously was standing and am now sitting, then both opposing sentences 'I am sitting' and 'I am not sitting,' 'I am standing' and 'I am not standing' can be thought; for the temporal succession does not alter the material [character] of the knowledge. What is thinkable at one time must remain also thinkable at all times. However, the temporal succession can probably change the formal [character] of the knowledge. What was previously not

good or not best can now, in the wake of an extended series of occurrences, come to be best, and vice versa. What I formerly approved as best can now, following changed circumstances, have ceased to be best and for that reason I can now disapprove it.

From this [consideration] it becomes clear how, in the temporal succession, diverse, opposite sentences come to be actual and thus can come to be true. If yesterday the sentence 'A is B' in the series of things, at that time, designated the best [state of affairs] and came to be true, then today, in the wake of a lengthier series and altered circumstances, the opposing sentence 'A is not B' can be more suited to the order and perfection [of things] and thus better. Here you see a simple method of inferring from my own existence to the existence of an immutable being that intends and freely brings about this, the best [state of affairs]. If time alters nothing in the material [aspect of the] representation and can only change the formal [character] of it, the reason for the alteration that I perceive in myself does not lie in its thinkability but instead in its relative goodness and perfection. Insofar as they are an object [86] of knowledge, they remain immutable forever. Only as the object of approval can they behave diversely at diverse times. But if goodness and perfection should be the reason why something becomes actual, then this presupposes an entity that takes pleasure in goodness and perfection in such a way that they can become motives for acting. Yet I shall treat this method more extensively below.

For now I still have to share with you an observation to which my idealist, with whom I would converse about the same matters, has led me. "You do not do justice to us," he declared, "if you maintain that idealists have to renounce the kind of proof that belongs to the first genus. Not so completely," he asks me to believe, "particularly if the point of dispute is made so pristinely clear, as was just recently done by us. The actual world is an actual world for the idealist, too. We do not cancel the well-established difference between dreaming and waking, fantasy or fiction and truth. Even the most short-sighted among us must perceive that in dreams, fantasies, and fictions, the events are placed next to and after one another in an order different from what we know, when awake, to be true and actual. Those events follow completely or at least for the most part the dictate of wit, imagination, fiction and so forth; in a word, they follow the laws of the faculties of the soul that are proper to us subjectively. In a waking condition, by contrast, as you yourselves have quite correctly noted, there reigns the causal connection of things, the combination of the productive cause and the effect, according to so-called natural laws. This representation of an actual world is common to every entity that represents things and it recurs in each of those entities with the modification that is suited to its power of grasping and its standing. In each representation of the world, in each such representation that dwells in an entity that is awake, truth and perspective are to be found. The truth recurs in everyone and remains just the same. By contrast, the perspectival aspect in the painting is many-faceted and suited to the point of view. The idealist denies merely the actual existence of an object that is supposed to serve as the prototype for these true depictions and, indeed, for this reason, because this prototype provides him with nothing more [87] to think since he knows no way of making any representations of it beyond the depiction of it that is to be

found in his soul. Meanwhile, from this representation of the world on the part of the idealist, everything must follow and be able to be inferred, that, in the opinion of the materialist and the dualist, follows and can be inferred from the actual existence of the object. The object [*Objekt*] provides the materialist and the dualist with no more predicates than the representation of the world provides the idealist. Hence, it does not justify any inference that the idealist cannot with equal right recognize and hold to be true. Imagine a room, the walls of which are all adorned with mirrors, and a depiction of an item [*Gegenstand*] that is repeated in each mirror from its position. Let these mirrors come to dispute among themselves about whether the item that that they represent is actually to be found in the middle of the room or whether the artist who produced that depiction has also laid it in each one of them in keeping with the place where each stands. How will they settle this disagreement among themselves? Considered as mirrors, they can have and respectively attain nothing but the depictions of the item. Will they not be in a position, if they can think rationally, to draw precisely the same inference from their depiction as from the presupposed actual existence of the item? Must it not rather be for them utterly the same thing, the item, of which they can know and experience nothing further, whether it be on hand in the room or not?"

Good, I said, now let me continue the simile. If these mirrors recognize that truth and perspective are found in their depiction and that the truth repeats itself and remains precisely the same in all, while the perspective, by contrast, is peculiar to each of them, will not further disagreement on their part be a mere grumbling over words? If they concede the agreement in the depictions, what justifies their denial of the prototype, as the ground of their agreement? Or, rather, what more can they still demand from this agreement of the truth, if they should recognize the existence of the prototype?

Had my friend only recognized the axioms that I gave you a few days ago to consider, then I would have pressed him even further. I would have said: If it is conceded that truth is to be encountered in the portrait, truth that, with the perspectival aspect [88] discounted, repeats itself in each subject, then it is a consequence of the power of representation and must exhibit itself in the supreme being, if there is such, in the purest light and without any admixture of perspective. If, however, this is so, then so, too, is the proposition: 'there exists, objectively and actually, such a prototype,' the purest and most undeniable truth.

[89]

Chapter 11
Epicureanism. – Accident. – Chance. A Series of Causes and Effects, without End, – without Beginning. Progression into Infinity, Forwards and Backwards. – The Timeless, without Beginning, without End and without Progression.

A mutable, contingent thing can be thought in various ways. It can be thought with the mutation and without it. Both propositions contain equal truth. As regards thoughts, opposing predicates can be asserted of the same subject. A is B and A is not-B; both can be or become true, although not at the same time for the same subject. If, however, each of these propositions contain just as much *ideal* truth, how could they ever attain *actuality*? What imparts the preference now to this proposition and now to its opposite, making it into the *actual* truth? How can what is possible in a number of ways become actual in a determinate one?

By *accident*, says the school of Epicurus; through mere *chance*. Even if the school does not dispatch with every single question in this way, we nevertheless soon come to the point where it offers nothing else to satisfy us. We must, therefore, investigate whether these words [accident and chance] contain an answer to the above question at all.

As you know, I had the benefit of taking my first lessons in the Hebrew language; ever since, I have been accustomed to translating into Hebrew in my thoughts every curious word I read or heard in some other language. I have found no authentic old word in this language for *accident* or *chance*. What the authors of later times tended to put in its place originally meant something more like *destiny*, *providence*, [unforeseen] *encounter*, i.e., what a higher power destines for us or has us encounter independent of our own doing, and thus almost the opposite of chance and accident. *Providence* and *chance* agree only in the lack of intention and of causal involvement on the part of a human being, and this seems to have moved the translators from the Arabic, who had to dress the Greek concepts in Hebrew words, to choose a word that [90], in terms of the meaning, has some similarity with the former [i.e., the original Greek concept]. In principle, these words ‘chance’ and ‘accident’ should negate not only all human influence, but all intentions and all causal involvement whatsoever. And so these synonymous words also seem to be distinguished in German. ‘Accident’ applies more to the lack of intention, whereas ‘chance’ appears to apply more to the absence of an efficient cause. A goal that is reached unintentionally is a mere *accident*, and of events which follow upon or alongside one another without one immediately bringing forth the other, one says that their coinciding is mere *chance*. If a child moves a piece in a game of chess

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God’s Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_11,

and by doing so makes a fortunate move, this was a mere accident. But that this child afterwards became a good chess player can have been a chance occurrence, without that circumstance having contributed anything to it. If I go out without the intention of looking for my friend and I encounter him along the way, then this is by accident. But if it happens precisely at a time when he is in need of my consolation or my support, then this is at the same time a lucky *chance*.

In using these words, we want at bottom to do nothing less than deny the necessity of causes. Through the [use of] 'accident' we want merely to cancel the influence of final causes on the entity acting, and through the [use of] 'chance' we want solely to cancel the immediate effect of events upon one another, without denying that each of these events depends on its own series of causes. Of course, only for historical truths, for *news*, as we call it, is the coinciding of events itself ascribed to chance. Things that take place only a single time in the course of history and perhaps may never or at least never under the same circumstances recur, can join together without being immediately brought forth, or even only occasioned, by one another. But as soon as they occur more often, and always in the same combination and juncture, then sound human understanding already supposes causal influence and expects like from like. In my Second Lecture, I laid out the rational grounds that entitle us to this supposition and I showed that even the sense of animals is attuned to an expectation that [91] has the same ground as the human supposition. Even the ancients, as far as I know, have seldom let themselves be misled into contradicting human understanding so dearly and denying all causality or casting it into doubt. Epicurus assumed far more the very necessity of the material cause and for this reason held the atoms to be eternal. He also admitted efficient or productive causes, and thus ascribed to atoms a motion through which all the things of nature are produced. It was only the grand universe's purposes or the influence of final causes that he believed himself capable of denying. Everything beautiful, great, and sublime that nature brings forth, he ascribed to chance. Chance shakes the grand tumbler of atoms into a jumble and blindly casts it, and thus have the things we gaze upon with such wonder come to be. If they agree with final purposes, this is by accident. The duck, say the Epicureans, has not received webbed feet in order to be able to swim; rather it swims because chance has given it such feet. And so then, too, the stomach will not be put together in such a way so that it might digest food, but instead will digest because it has by accident come to be a stomach; and similarly for the rest, according to this lovely theory, however the doctrine of the utility of the parts in the animal body might sound, the doctrine that, as it is ordinarily presented, is so very comforting to our vulgar human sensibility. La Mettrie says: nature never makes its things so well as when it thinks on them the least; like that painter who, frustrated at his failure to depict the foam on the bit of a warhorse, threw the brush against the canvas and luckily produced by this means just the object he wanted to imitate. As absurd as this idle talk might sound to you, my dear ones, you must also know that la Mettrie so prided himself on this idea [*Einfall*] that he repeated it in all of his writings, and that this man's writings made a sensation and were applauded in their time. However, for now I will not yet enter into the doctrine of purposes. I will come back to it in the following and for now turn once again to productive causes.

It will be admitted that each event in the universe has its causes which bring it to actuality, and if it is asked how, from opposing determinations of a mutable [92] being, this one determination has become actual, Epicurus will answer: through the most proximate, foregoing efficient causes. As mutable things, these causes are no less capable of being determined in different ways, and have the ground of their determinateness in their [own] efficient causes and so further *backwards* without bounds [*Gränze*]. At least we do not see any limits [*Schranken*] where we could come to a stop, as long as we are talking about mutable things capable of being thought in more than one way. *Forwards* as well; each event has its effect and, as nothing can be completely fruitless, so the effect too is not ineffectual. Now the question arises: can this infinite series of causes and effects obtain for itself or not, without depending upon a necessary and [im]mutable[1] being? Either this chain without beginning and end preserves itself through its infinity on its own, or at some point it must be tied fast to the throne of the Almighty so that through this connection with the necessary being it can come into actuality and be preserved. Various philosophers believed themselves able to demonstrate that while a series without beginning can no doubt be thought, it could not come into actuality. They make use of the following reasons.

Of the series without end, they said, it is obvious that it can never become actual because its endlessness consists in just this, that it will never be completed, that it must always permit of being made longer still. Its endlessness can thus never become, or have become, actual. The *capability* of always adding something to it still remains and therefore the actual is never *endless*. In just the same way, they inferred, beginninglessness is a mere thought that could not come to actuality. Because we can represent the backwards series of causes as a length that we can arbitrarily make longer in our thoughts, so we say that it is without beginning. In principle, however, this thought can never be carried out, the beginningless can come to actuality just as little as can the endless. Both, the beginningless as well as the endless, require an eternity for their actual existence, and an eternity can never have elapsed. Therefore, we must admit the sort of beginning of things that is in need of no further beginning, hence, a necessary being, whose existence does not [93] depend upon efficient causes, whose duration however is not a temporal succession without beginning but instead a *timelessness*, an immutable eternity that can essentially have neither beginning, nor progression, nor end. Only the contingent events of the world know a past and a future time. The necessary being has, like all the necessary truths of geometry, no past and no future time. One cannot say: *they were* or *they will be*, but instead: *they are*.

What we have claimed about the beginningless cannot therefore be applied to the timeless. The former must at some point come to a stand-still; the latter however knows absolutely no progression. A mutable substance is not at once everything that can be thought of it; its existence is like a line that can always increase in space as well as in time. The immutable necessary substance is at once everything that

[1] From the context it is clear that Mendelssohn intends “immutable” rather than “mutable” (*veränderlichen*).

can be thought of it, and its existence knows neither increase nor decrease. It is and immutably remains always the same thing. – As trenchant as these reasons appear, many philosophers are not prepared to be put at ease by them and there are, indeed, several causes of this.

In the first place, they do not find the analogy between beginning and end completely illuminating. Even if an eternity will not be able to be completed at any determinate time in the future, the necessity of the beginning does not yet follow unless, out of boredom, one wants to assume that the past can be enclosed in a definite space of time.

One appears, therefore, to presuppose what should first be investigated. The question was whether a series without beginning could be actual, and in the answer one assumes as conceded that nothing without a beginning could be past.

In the second place, this kind of proof entangles us in the difficult investigation of the infinite in space and time, [for example,] to what extent, if any, the idea of the infinite has a place in regard to the divisibility as well as the extension of time and space. Such investigations are difficult to discuss on account of their subtlety, and it is not advisable to build the conviction of the existence of God on such loose soil.

Finally, they do not find the distinction between the infinite in power and the infinite in duration completely [94] illuminating. If the infinite in power or the necessary being is, they say, supposed to be able to be actually on hand at all times, then it is not obvious why the mutable in duration and extension could not also be infinite. If everything contingent permits of analysis, backwards as well as forwards, into an infinite series of causes and effects, there is no apparent reason why it should not be analyzed throughout actuality into such a series. If we acknowledge a supreme intellect, then all analyzable concepts must be actually analyzed in it. In it too, therefore, each concept of the contingent brings with itself a series of causes and effects without beginning and end, a series in which that same concept must be analyzed and developed according to its nature. We do not completely comprehend, then, why what God thinks of contingent beings could not also become actual without God. At least, they say, this kind of proof lacks the convincing transparency that we wish we could give the proof for God's existence. Hence, they have tried to carry out the proof without involving themselves in the investigation of whether a series without beginning could be actual or not, troubling themselves far more with demonstrating in general that even a series without beginning could not be actual other than through its dependence on a necessary being. More on this in the next lecture.

[95]

Chapter 12
Sufficient Reason for the Contingent in the Necessary. – The former is *somewhere* and *sometimes*, the latter is everywhere and all times. – The former is only in relation to space and time; the latter is unqualifiedly the best and most perfect. Everything that is, is best. – All God's thoughts, insofar as they have the best as their subject, attain actuality.

At the close of my lecture yesterday, I said that some philosophers, without presupposing the impossibility of a series without a beginning, have inferred the existence of the necessary and immutable from the existence of the contingent and mutable, and this starts out quite justifiably. By virtue of the sixth basic principle that we set out in advance in our account of Preliminary Knowledge, actual existence cannot be asserted of a subject A in a way that is truly grounded unless it is connected with this predicate, either because it cannot be thought without actual, objective existence or because, under certain circumstances, it must have become the best and had to be approved as such and not otherwise. The Leibnizians name this the principle of *sufficient reason* and accordingly say that everything that actually is must have a sufficient reason; that is to say, it must be possible to comprehend and explain rationally why in each case it became actual and why it has become actual in one way rather than another. Now, in the case of a contingent entity, we do not find this reason in the entity itself; for its existence cannot be comprehended on the basis of its thinkability. But we find that reason just as little in the most proximate causes of it, if these causes are themselves contingent and cannot justify their own existence. For as long as this is the case, they do not provide any satisfying reason, any comprehensible indication of the truth of its existence and the opposite does not cease to be thinkable. But if this is correct in regard to the most proximate causes, [96] it will remain just as little possible to deny it in regard to the remote causes. We may scale up the ladder of things as high as we want, we will still not have come a whit closer to the completely sufficient reason that explains it rationally. Yet if this is the case, an immense chain of causes without a beginning will be just as incapable of containing this reason. The question is merely postponed, not resolved. It recurs again and again with the same strength and with the same scope. An infinite chain of contingent things thus cannot make the proposition into a determinate truth, on which the existence of any sort of contingent thing rests. That is to say, a series of contingent causes, going back

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_12,

ad infinitum, cannot contain the fully sufficient reason why a contingent thing is rather than is not, why it is on hand in one way rather than another. Since, therefore, contingent beings are actually on hand, then there must also be a necessary being that contains within itself the reason for all contingent things but does not itself in turn have the reason for its existence outside itself but instead in itself, in its own being, in its inner possibility. These propositions are elaborated in common textbooks. Let us attempt to cast light on them in our own way and with respect to our presupposed basic principles.

The existence of contingent things does not follow from their inner possibility; they are not actual because they can be thought since then they would be absolutely necessary. But it also does not follow in a sufficient way from their most proximate or remote producing causes and just as little from a series of efficient causes without beginning, as long as these causes themselves are contingent and do not exclude the opposite. If, therefore, contingent things are supposed to be actual, if they are supposed to be actual in this way and not another, then the reason for the truth of their existence is to be sought in their dependence upon an absolutely necessary cause, by means of which the opposite or their non-existence is excluded. Now this opposite is not excluded as a consequence of the necessary being's capacity of knowing; that is to say, the contingent being is not on hand on account of the fact that its dependence on a necessary being makes the opposite unthinkable, for then it would, indeed, have to be necessary and immutable itself. What follows in a necessary way from a necessary truth [97] must be itself necessary. Thus, the reason for a contingent being's existence or its dependence upon the necessary cannot be found in its property of being an object of knowledge. If this were the case, then it would not itself come to actuality merely *somewhere* and *at some time*, but instead would necessarily remain immutably the same for all time; for, as an object of knowledge, it is immutable and eternal. Its dependence upon a necessary being will therefore have to be sought rather in the fact that it has become an object of the faculty of approval. By virtue of its inner goodness and perfection, it must have come to be the best under certain circumstances *somewhere* and *at some time*, and the necessary cause must have approved it and brought it about as such. Only in this relation can the rational ground of or reason for its mutability be given, can it be comprehended why it comes to actuality now one way, now another. It makes its appearance as soon as it has come to be, in this way and not another, the best in the series of things. Hence, in the necessary being's approval and free choice lies the only true reason for the dependency of a contingent thing upon it. Only through this approval does the existence of a contingent being *somewhere* and *at some time* become the settled truth and does its opposite or its non-being become for now unthinkable and thus untrue.

But this necessary being itself, where will we have to look to find the reason for its existence? In its inner being, we have said, in its inner possibility; that is to say, it is on hand because it is thinkable; its non-being cannot be thought and is therefore untrue. If we develop this concept properly, we then come to the kind of a priori proof according to which the existence of a necessary being is inferred from the mere possibility of thinking it. I spare myself for one of the future lectures the

elaboration of this proposition and rest content for now with having presented, on the basis of the undeniable existence of contingent, mutable things, their dependence upon a necessary cause and, indeed, on the free choice of this free cause. For everything that is brought forth by an efficient cause, by virtue of his approval, is an effect of his capacity of choosing and [98] if this capacity of choosing, on the basis of discernment and rational grounds, hits upon the best, then it is called a 'free choice.' I will not let myself be misled by the objection that the freely willed itself is thereby made into necessity, since under the condition that it is the best, the opposite must in this manner be impossible. I know well that many philosophers allow themselves to be moved by this objection to concede something accidental in the free choice itself and to let the decisive factor depend not on the motivation but on an accident, as it were. But I explicitly declare that I recognize no other freedom, either for human beings or for the divinity itself, than that which depends upon the knowledge and choice of the best. The capability of discerning, approving, and choosing this best is true freedom and a capability of acting contrary to this knowledge, approval, and choice is, by my concepts, a veritable absurdity. If someone wants to call this determinacy of the free choice 'necessity,' 'compulsion,' or 'fatalism,' one need not begrudge him this as long as he does not propose to cancel the distinction that lies in the thing. You may bring as many different sorts of concepts as you want under the polyvalent terms *necessity, compulsion, able to,* and *not able to.* It suffices for me that there is a twofold necessity, the one resting on truth and untruth, the other on goodness and perfection. The former is called 'blind,' the latter 'ethical' necessity. The former presupposes neither acquaintance with the best nor approval and choice of it, neither intention nor resoluteness; for the latter, by contrast, the final causes become productive efficient causes and the action succeeds merely because it is in accordance with the approval and intention that has driven us or, if you will, that has *compelled* us. A compulsion or necessity of this sort I concede with respect to God, too, and I must accept it if someone wants to call me a 'fatalist' on account of this. – I return to the investigation at hand. How far have we come?

We had established that a necessary, immutable being must be on hand that has brought this mutable universe and our mutable self to actuality on the basis of a free choice for the best. [99]

Choosing the best presupposes acquaintance with it; hence, this being possesses the power of knowing. It is just as certain that this necessary being must also possess the capacity of approving, desire and repugnance, reason and will, since neither choice nor production of the best is thinkable at all without these properties. But that each property that the necessary being possesses must accrue to it in the highest degree and without any limitations has been elaborated in countless textbooks and no one has as yet found anything important to call to mind against it. Would we then, according to this [thinking], have shown that the necessary being must also possess all the properties of the intellect and the will in their supreme perfection? – The step seems too quick. – Let us look back over the reasons that have led us here, in order to see whether we could not make the path more smooth!

If the following proposition that is evident to our senses, 'A world of the senses is actually on hand' or (what is even less deniable) the proposition 'I myself am actually on hand' must be an objective truth, then I, as the subject of this proposition, will stand in combination with existence, as the predicate of the proposition, and I cannot be thought without this predicate, just as I am, with all my individual determinations, since each truth must be knowable through the positive dimension of the power of thinking. Now this reason for the combination cannot be found in the material content of the concept. Were this the case, then I would be on hand because I am thinkable. I would therefore have to remain immutable. Now the subjective consciousness of my mutability is beyond any doubt whatsoever and it is, indeed, so undeniable that a being that is conscious of its mutability must also in fact be mutable. An immediate consciousness instructs me that I was previously otherwise than I now am but since the temporal sequence diminishes nothing in the thinkability of the concept, the opposite of what I previously was cannot yet have ceased to be thinkable. The reason for the truth of the proposition above will have to be sought, therefore, not in the material but in the formal [dimension] of the knowledge, not in the thinkability of the subject but instead in its goodness and perfection. Furthermore, it [the reason for the truth of the proposition] does not lie in my absolute perfection since I do not possess perfection without [100] limits, something that is again supremely evident through my subjective consciousness. If therefore a reason for the truth of the proposition is to be found, then we must encounter it in the relative perfection, in the constitution by virtue of which, under certain circumstances, in a certain series of things, *here* and *now*, in this way and not otherwise, it has been possible for me to come to be the best. In this way and not otherwise can a rational ground for our alteration be given; in this way and not otherwise can it be comprehended how a contingent proposition that yesterday was not true can today come to be the truth. Under each condition of time and space, *somewhere* and *at some time*, something else attains the quality of the best and precisely by this means attains the reason for the truth of its existence. Now this relative goodness of a contingent being can contain the ground for its actuality in no other way than insofar as it by this means serves the purpose of a free cause and accordingly can be approved by the latter. The ground for my existence must therefore be sought in a free cause that has recognized and approved me *here* and *now* as belonging to the series of the best and by this means has been moved to bring me to actuality. This free cause cannot be itself contingent since otherwise we would not have come a step closer to making the proposition comprehensible; the reason for the truth [of the proposition, 'I myself am actually on hand'] that combines the concept of the contingent being with existence would still have to sought anew. In the end, therefore, we have to come back to a necessary being, for whom this reason for the truth lies in the thinkability of the subject itself, to a being whose objective existence is not to be separated from its thinkability, i.e., to a being which is on hand because it can be thought.

If the constitution of a thing, as relatively good, is supposed to contain the ground for its actuality, then it must have been intentionally chosen. The necessary cause will have to have known and intentionally chosen the contingent being that has its existence from the necessary cause. Since, now, everything that the necessary being is,

it must be in the highest degree of perfection, the knowledge of the necessary cause will have to be the supremely perfect knowledge and its choice the most freely willed. Hence, it will also from the outset have thought in the most distinct and perfect manner all alterations of time and place and so, too, all determinations and characteristics through which a contingent thing in its time and at [101] its place is the best, and it will have approved them with the degree of efficaciousness and striving appropriate to them. Now the striving inherent in the faculty of approving, as we saw in the Seventh Lecture, proceeds from the subject and has its goal in the object of knowledge and seeks to bring that object in accord with the subject's approved concepts. Hence, by virtue of its supremely perfect faculty of approving, the necessary cause will let everything contingent become actual at a place and time in keeping with the measure of its constitution and facility to be the best somewhere and at some time, and since the course of time and the order of space is mutable, so, too, must the things be that come about merely on account of their constitution of coming to be [conditionally] the best.

Everything that is, is the best. [It is] (1) unqualifiedly the best or the supremely perfect in *simplicity*: the sum-total of all realities, the self-sufficient being (*Ens a se*) [or] (2) the best *secundum quid*, the most perfect in the *unification*, the combination of many, each of which, considered alone, is limited and imperfect but through combination and contribution to the most perfect whole becomes the best somewhere and at some time, as a part of the whole, the world together with all its alterations in time and space.

All God's thoughts, insofar as they have the best as their object, attain actuality. (1) *The absolutely best* [of these divine thoughts]. God thinks himself with the most vital knowledge, with supreme *self-approval*. His supreme power ceaselessly brings forth in him all predicates that can be united in a subject and these are as necessary as his thinkability. (2) The best [of these divine thoughts] *secundum quid* or the hypothetically best. God thinks his properties with the infinitely manifold limitations with which those properties are thinkable. That is to say, he thinks all possible levels of his perfections with the degree of approval and satisfaction appropriate to each of them. He thinks for himself all possible combinations of these limited perfections; not in one subject since they are not compatible [in one subject]; but he thinks them for himself in a combination of many [subjects]. Among these possible combinations of many limited entities, *one* will be comparatively [102] the best as a whole; just as each individual in the best combination must be the best in its place and at its time. God thinks for himself this most perfect combination and all the limited (in terms of time and order) things occurring in it, insofar as they are the best, with the highest degree of approval. The aim of the power of approving is to bring forth the object, to strive to bring the object of the representation to actuality, in keeping with the standard of the ideal. The power of the self-sufficient being will thus bring forth these limited degrees of its perfection and their best possible combination, not in himself since they are not compatible with his properties but outside himself as limited substances, subsisting for themselves, each with that alteration in place and space, by means of which they are the best in relation to the whole. *God is the creator and sustainer of the best universe*.

One sees here the transition from God's intellect to his property as creator and sustainer of things outside him. Representation, combined with approval or participation, is *vital knowledge* and vital knowledge in the highest degree is the spur to activity, the striving to bring forth, to express power.

Some philosophers have also taken the trouble to refute by this route and in a demonstrative manner the peculiar pretension of the egoists. Human understanding already reproaches this pretension as an illegitimate fantasy. But it has, as we saw, its uses if one seeks through rational grounds to render scientific the sayings of sound human understanding. If everything that God thinks for himself to be best also comes to be actual and if belonging to the universe imagined by the egoist are, besides him, several more substances that harmonize as parts of the most perfect whole, then several substances outside him must also have come to be actual and been brought forth by God. As an individual substance, the egoist cannot fancy himself to be an object of the divine approval, of divine satisfaction, since he is conscious of his feebleness and his flaws. Thus, only in combination with the whole can his existence somewhere and at some time have come to be best and been approved by God. Hence, this whole together with all the substances belonging to it must have attained actuality just as much [103] as his *I* did.

Indeed, some have sought in this manner to convince even idealists scientifically of the unreasonableness of their opinion. The same combination of things in which the matter as an object of representation is actually on hand must be necessarily more perfect than one in which the [represented] sensory make-ups have externally no object. In the latter there is merely harmony in thinking beings' representations insofar as they are depictions and contain truth; in the former, by contrast, the thinking beings' representations agree not only among themselves but also with an object that is actually to be found outside them, an object that is the prototype for their pictorial representations. In the former case, depiction agrees only with depiction; in the latter, by contrast, copy also agrees with prototype. Greater agreement is greater perfection; a world in which matter is to be encountered outside minds is more perfect than one that consists merely of minds. Since then God brings only the most perfect to actuality, the world that he has created will not be merely ideal but will also actually contain matter, just as the greatest harmony demands. But you immediately see that merely the existence of an object of material representations can be inferred via these reasons. To what extent, in the course of exhibiting material constitutions, that which is subjective in our sensory knowledge enters into the mix and transforms such knowledge into appearances remains undecided by this [argument]. In sensory knowledge, there is indisputably some truth. But this truth is for us bound up with the semblance, the prototypical is bound up with the perspectival and cannot be separated from the latter by our senses.

[104] # Chapter 13
Spinozism. – Pantheism. – All is One and One is All. – Refutation.

The Spinozists claim: we ourselves and the sensory world outside of us are nothing obtaining for themselves but instead are mere modifications of the infinite substance. No thought that the infinite has could attain to actuality outside it and separated from its being, for there is only one unique substance of infinite power of thinking and infinite extension. God, says the Spinozist, is the unique, necessary substance and also the solely unique possible substance; as for everything else, nothing lives, moves, and exists outside God; they are instead modifications of the divine being. *One is all and all is one.*

As strange as this opinion sounds, and as much as it deviates from the common path of sound human understanding; it has nonetheless long had thoughtful heads among its adherents and friends. Indeed, fanatics and atheists have joined together to accept this opinion because it seems in fact to connect these opposite errors. That it borders on atheism is apparent at first glance. But Wachter, in a peculiar treatise,[1] has indicated that this opinion has its origin in cabbalistic fanaticism and is entirely constructed upon it. Let us look, however, not to the conclusions this school is charged with, but instead to the reasons on which it is founded. We are afloat here in a region of ideas too far removed from immediate knowledge, a region in which we indicate our thoughts merely through the silhouettes of words; indeed, it is only through the help of these very silhouettes that we are again in the position to know. How easy is error here! How great is the danger of taking shadows for the thing! You know how much I am inclined to explain all of the controversies of the philosophical schools as merely verbal disputes or at least as originally deriving from verbal disputes. If the tiniest detail changes in a silhouette, the entire image at once takes on a [105] different look, a different physiognomy. So, too, with words and concepts. The slightest deviation in the determination of a fundamental term leads in the end to completely opposite consequences, and if one loses sight of the point from which one set out in common with others, then in the end one no longer disputes about words, but about the most important matters. We must, therefore return to the crossroads where the Spinozist leaves us and takes his own route, in order to see whether we cannot settle our dispute before we go our separate ways.

[1] [Johann Georg] Wachter, *Spinozismus im Judenthum* [Amsterdam, 1699].

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Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_13,

Where are we setting out from? What can we accept as settled and presuppose among ourselves in order, with this serving as the measure, to orient the point in dispute? As far as I am familiar with the doctrine of the Spinozists, they agree with us in the following theorems: *the necessary being thinks itself as absolutely necessary; it thinks contingent beings as resolvable into infinite series, as beings that according to their nature presuppose for their existence a series extending backwards without beginning and convey actuality in a series extending forwards without end.*

Up until this point the adherents of Spinoza can walk alongside us, but here the path splits. This series of contingent things, we say, have their own substantiality outside of God, even though they could only be on hand as effects of his omnipotence. No doubt, that finite beings subsist for themselves depends upon the infinite and they are not thinkable without the infinite, but they are nonetheless not unified with the infinite with respect to subsistence. We live, move, and exist as the effects of God, but not in him. The Spinozist, by contrast, claims: there is only one *Unique* infinite substance, since a substance must obtain on its own, subsisting for itself, it must require no other being for its existence and thus be independent. Because, however, no finite being can be independent, no finite being can be a substance. By contrast, the world-all is a true substance since in its unboundedness it includes everything in itself and thus requires no other being for its existence; hence, it is independent. This world-all, the Spinozist continues, consists of bodies and spirits, which means, according to the doctrine of Descartes accepted by the Spinozist, that there is extension and thought, beings that are extended and beings that think. He accordingly appropriates to his unique infinite substance two infinite properties [106], *infinite extension* and *infinite thought*, and this is his: One is All; or rather he says: the entire sum-total of infinitely many finite bodies and of infinitely many thoughts make up *One* unique infinite *All*, infinite in extension and infinite in thinking: *All is One*.

The acumen with which Spinoza constructs his system upon these fundamental ideas and binds it fast together in geometrical fashion all the way down to its smallest parts is rightly admired. Concede these fundamental ideas to him, and his edifice will stand there unshaken and you will be unable to budge the smallest pebble from the way it hangs together with everything else. Thus, we have merely to investigate these fundamental ideas and see just how far they differ from our ordinary concepts, either in terms of the matter or merely in words.

In order to come as close as possible to this system, let us not at the outset level the criticism that Spinoza appears to confuse the infinite in power with the infinite in terms of extension [or] amount, *intensive* magnitude with *extensive*. That he puts the infinite in thought together, as it were, from infinitely many finite thoughts. In this way, merely the infinite in extension arises. If however the infinite is supposed to be independent, then it must not be extensively infinite but intensively without bounds and limits; it must be infinite not in extension but in power if it is supposed to require no other being for its existence. I will touch on this in more detail in what follows and for the moment leave it aside without commentary in order to scrutinize the other fundamental ideas of the Spinozistic system.

That there is an arbitrariness in the definition of the word 'substance,' an arbitrariness that steered Spinoza away from the ordinary path, is a reproach that has already been made by many and by almost all of his adversaries. We also do not attribute to any finite contingent being the sort of substantiality that he presupposes, an existence obtaining for itself, that is independent, and that requires no other being for its actuality. We also grant that such a substantiality, sufficient unto itself, would pertain only to the infinite and necessary being and that it is imparted, even by this being, to no finite being. Yet we distinguish *the self-sufficient* from *something subsisting for itself*. The self-sufficient is independent and [107] requires no other being for its existence. This being is thus infinite and necessary; but what subsists for itself can be dependent in its existence and can nevertheless be on hand as a being separate from the infinite. That is to say, beings can be thought that do not subsist merely as modifications of another being, but instead have their own constancy and are themselves modified. We think we can legitimately ascribe a substantiality of this second type also to finite contingent beings. We can very well let everything stand that Spinoza thus derived with geometrical acuteness from his definition of substance, but it holds only for the self-sufficient being, to whom alone infinity in power and necessary independent being pertains, and holds in no way for all things that subsist for themselves. If Spinoza does not want to call these 'substances' on account of their dependence, then he is disputing only the words. If the difference is conceded to lie in things, then one has to think up another name for the constancy of dependent beings so as not to let a difference (that resides in the thing) go unnoticed; and the quarrel is decided.

This remark, if it does not at once dispose of the doctrine of Spinoza, nonetheless strikes at its proofs and foundations. It shows that Spinoza did not prove what he wanted to prove. It thus weakens the power of his weapons, or deflects them from the goal at which he had directed them. Instead of proving that everything subsisting for itself is only One being [*Eins*], he ends up merely bringing out that only everything self-sufficient is such. Instead of demonstrating that the entire sum-total of everything finite makes up a unique self-sufficient substance, he ends up upholding merely that this sum-total must depend upon the unique infinite substance. But everyone will concede this without the dispute thereby being decided. Thus he has left the disputed point completely where he found it. His proofs are trenchant, but they do not refute us.

The following remark penetrates somewhat deeper into the thing and attacks not only the proofs but also the very doctrine of Spinoza. Spinoza, say his opponents, attributes extension and thought to his infinite substance because according to the theory of Descartes everything thinkable can be traced back to these fundamental concepts. According to this philosopher, the essence of bodies consists in extension and the essence of spirits consists in thinking. Yet, [108] if we also add to extension the concept of impenetrability, then this exhausts merely the essence of matter. Besides matter, however, form also belongs to body, that is, motion together with all its modifications. Spinoza has therefore shown us merely the source of matter. Where should we look for the source of form? Through what does body get its motion, the organized body its form, that is, its designed and regular motion, and

every other body its figure? Where can the origin of this be encountered? Not in the whole, since the whole has no motion. The collection of all bodies unified in one unique substance cannot change its place and has neither organization nor figure. Therefore, [it must be encountered] in the parts. Then the parts must have their own existence apart from it and the whole be a mere aggregate of them. If the parts did not, as Spinoza professes, have their separate existence and were merely alterations or manners of representation of the collective whole, then they could not have any other modification than those which flow from the properties of the whole. Whence the form in the parts if the whole provides no source for it?

One can also reproach Spinoza for a similar mistaken inference in regard to the world of spirits. He has provided simply for the material of thought and assigned to it a source in the properties of the infinite. Truth and untruth find their origin for him in the properties of the simple substance. But where do goodness and perfection, pleasure and displeasure, pain and gratification, in general where does all that come from that belongs, according to our concepts, to the faculty of approving or desire? If the whole is incapable of foreknowledge, of intention, of approving and demanding, where do all of these concepts in the parts, that have nothing at all that subsists for itself and, in his opinion, are mere modifications of the single substance, come from? It is true that Spinoza also wants to cancel all freedom in the parts, to hold all choice to be mere illusion, and, as far as their truth is concerned, to subject to unavoidable necessity the voluntary resolve we believe to be dependent on us. He accordingly did not need to provide for something in his system whose existence he does not acknowledge; hence, for him freedom, will and the power of choice, and everything that depends on these, can present no further difficulty. Only, [109] with this the illness is not fundamentally remedied. All of the objections that Spinoza has against freedom and the power of choice affect only the system of *perfect indifference* that he alone calls *freedom*. He recognizes no absence of compulsion other than the liberation from every influence of motivations and incentives, from all collaborating knowledge of foreseen good and evil, actually what the determinists call *the perfect indecisive balance*. Since he then saw that foreseen motivations and incentives pass their determinateness and inevitability on to the most free of choices, he included every outcome under the wooly term ‘necessity,’ and said that the choice or power of choice of rational beings is necessary. Contrary to this, notwithstanding all of his reasons, Spinoza must very well concede the very thing that the determinists call *freedom* or the dispute he conducts with them is merely concerning words. He has no reason to cancel this same freedom that follows upon knowledge of the good and evil and is determined by what is foreseen to be best. Since, at least in regard to the finite, he cannot deny the distinction between good and evil, the desirable and undesirable, pleasure and displeasure, and so forth, he must also concede all that follows from these ideas, hence, their collaboration in the determination of the finite, their influence on the alterations of the thinking being. If we thus remove the ambiguity from the word ‘necessity,’ if we determine the concept more precisely, and make a distinction between physical and ethical necessity, letting the physically necessary flow from the source of knowledge and the ethically necessary from the source of approval, as we have done, and if Spinoza

cannot dismiss this distinction that lies in the things themselves, then he must acknowledge that the formal aspect of thinking is to be distinguished from the material aspect of the same, that the property of thinking does not necessarily include the property of approving, that *good* and *evil*, as well as the inclination towards the former and the disinclination from the latter, must have another source than truth and untruth. Where, however, is this source to be found if no trace of it should be encountered among the properties of the unique substance?

We thus see that Spinoza's system [110] is deficient in two respects. He has provided merely for the material aspect but not for the formal aspect, as much in regard to the corporeal world as in regard to thinking beings, and how close his system will come to ours if he will also take up the formal aspect and seek to explain the source of motion on the one hand as well as the source of approval on the other.

And now to the remark I touched on above and promised to elaborate further in what followed. I am reminded, however, that a lengthy discourse is not needed here. *Wolf*, in the second part of his *Natural Theology*, has presented this objection to Spinozism with his typical lucidity and thoroughness, and as far as I know, no adherent or defender of this system has ventured to answer this objection.[2] Thus I need only repeat it here briefly. Every quality of a thing has its expanse and its strength, its extension and its intensity. The addition of many things of the same kind increases the expanse but not the strength of the quality. If you add warm water to warm water, you will have more but not warmer water; if you add passing acquaintance to passing acquaintance, you have more expansive but not more fundamental and deeper discernment. A more expansive cause can no doubt produce a stronger effect, and multiple light-rays can effect a stronger illumination, but in this effect there is no longer mere addition but an inner intensification produced by the assembled majority of the rays. Moreover, the moderate illumination of many rooms gives off no stronger light than the same illumination of a single, small room. All of this is clear at first glance and it is adequately if superfluously elaborated in every textbook on ontology. Thus, even if an infinite amount of finite beings are taken together, what emerges from it is a total infinity but only in terms of the amount and expanse. The intensity or the strength of the quality still remains forever finite in that totality. Now even according to Spinoza himself, only the infinite in terms of strength can be independent and require no other being for its existence. He will thus still have to admit a unique infinite being, whose strength is without limits, outside of the entire sum-total of all finite beings, as something which can only be infinite in terms of the expanse of them. Indeed, since [111] by his own admission only one unique substance can be independent, he will have to allow that his infinite in terms of the amount depends upon this infinite in terms of strength.

That the infinite in terms of the expanse [of things] could not be self-sufficient but must rather depend on the infinite in power becomes clearer from the following consideration. All expanded things, be they finite or infinite, can produce not true

[2] Cf. Christian Wolf, *Theologia naturalis* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1736–7), §706.

unities but instead only *sum-totals*, aggregates of *many*, not *single* beings but instead *assembled*, collective beings. Although extension *of the same sort* pertains to all matter essentially, what is *extended* is still not always the same; [here there is] no actual unity but only a repetition of one and the same quality in the smallest parts of matter. So it is, too, with heaviness, if it is supposed to be present in the body, and also with the power of generation and organization, if one wants to consider it as a property of the formed body. Even if the power is always the same in abstraction and to be encompassed in one and the same idea, it nonetheless cannot be present in the body as a property without being repeated as it were in every atom of that same body. It is to be sure the same power that coils the spring in my clock and that gathers the clouds there in the firmament and drives them away; but this *unity* is merely abstract; in terms of the *things* the power must be differently repeated in the different objects, and thus must remain no longer *One* but *Many*.

If a many should come together in a sum-total and an aggregate should make up a collective being, then this will happen only through the representations of thinking subjects who take them up and gather them in a concept. Outside and on the sides of the objects there exist merely unities, and no doubt each for itself, individually. It is merely in the representations of thinking subjects that these unities come together and form sum-totals, Many in One, aggregates. A herd of sheep consists in and for itself of individual animals of this kind, a sand-hill out of individual grains; but these are collected and combined in thinking beings' conception and, by this means, from the former [we have] *One* herd and from the latter *One* pile. Without thinking beings, the corporeal world would not be a world, it would not constitute a whole but instead would consist, at most, of pure isolated unities. I have treated this in greater detail on another occasion [112], and proved there that the soul could not be material.[3]

Yet the spirit world has a similar make-up. Even if the same power of thinking pertains to everyone, it is still not the same unity that thinks in everyone. What we understand through the power or property of thinking must rather be repeated in each object and pertain to each thinking being for itself. In terms of the concept, it is to be sure one and the same sort of power or attribute of thinking, as Spinoza puts it, by means of which we all think here; yet, in terms of the things and in actuality this power must pertain to each of us in a particular way, if we think differently ourselves and one unique power is not supposed to think for us all, as some Scholastic philosophers are supposed to have believed.

However, each thinking being, if it is finite, can merely think one part of the world, one side and perspective on it that does not encompass the whole with equal distinctness. According to Spinoza, the world-all in its all-encompassing distinctness lies merely in the sum of all thinking beings, in the total of the same. But this total, this taking-together, [this] *Many* in *One*, this sum presupposes, as we have

[3] See Mendelssohn's *Phaedo*, the second dialogue in particular.

seen, a thinking being who comprehends, collects, and combines in his representation. Without this unifying subject the parts remain isolated and uncombined, they remain still *Many*, and only through the encompassing thought are they *unified*.

Therefore, if according to Spinoza the world-all, or the true substance, consists in the sum-total of all material and thinking beings, then this sum-total presupposes the existence of a subject that conceives the sum-total. This subject will have to comprehend every side, combine all of the concepts of finite beings in their infinite manifoldness, and think all of these with the most perfect distinctness, since each obscurity in the representation leaves behind a gap and the sum-total that we are seeking will not be complete. Without the spirit world, corporeal things do not constitute a world, but limited spirits form as it were only fragments of the whole, fragments that must, in their infinite region, be comprehended by an unlimited spirit and be combined into *One* system. That this limitless spirit will be infinite in power, self-sufficient, and independent follows of itself; and consequently [113] Spinoza's idea would have led us from the infinite world-all to the necessary existence of an individual being, infinite in power, whose thoughts comprehend everything manifold in the corporeal and the spirit world in the most distinct possible way and combine it all into One system, and without which the infinite in expansion can not subsist. – In such a way, our quarrel with this philosopher, right here at the crossroads, would already be settled for the most part. Moreover, we would have this honest investigator of truth for our friend, since it is certain that this man who had dedicated his life uniquely and alone to the truth would not oppose it out of obstinacy or vanity. We could embrace him and still proceed for a long stretch together. Yes, if Spinoza conceded all this to us we would be almost at our goal already.

[114]

Chapter 14
Continued dispute with the pantheists. – Approximation. – Point of unison with them. – Innocuousness of the purified patheism. – Compatibility with religion and ethics insofar as they are practical.

No, not at all, my friend Lessing would exclaim if he had been present at our last lecture, You are still quite far from the goal and proclaim victory before you have overturned [your foe]. Even if all the observations that you brought up against Spinoza were correct, in the end you would still have refuted merely Spinoza alone, not Spinozism. You would have shown that the system of this philosopher, no less than every other one set forth by a mortal, has its deficiencies and gaps, that he was lacking in the foundation that he gave the edifice containing his doctrine and omitted things without which this edifice cannot stand. But does the complete overthrow of everything maintained by Spinoza follow already from this? How does it, particularly if a later adherent of this great man sought to fill in the gaps and make up for the deficiencies? Or, suppose we thoroughly renounced the system and confessed that things do not allow themselves to be combined into a series of geometric inferences. Would it be necessary for Spinozism or pantheism, on account of this, to be completely given up? Regardless of this, could the proposition not be true: *Everything is one and one is everything*?

You have refuted the system of our opponent: has your system been proven in the process? Let us look more closely, he would continue, at how far we have come. You say: 'Spinoza cannot, on the basis of his basic principles, explain the origin of motion.' Good! What anti-spinozist or theist then knows how to give a better account of this? They appeal to the will of God who is supposed to have communicated movement to matter. Spinoza also has all motion springing from something similar that he calls 'will,' although I do not know how to make his assertion on this point fully clear to myself. Perhaps even the pantheist finds additional assistance of this kind to explain the origin of motion [115] and, if he does not find it, this origin may remain thoroughly unexplained. In the end the appeal to the divine will is not far from a confession of one's ignorance and the advantage that the theist may have in this regard is by far not important enough to give his system the decisive upperhand. The pantheist can concede the difference between truth and goodness, knowledge and approval, along with all the consequences that can rightly be drawn from these distinctions. He can also locate the source of the formal as well as the material in the sole, divine substance. You see how much I make place for in his name without giving up the system on that account.

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_14,

Moved by your reasons or those of others, I willingly make place for the correctly noted distinction between the infinite in terms of extension and the infinite in terms of power and I accordingly concede that the necessary being cannot, as Spinoza himself maintained, consist in the sum-total of infinitely many contingent beings. For in this way it would be infinite only in terms of extension, but in terms of power it would still remain forever finite and dependent. Hence, I assume with you, as Spinoza himself probably would have done, that the sole necessary being must be infinite in its unity and in terms of power, and so, according to our system just as much as the theist according to his, we can place not only the origin of the true but also the origin of all goodness in the essence of the divinity. Therefore, since we (I continue to speak in the name of my departed friend) have now altered the system and, no less than the theist, have ascribed supreme perfection to the divinity, then we also assume, as a consequence of this, that the divine intellect has represented to itself in the clearest and most exhaustively detailed manner all possible contingent things, along with the infinite manifolds and alterations of them, together with their diversity and goodness, beauty and order and that, by virtue of the divinity's supreme power of approving [the best represented by it], it has given preference to the best and most perfect series of things. According to the system of true theists, all of this must also have transpired in the divine intellect and must proceed unceasingly. Even the theist, therefore, must ascribe a kind of ideal existence in the divine intellect to the series of things that have actually come to be and this [116] the pantheist can concede without detriment to his system. However, he stands pat with this ideal existence and if the theist moves on and adds to this claim the following "God has also communicated an objective existence to this actual series of things outside himself," the pantheist modestly retreats and sees no reason to make room for this. By what means do you convince him of this objective existence outside the divine intellect? Who tells us that we ourselves and the world surrounding us have something more than ideal existence in the divine intellect, something more than God's mere thoughts and modifications of his primal power?

"If I understand you correctly," I would answer him, "then in the name of the pantheists you concede, to be sure, a God outside the world, but deny a world outside of God and make God, as it were, into the infinite egoist."[1]

You have construed my thoughts correctly and you know how little attention I paid to the ridiculous way that you would seek to paint them. My pantheism is similar, if you will, to a two-headed Hydra. One of these heads bears the heading: *Everything is one*; the other: *One is everything*. You must knock both away at once if you want to kill the monster. Before, however, you dare this herculean work, pay close attention to the weapons with which it can defend itself.

Thoughts, the one thinking, what is thought – these are the three aspects of whose differences we are conscious as long as thinking is still merely a capacity, i.e., as long as one has not yet actually thought. That is to say, as long as the thinking being, as subject, has merely the capacity of thinking and the object has merely the capacity of

[1] Following Mendelssohn's own practice in this chapter, we place this text in quotation marks to mark it off from the discourse that he ascribes to Lessing (as Lessing's likely response to the discussion heretofore). This discourse, not set off in quotation marks, makes up the body of the chapter.

being thought and the thought has not yet actually come about from the relation of the object to the subject. But as soon as thinking actually proceeds, the subject enters into the most intimate combination with the object and produces the thought. This is to be found within the one thinking and insofar as it is a true imprint of what is thought, it is not to be distinguished from the object itself. Note then well before you would refute my pantheist! You would admit that, in the course of actual thinking and insofar as the thought is true, that difference among the aspects disappears and what is thought cannot be distinguished from the actual, [117] true thought and, hence, is fully one with it. Now the thought is an accident of the thinking being and cannot be separated from its substance. Hence, the thought will necessarily be encountered nowhere else than in the one thinking and as a mere alteration of it. Since now in God, as we all grant, no mere capacity occurs, but everything must far more be in the most active actuality, since further all God's thoughts are true and accurate, then no thought in God can be distinguished from its prototype or rather God's thoughts that can be found in him as alterations of him will be at the same time their own prototypes themselves. The inner, constantly acting activity of the divine power of representation produces in God himself everlasting images of contingent beings, with the infinite series of all their successive variations and diversities; we call this taken altogether 'the world of the senses,' a world outside us. Represented from this side, the pantheism that you believe to have brought down, to have trounced seems to me to stand fully on its own feet again. You would[2] refute it? Then first indicate how this is possible! If this is supposed to take place, then it must be shown that the prototypes outside God do not have the same predicates as the representations and images of them that are to be found in God. But you deny this yourself according to your own system. God's thoughts must be true and adequate to the highest degree and, hence, must have all the predicates that pertain to their objects.

Yes, indeed, it would occur to my friend here, all the predicates with the exception of those that pertain to the prototype merely as prototype and that the subject [*Subjekt*] can never assume without ceasing to be a subject. The agreement between prototype and copy does not extend so far that the diversity of their relationships is canceled. The most faithful image must not cease to be an image; it would lose something of its truth if it should become the prototype. Hence, my friend, if this is the point that matters in our dispute, then it is, as I hope, still to be decided. It seems to me there are non-deceptive characteristics that in the most non-deceptive manner distinguish me as an object from me as a representation in God, that distinguish me as prototype from me as an image in the divine intellect. [118] The consciousness of my self, bound up with utter lack of information of everything that does not fall into my sphere of thinking is the most telling proof of my substantiality outside God, of my prototypical existence. To be sure, God has the most correct concept of the measure of my powers, hence, too, of the scope of my consciousness. But this image of my consciousness is not separated in him from the consciousness of his infinity; it is not, as is the case with me, bound up with the actuality of so many things with which I am myself unacquainted and which are, nonetheless, in part bound up with my

[2] The translation here follows the *Jubiläumsausgabe* in assuming that 'weitet' should be 'wolltet'.

being. It is one thing to have limitations, to be limited; it is another thing to be aware of the limitations that someone different from us possesses. The supreme being is also aware of my weakness but does not possess it. Far from being the case that the concept that he has of me would therefore cease to be true, it would much more be able to be the most true concept in no other way.

"Must something still be added to God's thought, if it is supposed to be actual outside God?"[3]

This question, I believe, leads us to the ground of our dispute and I want to explain myself in regard to it with all the uprightness and transparency of which I am capable.

Thoughts, as the object of the faculty of knowing, are true in God to the highest degree. The untrue, error as well as sensory illusion, finds place in the divine intellect only as the predicate of limited, contingent beings. He is apprised of me together with all my deficiencies and weaknesses, hence, too, the errors of my intellect and the illusion of my senses.

God is apprised of the evil as well as the good, as the object of the faculty of approving, and is apprised of them both according to the truth, i.e., with the degree of approval and disapproval that is most precisely suited to them. Hence, he knows the best with the most powerful approval of it, with the most vital knowledge of it. This approval insists on being efficacious. The highest living power in God, a power endlessly efficacious, effects in him himself the predicates pertaining to him and is the source of his own existence, the absolute best. Since, however, as the thought in God, the best in combination, *optimum secundum quid*, brings with it the comparatively highest approval of it, this must, by virtue of its supremely vital power, also come to actuality [119] and, indeed, not in him (since only the absolute best can be on hand in him) but instead separated from his substance, a series and combination of contingent things outside God, an *objective world*.

"But what does God add to his thoughts, to his representations of the best that they also become actual outside him?"[4]

Whoever genuinely understands and can say this, my dearest ones, also understands how to do it and you will not demand this of a feeble compiler of hypotheses. But, if we are talking about limited minds, then I have already answered this question as much as I can. To the representation of a finite mind in God, its own consciousness must be added, with the lack of information of everything that falls outside its limitations; the mind is in this way a *substance outside God*. Of the rest of things, I do not know, I cannot provide you with any such characteristic mark. What I know to attest of a being conscious of itself, I know from myself, since I myself am such a being and have my own consciousness. Whether the remaining limited beings alongside me have a substantiality similar to mine, whether – to speak with Leibniz – all beings obtain for themselves only insofar as they have powers of

[3] This question is placed within quotation marks, presumably to indicate that Mendelssohn is posing it to Lessing.

[4] A second question placed in quotation marks and directed at (while also complementing) Lessing's train of thought here.

representation, while matter must be called a mere semblance of substance or whether there is also a kind of substantiality that is proper to matter – this investigation would lead me too far afield of my undertaking and for now can remain put to the side. For now I have to consider merely myself and thinking beings like me, in order to decide the dispute with the pantheists. In order to prove that not all things are mere thoughts of the infinite, I have merely to demonstrate that there are finite minds outside God that have their own substantiality without engaging the question of substances of another kind. Indeed, it is enough if I show that I myself have a consciousness of my own and thus must be a substance obtaining for myself outside God. To convince the pantheists of this will not be difficult now.

No being has an immediate concept of a reality greater[5] than pertains to it itself. If we want to think of a higher being, then, merely intuitively and immediately, we think of the scope of our own powers, and extend the limitations [120] further and further in order to represent to ourselves a being more perfect than we are ourselves. Or we remove them entirely in order to arrive at the concept of a supremely perfect being. However, the entire domain of reality that we do not possess ourselves is also alien to us as knowers and cannot be intuitively known by us. This is a universally known, basic principle of philosophy. But just as true from the other side is the proposition: *No being can actually alienate itself from any degree of its reality.* I cannot think to myself an entity that has lesser and more limited capacities than I have and, in doing so, actually alienate and lack information about everything that has become more a part of me. If I want to represent the power of the senses of someone blind, then I must direct my attention merely at the impressions and sensations of the remaining senses and seek, by this means, to weaken and obscure the impressions of sight or I also leave the visual images in their intuitive perfection and deny them, along with their consequences and effects, of the person born blind.

In the first case I arrive at a concept of the positive, in the second case a concept of the limitations of his sensory facility. But I cannot bring about the complete absence of all sensory impressions for myself. Just as little can God, by virtue of the fullness of his perfection, think any sort of limited being, together with the actual alienation of his divinity. He thinks for himself a limited degree of his reality with all the weaknesses and incapacities that follow from this limitedness. But He remains himself anything but alienated from his infinite reality. Therefore, the thought in God that has a limited being as its object cannot, in that thought, attain any consciousness of its own, torn away, as it were, [from God]. Nothing is thereby removed from the truth of the divine concept; rather, according to our explanation of truth, this concept must remain in God purely subjective and actually possess no consciousness of its own with the alienation of all higher perfection; otherwise it would be the *object* and no longer a concept of the object.

Let us call *A* the degree of reality that pertains to a limited being and *B* the limitation or reality that is denied it. Hence, inasmuch as God represents to himself this limited being, he will think *A*, affirming it along with all the consequences of its

[5] The translation here follows the *Jubiläumsausgabe* in assuming that 'grossem' should be 'grösseren'.

[121] being, while denying *B* along with all its consequences and, precisely by this means, God will have the most complete, the most correct, and truest concept of this being. But God cannot possibly produce or possess in himself the consciousness of *A* with the actual alienation and absence of *B*. For this would be the true alienation of his divinity.

Meanwhile, what Spinoza remarks on another occasion may perhaps also be on target here: *Pleraeque oriuntur controversiae, quia homines mentem suam non recte explicant, vel quia alterius mentem male interpretantur. Nam re vera, dum sibi maxime contradicunt, vel eadem vel diversa cogitant ita, ut quos in aliis errores et absurda esse putant, non sint.* [And many controversies arise because human beings do not properly explain what they themselves have in mind or because they badly interpret what someone else has in mind. For the truth of the matter is that, while they contradict one another to greatest degree, they are thinking the same thing or they are thinking something different so that what they consider to be errors and absurdities in others may not be so.[6]] Let us therefore once again investigate how far apart from the pantheists we are. Perhaps we come closer in the end than we ourselves believe. 'Everything is one,' says the pantheist; 'God and the world,' we say. The pantheist: 'God is also the world.' 'The infinite,' we declare, 'has brought everything finite, one of these many, to actuality.' The pantheist, on the other hand, says: 'The infinite encompasses everything, is itself everything, is *one* and at the same time *everything*.' As little possible as it is for the many to be on hand without the *one*, the infinite *one* can just as little exist, according to the pantheist, without *everything*. For our part, we acknowledge that the existence of the finite is not thinkable without the infinite. We concede further that the existence of the finite cannot be thought without the *most distinct knowledge* of everything finite. But we maintain that the existence of the infinite is very well possible and thinkable without the actuality of everything finite, that therefore the finite is indeed dependent upon the infinite but the latter is not dependent upon the former, as far as existence is concerned. Hence, we separate God from nature, ascribing to God a being outside the world as well as ascribing to the world a being outside God. By contrast, the adherent of the pantheism that was considered above and that concerns us here, assumes as follows: 'there is no existence anywhere outside God; instead the representations of the infinite, thanks to their necessity, attained a kind of existence in God himself that is fundamentally united with his being in the most internal way.' Let us put aside for a while what we previously called to mind against this hypothesis and now merely propose this question: *Do all thoughts of God have this self-consciousness of their own that we perceive in ourselves* [122] *and cannot deny or do only some have it to the exclusion of the rest?* No one will maintain the former for, if all God's thoughts, merely because they are God's thoughts, possess what is required for existence, then none of them can in fact actually be on hand. So much is still, in the end, undeniable of determinate existence: that the existence of a certain determination excludes the opposite determination; that the present alterations of things cannot be actually the same as past and future alterations of those things;

[6] *Ethics* II, proposition 47, scholium.

that I, the I who now sits and speaks, no longer lie and sleep. Let it forever be the case that the succession of diverse states – in keeping with Spinoza (and, at bottom, with the truth) – takes place in me only as a limited being. Nevertheless, it is always a succession of diverse states that mutually exclude one another and therefore presuppose a thought of God becoming actual to the exclusion of the rest.

Therefore, only some of God's thoughts by way of their pre-eminence attain what we call 'existence' and what is now disputed is whether they thereby always remained within his being or have attained their own substantiality outside it. These thoughts of God which have pre-eminently attained existence, have this preeminence not by virtue of their truth and thinkability; for their opposite is just as thinkable, at least it was or will be, and the diversity of the time alters nothing in the truth and thinkability of things. The intermediate causes suffice just as little with regard to the thing since, according to Spinoza, they are resolvable into infinite series and hence merely postpone the question without answering it. We have unpacked all this sufficiently in the previous lectures. Thus, the thoughts of God that become actual to the exclusion of the rest will acquire this pre-eminence by virtue of their relative goodness and purposiveness insofar, namely, as in this way and not otherwise, they correspond *here* and *now* to the idea of the perfect and best. This visible world is, therefore, according to the pantheist, actually on hand as a thought of God within his being, that is to say, insofar as it is in him a representation of the best and most perfect sum-total of manifold finite beings that can be thought in connection [with one another]. [123] In this immense thought is the human being; 'I am a human being' is also a thought of God, endowed with the separate, limited consciousness of myself, fully devoid of any information of what lies outside my limitedness. I am, on account of this limitedness, also capable of happiness and misery, in part through myself and my own actions, in part even without any addition from me and, with respect to my happiness or my misery, dependent on other divine thoughts.

Further, as a human being, I can expect everything good that should come to be for me merely from the substance whose thought and modification I am supposed to be, to the extent that it is its will to allow a part of that good to depend upon me myself but another part to depend on other of its thoughts. To be sure, not *will* in a genuine sense, since Spinoza holds will and intellect to be one and the same. Meanwhile, if I understand him correctly and in the way that my friend explains him, he still distinguishes familiarity with the true from familiarity with the good and names the knowledge of the good the 'will' insofar as by means of it one thought is given a preference over the other. Hence, we can always say: 'Everything good that we receive is an effect of the divine will and also, to that extent, an effect of a free will insofar as he has found it good to let our happiness depend upon us or other thoughts of his.' Assume all this and I ask: in what now does the system defended by my friend differ from ours?

As a human being, the divinity's thought, I will never cease to remain the divinity's thought and will be happy or miserable in this infinite sequence of times, depending upon whether I more or less know, more or less love him, the thinker of me, depending upon whether I strive (for Spinoza must also allow that a striving

inheres in this thought that God has), depending upon whether I more or less strive to become similar to this source of my existence and to love the rest of his thoughts as myself. If, my friend, the defender of *purified pantheism* concedes all this as he would certainly have to, by virtue of his basic principles, then morality and religion are secured. Then, too, this school would distinguish itself from our system merely in a subtlety that can never become practical, in a fruitless [124] consideration, namely, whether God has let these thoughts of the best connection of contingent things beam forth, stream forth, flow out – or with what image should I compare it since this subtlety can scarcely be described otherwise than through images – whether he has let the light of itself flash outward or only glow internally? That is to say, whether it has remained merely a source or whether the source has gushed forth into a stream? If through these very sorts of imagistic ways of speaking one wants to make palpable to oneself the process of bringing forth, fashioning, making actual, and so forth, then it is difficult to keep misinterpretation or misunderstanding from extending the metaphor beyond its boundaries and leading to errant paths, to atheism or superstition, depending upon whether the mind is otherwise attuned to raptures or to dry reflection. The systems still seem to be quite far from one another in their corollaries and yet at bottom it is misinterpretation of the same metaphor that alternatively transports God all too figuratively into the world, or transports the world all too figuratively into God. Upright love of the truth immediately leads then back to the point from which one set out, and shows that one has merely become entangled in words. Renounce words, and friend of wisdom, embrace your brother!

[125]

Chapter 15
Lessing. – His Contribution to the Religion of Reason. – His Thoughts on Purified Pantheism.

Friend D., who surprised us in the last morning lesson, chided me as he departed. "How do you come to make our Lessing," he said, "into a defender of such a misguided and decried teaching? Did no other name occur to you, on which you could foist this suspicious business?" You know, was my answer, that whenever I am casting about for a critic in such things, it is Lessing who first occurs to me. I have long had a philosophical exchange with him; for several years we communicated our thoughts about these matters to each other, communicating them with an unbiased love of truth that did not allow any place for either being self-opinionated or aiming simply to please. Thus, whenever a philosophical proposition is to be discussed, whenever the reasons for and against are to be compared with one another and weighed against one other, it is his image, sometimes out of sheer habit, that still hovers before me. – "Nonetheless, I would hesitate," he said, "to help myself to his name on this occasion. I would not want, for anything in the world, to arouse the slightest suspicion towards the religious principles of this excellent man. What? Lessing a defender of pantheism, a doctrine that is constructed on overly-subtle, sophistical grounds, a doctrine that if it does not utterly overturn every truth of natural religion, at least renders them supremely problematic? For whom would the truths of rational religion have been more inviolable than for him, the guardian of the Fragmentist?[1] For the creator of *Nathan*?[2] Germany has no acquaintance with any other philosopher who has taught the religion of reason with such purity, without any admixture of error and prejudice, and presented it to the plain human understanding so convincingly. His adherence to natural religion went so far that, out of zeal for it, he would suffer no revealed religion alongside it. He believed himself obliged to extinguish all lights in order to let the full illumination stream impartially from the light of reason. In defending [126] the Fragmentist, Lessing also seemed to take on his disposition completely. Already in his earliest writings, to be sure, one recognizes that the rational truths of religion and ethics had always

[1] The Fragmentist is Hermann Samuel Reimarus, a portion of whose work Lessing had published as *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* (1774–8); see the Translators' Introduction, footnote one.

[2] Lessing wrote the play *Nathan der Weise*, the main character of which was thought to be based on Mendelssohn.

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_15,

been sacred and inviolable. But after his acquaintance with the Fragmentist, in his writings, in all the essays that he wrote to protect his friend or 'guest,' as he called him, one notices the same quiet conviction that was so characteristic of this friend, the same unbiased distance from all querulousness, the same level path of sound human understanding with regard to the truths of rational religion. – And in his *Nathan*? Exactly what Horace says regarding Homer's ethics:

Qui, quid pulcrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.[3]

is what I would venture to claim of Lessing's masterpiece regarding certain truths of natural religion. Above all, what concerns divine providence and governance, I am not acquainted with any writer who could have instilled these great truths in the heart of reader with the same purity, the same force of conviction, and the same interest as he does.

Cur ita crediderim, nisi quid te detinet, audi![4]

In all of the deeds of human beings that we are able to observe, we note a kind of opposition between loftiness and condescension, between dignity and intimacy, an opposition that convinces us of the difficulty of combining both of these ethical properties in one character. Even the language leads to such an opposition, inasmuch as we compare the derivative moral sense of the words with their original physical sense, and contrast loftiness or sublimity with condescension. If the physically sublime is put down, it ceases to be sublime; thus, one is also inclined to accept the impossibility of combining the two in ethical matters, although at bottom the exact opposite is the case here inasmuch as the highest ethical sublimity consists in condescension, and dignity without intimacy mistakes its true worth. It is no slight refinement of our concepts to discern this distinction between the ethical and the physical [127] and not let oneself be blinded by the common prejudice. That great king who, while galloping on toy horses around the table with his children, is said to have been surprised by a foreign envoy, rightly asked: 'Is he married?' Yes, was the answer. 'Does he have children?' – Yes. – 'Then he may enter,' were the words of this good king, who could trust only a father's disposition [to appreciate] that dignity loses nothing through paternal condescension. Without the appropriate sensibility, the courtier would seldom recognize this truth. For him, condescension typically tokens pusillanimity, and paternal intimacy little more than weakness.

"The same difficulty of thinking both of these properties in combination has long led human beings onto opposing wayward paths in matters of religion. One

[3] Horace, *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle II, lines 3–4 [see *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 263: "[W]ho tells us what is fair, what is foul, what is helpful, what not, more plainly and better than Chrysippus or Crantor"].

[4] *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle II, line 5 [ibid.: "Why I have come to think so, let me tell you, unless there is something else to take your attention."].

has exaggerated either the sublimity of the divine being, or its condescension, at times excluding God from all collaboration in human affairs, other times so entangling him in them that he necessarily also shared in human frailties. The philosophers who saw God's infinity took it to be unworthy of God to fret about the fate of human beings and other non-infinite beings. They thus elevated their divinity completely above the sublunary world and charged it merely with caring for the preservation of the whole, for the kinds and races of things, with complete disregard for the fates of individual beings and what they encounter, whether they belonged, moreover, to the class of rational or non-rational beings. The popular system of poets and priests was directly opposed to this one. Not only were major natural changes, events and revolutions of states, wars, and devastations ascribed to their divinities, but they even led their Jupiter, as a household guest, to their Philomen and Baucis and, in the spirit of hospitality, allowed him to sympathize with the unfortunate fate of these poor peasants. If, on the one hand, this kind of presentation had its uses by bringing the divinity closer as it were to human beings, making it a witness and judge of human actions as well as a comforter for this life's burdens, it made the mistake, on the other hand, of degrading the divinity to the level of human frailties [128] and providing a setting for not recognizing sufficiently its infinite sublimity and self-sufficiency.

"Furthermore, this popular system allows the hand of the divine to be recognized only in extraordinary and astonishing cases, or in miraculous things, that is to say, merely in such unique events where the purposefulness is plainly visible, where the collaboration of a voluntary being that acts intentionally and consciously is not to be doubted. The common course of things, however, where everything appears to proceed in accordance with established rules, was taken to be the effect of nature and entirely withdrawn from the collaboration of the divinity. It was as if the order of nature and the will of the divinity were opposed. The more one discovered order and regularity in the course of nature, the less space was left for the governance of God, and thus it happened that the first to investigate nature were also the first to deny God.

"You know," he continued, "that in the last century the greatest men had not yet brought these concepts to complete clarity. The philosophical prejudice that the supreme cause should act merely according to universal laws continued to be favored. The particular, as a consequence of the universal, was merely an object of divine governance. In and for itself it could accord with or be contrary to the divine purpose; it had to be permitted by divine governance in precisely the way that the universal laws of nature brought it along with them and not otherwise or it had to be done away with through immediate intervention, that is, through a miracle.

"It is the supreme triumph of human wisdom to recognize the most perfect harmony between the system of purposes and the system of effective causes, and to see with Shaftesbury and Leibniz that the purposes of God extend, as does his collaboration, all the way to the smallest change and individual events, those of the lifeless as well as of the living; that the universal laws of the purposes and in a perfectly harmonious way, also the universal laws of effective causes spring from the similarity of individual things, events, and final purposes; that there is never a gap here and

that each natural effect agrees with divine purpose just as much as it flows from his omnipotence. Do not fail to recognize divine governance and providence in [129] the smallest of events, do not mistake them because these things are the outcome of the ordinary course of nature; thus to revere God more in natural events than in wondrous things strikes me as the highest ennoblement of human concepts, the most sublime way of thinking about God, his governance and his providence."

I let him know how much I agreed, then I cited the words of the Rabbi who had already made note of this contrast of sublimity and condescension: *Everywhere that you find the magnitude and sublimity of God, you find also his condescension*. Particularly noteworthy are the places from the writing with which this teacher, after the rabbinical custom, supports this doctrine, and the lyrical rhythm that the Psalmist is able to give it:

Who is like our God, the eternal?
Who is enthroned as high?
Peers so deep?
In heaven?
On earth?[5]

D. continued: "Now, friend, it is my view that this very teaching has not been presented by any writer with more conviction and exhibition in individual cases, on the one hand, and with more ardor and pious enthusiasm, on the other, than by our immortal Lessing. Let us simply recall that splendid scene of his dramatic didactic-poem in which, with all the lucidity of a didactic philosopher and, at the same time, all the energy of a theatrical poet, he presented as transparently as possible the true doctrine of divine providence and governance as well as what is harmful in the kind of representation according to which one constantly sets out after wondrous things in order to recognize the hand of the divinity. A combination that was only possible in a Lessing, although perhaps even for him only in our mother tongue. Only our mother tongue appears to have attained this level of cultivation where the language of reason can be combined with the most lively exhibition."

It seems to me, I said, as if Lessing had the intention of writing a kind of *Anti-Candide* with his *Nathan*. The French poet gathered all the power of his wit, spurred on the inexhaustible humor of his satirical spirit, in a [130] word, strained all the extraordinary talents providence gave to him, in order to fabricate a satire of this providence itself. The German did precisely this to justify providence, and to exhibit it to mortal eyes in its purest radiance. I recall that soon after the appearance of *Candide*, my late friend had a fleeting notion to write its counterpart or rather a continuation of it, in which he was prepared to show, through a succession of events, that all the evils Voltaire had heaped up and packed together at the expense of slandered providence, should nonetheless in the end be steered to the best and be found to agree with the wisest of aims. It seems that the French satirist made the task too difficult for him, that in the course of his composition he had amassed more evil than could be made good by a composition in turn. Thus, Lessing preferred to

[5] Psalm 113, 5–6.

go his own way and created a sequence of events that might well be placed alongside *Candide* in spirit and poetic power, and that in the excellence of its aims, in wisdom and in utility, compares to *Candide* much as heaven does to hell or the ways of God to the ways of the Seducer.

"And precisely this magnificent panegyric to providence," D. spoke once again, "precisely this blessed endeavor to justify to human beings the ways of God, how dearly it cost our immortal friend! Oh! it embittered his last days, if not in the end even cutting short his precious life. Upon the publication of the *Fragments*, he was prepared to see a whole swarm of writers descend upon him, both professionals and otherwise, with the intention of refuting the *Fragments*, and he considered himself strong enough to defend his guest against all the rude attacks of his opponents. As diverse as the paths were that his adversaries could pursue and, as we can see from what ensued, actually did pursue to combat him, he still believed himself able to fend off all of those who would not distinguish themselves through judiciousness and love of truth. In the end, though the dispute was conducted in a lively way, it remained merely a scholastic spat that, from one side and the other, was supposed to make for many an agreeable and also disagreeable hour [131] but, as he thought, have no influence on the happiness of life. But how much did the scene change after the appearance of *Nathan*! The cabals, once limited to the student dens and bookshops, now penetrated into the private houses of his friends and acquaintances; everyone whispered: Lessing has affronted *Christendom*, even though he had only dared to utter a few reproaches at some Christians and at most *Christianity*. His *Nathan*, we have to confess, basically bestowed a true honor upon Christianity. At what high level of enlightenment and education must a people stand that a man could soar to this lofty disposition, that he could cultivate this subtle familiarity with divine and human things. It seems to me that posterity, at least, will have to think as much, but Lessing's contemporaries did not. Every accusation of self-conceit and one-sided thinking that he, or one of his dramatic *personae*, made against some of his brothers in faith was taken by each as a personal insult issued by Lessing himself. The friend and acquaintance had been welcome everywhere, but now, wherever he turned, he found sullen countenances, reserved, frosty glares, cold welcomes and premature exits; he saw himself abandoned by friends and acquaintances and exposed to all of the persecutions of his pursuers. Strange! Even among the most superstitious French, *Candide*, that libelous tract on providence, did not come close to having the pernicious consequences, did not come close to incurring the hostility that Lessing, in defending providence, incurred through his *Nathan* among the most enlightened Germans. Sad, moreover, are the effects that this wrought on his mind! Lessing who, for all his learned labors, had been the most agreeable socialite, the most joyful table companion, now lost his jovial humor completely, became a drowsy machine without feeling." – I cut him short. Stop this, friend!, spare me this melancholy memory! – "Quite right," he said. "There is no consolation for this melancholy memory, and it also does not belong at all to my present enterprise. I wanted merely to mention what *Lessing* did and suffered for the truths of rational religion and what a contribution he made to all who are its friends and confess to it. [132] Such a man should be too worthy of our reverence to be misused in defense of an error. If you still want your friend to take part in your philosophical conversations,

then at least give to him no worse a disposition than he exhibited himself. Don't have him defending erroneous teachings from which he must, indeed, have been very far removed." – I spoke: Do you thus think then that Lessing, in keeping with his character, would have been pleased to see pantheism or Spinozism overturned by me, regardless of whether I might have done this with good or bad reasons?

"Now there is no doubt that this is not so."

[The truth is] so far from this, that it was much more in his character to take up any persecuted teaching, whether he were attracted to it or not, and muster all of his acumen in order to say at least something in its justification. The most erroneous proposition, the most absurd opinion, need only be contested with shallow reasons and you could be certain that Lessing would have come to its defense. The spirit of investigation was for him everything. He used to say that truth maintained with shallow reasons is prejudice, no less harmful than outright error and at times even more harmful since such a prejudice leads to laziness in inquiry and kills the investigative spirit. I am certain that if the critics of the *Fragments* had defended them with shallow reasons, Lessing would have been the first to contest them.

I have heard this praise of our friend from your lips, I continued, with heartfelt joy. Oh! With all the indifference or thanklessness of the masses, it is a comfort, the greatest comfort to see the remembrance of someone who did such good so freshly preserved and bearing fruit in noble minds. I too praise the zeal with which you adopt the religious principles of this philosopher. With all my heart, I know the uprightness and honesty of his disposition whenever the most important truths of religion are at issue and yet I do not consider it necessary to beg his spirit for forgiveness for engaging it in defense of pantheism. As I knew him, without being attracted to an error, he could zealously prop even it up if the reasons [133] with which one wanted to contest it were not sufficient.

I have also shown in the course of my last lecture that purified pantheism could co-exist quite well with the truths of religion and ethics, that the distinction consists merely in an overly-subtle speculation that does not have the slightest influence upon human actions and human happiness, and that the distinction instead leaves in its place everything that can become practical at all and is of any noticeable consequence in the life or even the opinions of human beings.

Consider here a passage in the theological writings Lessing left behind. It will convince you that Lessing thought in just this way on this point. Admittedly, as I recall, it is a youthful essay, the most essential parts of which he had read to me right at the beginning of our acquaintance. Yet still it at least shows you the turn that he knew, already from early on, to give to this speculation, and, if I am right, a little work that he published just before his death bears patent traces of the very same kind of thinking.[6]

[6] The text Mendelssohn reproduces here is from Lessing's theological *Nachlass* published in 1784. The "little work" that Lessing published just before his death is *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* ("The Education of the Human Race") (1780), and Mendelssohn is referring particularly to §73 of that work.

This passage is from the twelfth essay of his posthumous writings, an essay that he entitled "The Christianity of Reason." I will cite for you the most important propositions from it since it consists entirely of individual propositions that have been found unfinished among his papers. They read:

§1

The unique, most perfect being could occupy himself for all eternity with nothing else than the contemplation of what is most perfect.

§2

He himself is what is most perfect; therefore, for all eternity, God could only think himself.

§3

It is the same for God to represent, to will, and to create. One can therefore say that God also creates everything that he represents.

§4

God can think himself in only two ways; either he thinks all of his perfections at once and himself as the sum-total [134] of these, or he thinks his perfections separately, one isolated from the others, and each divided from itself according to degrees.

§5

God has thought himself for all eternity in all his perfection, that is to say, for all eternity God created a being lacking no perfection that he possessed himself. –

From this, in the propositions that follow, L. seeks to explain through a formulation not without subtlety the mystery of the trinity, or even, as he often flattered himself in his early years, to demonstrate it metaphysically. Of course he came back from this youthful pretension which would not have satisfied even the strictest adherents of the Athanasian Creed. However, one will still recognize the most distinct traces of it here, and for me this is a proof that the essay must be from a very early date. – Lessing continues:

§13

God thought his perfections separately, that is to say, he created beings, each of which has something of his perfections, since, to repeat it once more, each thought is for God a creation.

§14

All of these beings together are called 'the world.'

§15

God could think his perfections in infinitely many ways; therefore, infinitely many worlds could be possible if God did not at all times think what is the most perfect and hence if God had not thought the most perfect way among these ways and thereby made it actual.

§16

The most perfect way of thinking his perfections separately is that way when one thinks them separately according to infinite degrees of more and less, degrees which so follow one upon the other that there is nowhere a leap or a gap between them. [135]

§17

The beings in this world must therefore be ordered according to such degrees. They must constitute a series in which each member always contains all that the lower members contain and yet something more which never, however, reaches the final boundary.

§18

Such a series must be an infinite series and, understood as such, the infinity of the world is incontrovertible.

§19

God creates nothing but simple beings, and the composite is nothing but a consequence of his creation.

§20

Since each of these simple beings has something which the others have, and none can have something that the others would not have, there must be a harmony among these simple beings, on the basis of which everything that transpires among them, that is, in the world, is to be explained.

§21

A fortunate Christian will one day extend the domain of physics up to this point. Yet it will happen only after long centuries, when all of the phenomena in nature have been accounted for, such that nothing more remains to trace them back to their true source.

§22

Since these simple beings are, as it were, limited gods, their perfections must also be similar to the perfections of God, just as parts to the whole.

§23

Belonging among God's perfections is the fact that he is conscious of his perfection and that he can act in accordance with his perfection. Both are, as it were, the seal of his perfections. [136]

§24

Various degrees of consciousness of his perfections and of the capability of acting in accordance with them must also be combined with the various degrees of his perfections.

§25

Beings that have perfections are conscious of their perfections, and possess the faculty of acting in accordance with them are called *moral beings*, that is, the sort of beings that can follow a law.

§26

This law is taken from their own nature, and can be none other than this: *act in accordance with your individual perfections*.

§27

Since it is impossible for a leap to take place within the series of beings, beings that are not distinctly conscious of their perfections must also exist – – – – – – – –

You see, I added finally, that Lessing thought of a pantheism as fully refined as the one I presented, in the best harmony with everything that can have an influence on life and happiness. You see, indeed, that he was on the way even to combining pantheistic concepts with positive religion: and in fact it went as well here as it had with the emanation system of the ancients, a system that was taken up in religion for many centuries and held to be the only orthodox teaching. On the long path that one has to trudge from these overly-subtle speculations to the practical dimension of religion and ethical doctrine, there are many convenient spots where one can steer by a roundabout route back onto the main highway. Just as one miscalculation can be made good and corrected by others, so can something incorrect in the same abstract meditations be quickly made good through others, a small deviation that would have subsequently led us far from the goal can be [137] made better by an ever so slight turn, and one is back on track. Thus, the contemptuousness of sophistry which has ever been the mother, or at least the sustainer, of all the persecution and hatred of religion among men.

[138]

Chapter 16
Elucidation of the concepts of necessity, contingency, independence, and dependence. – Attempt at a new proof for the existence of God on the basis of the incompleteness of self-knowledge.

If a thing is proven to be on hand, its possibility follows of itself. Everything that is actual must also be thought to be possible. Now we have to allow that a contingent, dependent being is on hand, since our own existence is supremely evident, consciousness of our own limitedness is most undeniably evident. We have to concede further that the dependent is not thinkable and, hence, also cannot be on hand without something independent and through all this we saw ourselves compelled to concede the actuality of a necessary, independent being, without which we contingent, dependent beings would not be able to be on hand. Who was it of you who last demanded a clearer unpacking of these terms of art: 'dependent,' 'contingent' and their opposites 'independent' and 'necessary'?

W. "I remember having requested this of you. The word 'dependent' seems to me still to adhere so much to the metaphor, the word 'necessary' still seems to me to convey with it a kind of urgency, a compelling constraint from which it must be freed, for the sense it is used in here. In addition, you also seemed to me to use these two types of speech synonymously and I requested that you help me take note of the difference between them."

Let's see, my son! If a thing *A* is supposed to be actual, must not the proposition *A is actually on hand* amount to a truth?

"To be sure!"

Must it not, therefore, be comprehensible by reason?

W. "By reason or by the senses. Truth must be knowable through the positive power of our faculty of thinking. But the senses are no less a positive power of the soul than reason is."

Indeed! But have we not seen that both rational knowledge and sensory knowledge flow from precisely the same source and that all sensory knowledge can be resolved into rational knowledge? [139] If we know a proposition to be true by means of the senses, then the subject of that proposition must be thought with the sort of individual determinations from which the predicate inevitably flows. The senses do not unpack and develop these determinations and comprehend them through the concept of space or of time to which they refer the fact. But it must be possible for reason to develop these individual determinations, set them apart from

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one another, and transform the proposition known in a sensory way into a proposition of reason. '*Here is a tree*!' We know this by means of the senses and it is also a truth known in a sensory way: '*A tree is actually on hand here*.' Every determination that must be added to the concept of the tree: the soil in which it is planted, the tiny seed from which it has grown, air, sunshine, rain, and everything that otherwise contributed to the fact that the tree has actually come to be – all this we comprehend by means of the word 'here,' by means of the relation to a place in space, in which all these determinations have come together. To be sure, it is not possible for our subjective reason to develop all these circumstances and more detailed determinations. But it must very well be possible for reason, objectively considered, to set them apart from one another and transform them into distinct concepts. – '*Today we have a bright and cheery spring morning.*' The temporal determination '*today*' encompasses in turn all the individual circumstances that are past and have contributed to the fact that this spring morning has come to be bright and cheery. But if the soul's source of knowledge is supposed to be one and the same, then reason, objectively considered, must be able to differentiate and distinctly cite those more precise determinations that have gone before and the extent to which they have contributed to the cheeriness of this morning. In a word, every proposition known in a sensory way must be able, in and for itself, to be resolved into a truth of reason, the subject of which contains all the individual determinations such that, among these determinations, the predicate of actuality is ascribed to it; is this not clear?

"It is perfectly clear!"

Therefore, too, if the proposition '*A is actually on hand*' is a truth known in a sensory way, then it must be possible for reason to think such conditions accruing to the subject, such that, under these conditions, the predicate of actuality pertains to it and the connection of the subject with the predicate becomes intelligible. Now, [140] this can happen in two sorts of ways. Either the conditions themselves under which the proposition becomes a truth of reason contain the actuality of a thing different from *A* and presuppose the existence of that very thing, as was the case here for the actuality of the tree or this beautiful day. Without the presupposition of all the efficient causes that have brought forth the tree or the bright and cheery morning, their actuality is not comprehensible in and for itself. Things of this sort are called 'dependent,' insofar as their actuality cannot be rationally comprehended without the presupposition of other things, different from them. Their existence thus flows, not from their thinkability, but from the actuality of another thing, bound up with it. Insofar as their being actually on hand is no consequence of the ability to think them, they are called 'contingent'; but insofar as the existence of another thing grounds their actuality, they are, one says, 'dependent'; their existence depends upon the existence of a thing different from them without which their existence cannot be rationally comprehended.

Now we have to concede further that the sum of all contingent beings, even taken together as infinite, cannot make any actual existence comprehensible in a rationally satisfactory way. The question is postponed but not resolved. In the end, as in the beginning, we still must always presuppose, under the conditions of the subject, the actuality of other things that, should they be just as dependent, just as contingent, do not bring reason a step further and complicate much more than resolve the

comprehensibility of the proposition. We have therefore been compelled to have recourse to the existence of an independent and necessary being. An independent being the actuality of which is thinkable without presupposing a thing different from it; a necessary being, the thinkability of which alone is sufficient to justify that it is actually on hand; a being that is actual because it can be *thought*, because it is possible, and this was the second case in which the proposition '*A* is actually on hand' can be a truth, namely, if no actuality different from the subject is among its conditions, if the mere thinkability suffices to justify its existence. [141]

In this manner, I think, the identifying characteristics of the contingent, dependent, necessary, and independent have been set apart from one another in a sufficiently distinct way. Insofar as the actuality of another thing, different from an entity, may not be presupposed for its actuality, it is called 'independent'; however, insofar as its actuality flows from its thinkability, insofar as the opposite, *such an entity is not actually on hand*, cannot be thought in and for itself, necessity is ascribed to it and we say: 'God is a necessary being,' i.e., the existence of God flows from his thinkability and the opposite or God's not being on hand is in and for itself not thinkable. Is such an entity possible? There can be no further question of this, once we have been led by the patent conviction of our own existence through a correct chain of inference to the existence of such an entity. The concept must contain truth, the concept to which we have been brought by the positive power of our own faculty of thinking. If something contingent is on hand, then something necessary must also be on hand, and be all that much more thinkable.

I will attempt to conduct this proof in another way as well, in a way that, as far as I know, no philosopher has touched on. Hence, take notice, my sons! and remind me whenever, out of predilection for my thoughts, I might permit myself some false step.

In addition to the immediate feeling of my own existence (that is, as we have seen, beyond all doubt), I also presuppose the following perception as indubitable: I am not merely what I distinctly know of myself or, what amounts to the same, there is more to my existence than I might consciously observe of myself; and even what I know of myself is in and for itself capable of far greater development, greater distinctness, and greater completeness than I am able to give it. This observation is, it seems to me, no less undeniably evident [than the consciousness of my own existence]. As a perception of the inner sense, it has its subjective certainty and since, with respect to my self, my own I is also the subject of thoughts, the predicate 'immediately known' can be attributed to me as well. That I do not know everything that pertains to my existence can be no deception of the senses, [142] no illusion. For in the first place we are not transposing something known internally onto an external object; we have no intention of connecting the make-up of one sense with that of others, of inferring from *often* to *always*, all of which were sources of sensory illusion (as we saw in the Preliminary Knowledge), and this illusion would then, indeed, itself prove that we are not properly familiar with ourselves and, hence, that there would be much that is actual in us of which we are not conscious. In fact it would not be possible for either our body or our soul to be on hand if they were merely what we distinctly observe of them.

Now I maintain not only that everything possible must be thought to be possible by some thinking being, but also that everything actual must be thought to be actual by some thinking being. What no thinking being represents to itself as possible is also in fact not possible and, in precisely the same way, what is thought by no thinking being to be actual cannot in fact also actually be on hand.

These propositions already appear plausible to sound human understanding. Every possible concept is thought as the alteration of a subject, as a thought in a thinking being. It must therefore at least have an ideal existence, that is, it must be a true concept of some sort of thinking being and this was the first half of our proposition: Each possibility must be thought as a possibility.

But also each actuality, if it is supposed to be true, must be known and conceived to be true by some sort of being. A concept must correspond to the thing; each object must be depicted in some sort of subject, each paradigm imitated in some sort of mirror. A thing without a concept has no truth; truth without some sort of entity assured of it does not bring the slightest bit of evidence with it and is thus no truth.

If these propositions are allowed, then it obviously follows that an entity must be on hand which represents to itself in the most distinct, purest, and most thoroughgoing manner everything that pertains to my existence. No limited knowledge would contain everything that pertains to my actual existence. A contingent being's consciousness and distinct discernment, indeed, that of all contingent beings altogether, do not reach as far as the existence of a single speck of the sun. In its [143] actuality lie infinitely many characteristics that all contingent beings taken together fail to conceive as distinctly as possible, whether in terms of scope or intensity. In a word, no truth can be thought to be possible by contingent beings with the highest degree of knowledge, no actuality can be thought to be actual [by them] in the most perfect way. There must, therefore, be *one* thinking being, *one* intellect that thinks in the most perfect way the sum-total of all possibilities as possible and the sum-total of all actualities as actual, i.e., that in the most distinct, complete, and thoroughgoing manner represents them all to itself in their greatest possible development, with regard to their coordination as well as their subordination. *There is an infinite intellect, and so forth*.

What could still be unclear to some extent in this chain of inferences is the proposition that everything actual must be thought by a thinking being. I indeed recognize, many might say, that everything actual cannot be other than thinkable. But how does it follow from this that it must in fact be thought by some being? Does this not entail inferring from possibility to actuality, from what *can be* to what *happens*? One thus seems to beg the question or to slip in what should first be proven. Is it not something like this that still creates some doubt for you?

"Precisely this," was the answer, unanimously.

It seems to me that here the word 'can,' thanks to its multiple meanings, once again introduces confusion into the concepts. We must steer clear of the word if we want to avoid its snares. – If it is said of a thing, that it is *capable of* something, can *do* something or can *suffer* something, that it has a capability, facility, predisposition for something, does this not mean a certain possibility that we ascribe to it?

"Nothing else! But one distinguishes remote, near and the nearest possibilities –".

Quite right! But however near it is, even if it be the nearest, it nonetheless still always remains 'a mere possibility,' as the logicians call it, a possibility, nothing of which has yet become actual. For example, elasticity or the capability to be stretched is attributed to the air that surrounds us, inasmuch as it is not yet stretched. The capacity of standing up is ascribed to me as I sit here, before I actually exercise it. Thus, in all these cases [144] mere possibilities are asserted as predicates of subjects. But how can mere possibilities be on hand as actual predicates?

"This seems inconceivable, to be sure."

Do we not contradict ourselves if we attribute to a thing that is actually on hand, as part of its make-up, something that is not actually on hand, if we hold a mere possibility to be a predicate of something actual?

"To be sure, it would appear."

And, nonetheless, the complete set of everything with which human beings are acquainted is full of these apparent contradictions, of possibilities, dispositions, capacities that are remote or near, of larger or smaller capabilities, talents, and so forth, by means of which things actually on hand are designated and distinguished from one another. How does this happen? Should we reproach the entire mass of human knowledge as absurd on account of this?

"Not at all; a difficulty merely with the words seems to have lurked, hidden and deviously, in the background, a difficulty that we perhaps for now lack (to avail myself of a similar, suspicious expression) the *capability* to discern."

On target, my son! It is a mere difficulty with the words, one that we have to clear from our path in order for every appearance of contradiction to disappear. At bottom, everything possible, insofar as it is merely possible, is not an objective predicate of things. If we attribute a possibility to any object at all as part of its make-up, then we are merely saying that, on the basis of the present make-up of the object, it can also be conceived how, in other circumstances, it would take on that property that was ascribed to it as possible. To ascribe expandability to gold, elasticity to air, and the capability to walk to someone sitting, means merely to declare of the gold that, on the basis of its present, actual make-up, it can be conceived how in other circumstances it would be actually expanded; or to assert of the air that being stretched would not contradict its present make-up; just as to maintain of someone sitting that his tools for moving, now applied to sitting, would make him stand up or go if directed by other causes of movement. In an assertion of this sort, what is actually [145] on hand still lies at bottom in every case and the possibility ascribed to it is the thought that under different circumstances the present make-up would be modified in another way. Is this not crystal clear?

"There is no objection to this, I would think."

Mere possibilities thus cannot be ascribed as features of the objective make-up or predicates to things if mere possibilities are not supposed to be at the same time actually on hand which is obviously absurd, of course. But on the basis of the present condition, on the basis of the actual make-up of a thing, the thought can arise for a thinking subject, that in other circumstances a different make-up would accrue to it and that therefore this different make-up of it is thinkable. All possibilities

therefore have their ideal existence in the thinking subject and they are, as thinkable, ascribed by this subject to the object. A possibility that is not thought is a veritably impossible thing [*ein wahres Unding*]. If in a thing something thinkable is not supposed to be actually thought by any thinking being, something to be distinguished is not supposed to be actually distinguished by anyone, something that can be alleged is not supposed to be alleged by any thinking subject, then either the merely possible is assumed at the same time to be actually on hand or one is combining words whose concepts contradict one another.

"Indeed! The concern that made their proposition still doubtful to us seems now to have been happily removed."

Thus, everything actual must not only be *thinkable* but also *thought* by some being or other. To every real existence, there corresponds an ideal existence in some subject or other; to each thing, a representation. Without being known, nothing is knowable; without being noticed, no characteristic mark, without a concept no object is actually on hand. Is this conceded?

"How can we do otherwise?"

This agreement between a thing and [its] concept knows no exception. Each characteristic mark, each distinguishing sign of the thing, just as it is to be found in the latter, must be thought in all its truth by some thinking being, with the highest possible distinctness, completeness, and exhaustive detail. As long as a single characteristic mark remains behind, one that is nowhere noticed, [146] a degree of development remains undeveloped, something to be distinguished is not distinguished. In a word, with the slightest lack of agreement between a thing and concept, we lapse again into the absurdity of assuming something merely possible as an objective predicate of the actual.

"All this was granted."

And now there is nothing easier than the application of this to the previously doubted inferences. My own existence is undeniable for me. It is equally impossible for me to deny the fact that inherent in my actual existence are characteristics and constitutive features that I do not consciously know and that even those of which I am conscious do not by far have in my conception the perfection that pertains to them in the thing. They are neither as true nor as pure nor as complete, exhaustive, adequate. In a word, between concept and thing, if I look merely at my knowledge of myself, the most perfect harmony is not to be found, the necessity of which we have just proven. Further, I cannot dispute the fact that a limited being, indeed, that the sum-total of all limited beings – whether finite or infinite in number – does not suffice to know my constitutive features in a way that harmonizes with the thing.

Whoever is only familiar to a degree with the connection among truths and with the unfathomable depth of all knowledge will confess that none of them can be known in their greatest perfection and with the most distinct consciousness unless the entire sum total of them is discerned to precisely the same degree, with precisely the same truth, certainty, distinctness, and completeness.

There must therefore necessarily be *one* thinking being, *one* intellect that represents to itself not only me together with all my constitutive features, characteristics, and distinguishing signs, but the sum total of all possibilities as possible, the sum

total of all actualities as actual, in a word, the sum total and connection of all truths in their greatest possible development and does so in the most distinct, complete, and exhaustively detailed way. *There is an infinite intellect*.

However, in the foregoing [chapters], it has already been sufficiently elaborated that there cannot be discernment without activity, knowledge without approval or disapproval, infinite intellect without [147] the most perfect will.

In this way, then, we would have a new scientific proof for God's existence on the basis of the imperfection of our self-knowledge. Test it well, test these thoughts, my trusted ones. It seems to me as fruitful as it is thoroughgoing and fundamental. The chain of inference we used consists of the following members:

Everything actual is actual in its utter completeness.

The exhaustive detail of the *concept* in some thinking being or other corresponds to the completeness of the thing.

Complete and exhaustive concepts can only be found in a perfect intellect and a perfect intellect does not exist without a perfect will, nor supreme discernment without the freest choice and most effective expression of power.

[148]

Chapter 17
The *a priori* Grounds of Proof of the Existence of a supremely perfect, necessary, independent Being.

The concept of the necessary, as it was developed in the last lecture, could easily set a bold thinker, like Descartes, on the track of discovering an *a priori* proof for the existence of such a being. If the actuality of a necessary being depends merely on its possibility, if there is a firmly-grounded transition from the thinkability of the necessary to the actual existence of the same, then perhaps human reason will be allowed to discover this transition and to blaze a new trail to the truth so dear to it. Without presupposing an actual existence, even its own existence, so little is it subject to doubt that human beings would set out from the definition, without any experiential propositions of outer or inner sense, and would arrive with sure steps at the truth *that there is a God!*

Bold and unprecedented it would be, this great step. In the entire compass of human knowledge, there is no example of this kind of inference. Everywhere the inference is from possibility to possibility, or from actuality to actuality. Real existence outside the soul is interconnected [*unter sich verbindet*], as is ideal existence within it; things correspond to one another, just as concepts do. If one concept renders another necessary, then one thing will also have another as its consequence; thus, the necessary connection between ideal beings which we discover by reason can also be applied to real beings outside of us. But nowhere will an example be found of the inference from a *concept* directly to a *thing*, from ideal existence immediately to being that is really and objectively on hand, as is supposed to happen here with respect to the necessary being.

Yet this rarity or rather this uniqueness cannot cause any hesitation in our case since it is precisely the character of the truth here. Since no more than one unique substance of this nature can be on hand; since, outside of this unique substance, [149] there is no thing whose actuality stands in a properly inferential connection with its thinkability, there can also be only the one unique case where this kind of proof would be appropriate. In the entire region of all human knowledge, this case must be unique, without precedent and without being an example, if the path is to lead to truth.

In order to find it [this path], Descartes attempted substituting equivalent concepts. In the place of the necessary, he put the infinite, the most perfect being. It is

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3_17,

obvious that the necessary being cannot have any alterable limitations and hence must possess all perfections in the highest degree. Thus, in the idea of the necessary being lies the sum-total of all perfect properties that can accrue to a being. Now, Descartes inferred further, existence is obviously a perfect property of things; therefore, the concept of the necessary also encompasses in itself the perfection of existence; therefore, the necessary must also actually be on hand. – In this way, through a subtle conceptual twist we would have discovered the *unique* transition that connects the realm of actuality with the realm of possibility and leads from concept to thing.

Too hasty, cries Leibniz to his bold predecessor; no doubt, the leap that you have made in this transition poses no danger, but reason should learn to walk and not leap. If we are convinced of the existence of the necessary on other grounds, then its possibility follows on its own. If, however, the existence of that being is supposed to be inferred from its possibility, then we first have to prove this [i.e., its possibility]. It must first be proven on other grounds that the concept of the necessary, infinite, or most perfect being is true and does not combine characteristics that cancel one another.

Fortunately, what is lacking here can be easily supplied and the gaps filled in. If characteristics should contradict each other, then the one must cancel what the other posits, the one must deny what the other affirms of the very same subject. Now all realities in the highest degree are affirmed of the necessary being, and every lack and limitation denied. All positive predicates are ascribed to it, and all negative ones removed. Here, therefore, there can be nothing contradictory, nothing canceling one another [150] to be concerned about. All perfections in the highest degree are also compatible to the highest degree, harmonizing in the most perfect melody, and thus, through their union, incapable of producing contradiction, unthinkability, and the highest discord: the opposite of truth. This claim is grounded on another of Leibniz's doctrines, that all perfections are affirmative characteristics, just as conversely all affirmative predicates of things are perfections. Now if the unification of all affirmative predicates or perfections is nothing unthinkable, and if existence obviously belongs to the sum-total of all perfections, then the conclusion that existence is inseparable from the concept of the infinite or of the supremely perfect is correct. Everything finite can, as a concept, be true without actual existence being ascribed to it. By contrast, the concept of the infinite, the limitless, the most perfect, would necessarily be untrue if it were supposed not to exist. – And so here, once again, the pure scientific argument for the existence of God would stand, it would stand here unshaken, grounded on its own evidence.

Not at all, say some opponents of this kind of proof; you are still building, as always, on a ground whose firmness you have yet to assess properly. You arbitrarily form an abstract concept for yourselves, and attribute to it every property that merely permits of being thought. We cannot deny you the freedom to do this and let the concept hold. However, having scarcely finished smuggling this surreptitiously into your argument, you snatch at existence and declare: To make this bundle complete, we must take this property with us and impart actual existence to the concept. Is this way of proceeding not sycophantic?

Nothing less, it seems to me. Contrary to all accusations of this kind, I believe I can justify this way of proceeding.

First, the abstract concepts are not merely arbitrary. They must at least be true, and this truth does not depend upon our arbitrary choice. They must have, as modifications of our thinking being, an ideal existence, they must be thinkable in order to be thought. Now we say in addition: A limited being can be thought as a modification of myself without ascribing actual existence to it. It [151] can have an ideal existence and real existence can be denied it. It can be *a mere concept* without being *a thing*. The necessary being, by contrast, either cannot be thought (thus having no truth even as a modification of myself) or I must at least think it as actually on hand. Either it is the concept and the thing at once or it is neither the former nor the latter. This being can by no means be a mere concept without the thing; this being cannot be thought as a mere modification of our power of thinking. Thus we still have to prove the thinkability of this concept and we are thereupon forced to think such a being as actually existing. Outside of ideal existence, which pertains even to a finite being as something true, real existence must also be ascribed to the infinite. I find in this procedure nothing dishonest, nothing surreptitious, as its opponents allege.

That the concept of the infinite is thinkable has already been elaborated in a previous discussion in keeping with Leibniz. I believe that I can demonstrate the same thing in a different, even more perspicuous way.

All truth must be knowable and, to be sure, the purer the truth is, the greater the intellect that grasps and conceives it, the more perfect the knowledge, the more perfect the knowing being.

The purest truth can only be grasped and conceived by the most perfect intellect. Where there is the highest reach of knowledge, there is the supreme power of knowledge. Only an infinite power comprehends the truth in its complete purity.

Now the purest truth is indisputably a thinkable concept; thus, there must also be an intellect that alone can grasp it, thus, too, the supreme intellect, an infinite power of thinking, is also not an unthinkable concept. Should the marks of this concept cancel one another out, the purest truth would itself have to be something contradictory, and this is absurd.

But how? Does this concept of the supremely perfect also remain thinkable without the perfection of existence? Can the sum-total of all realities be thought without the reality of actual existence? If this is not so, then our conclusion stands firm, then the supremely perfect must also actually be on hand.

"Even here there is something surreptitious," the opponents protest. "You assume [152] existence as a property of the thing joined to all its possible properties, in order to call it into existence. You consider existence, by virtue of your scholastic definition, a complement of the essence (*complementum essentiae*), as, so to speak, an addition to the possibility of a thing. Because we make assertions about existence in speech in the same way as we do about the properties of things, because we say that a thing is actual just as we say that a number is even, a figure is round, you then assume that existence is of the same make-up as the rest of the properties and characteristic marks of things, and you build the structure of your

inference upon this presupposition. Yet this presupposition itself cannot be granted to you. Existence is not a mere property, not an addition, not a complement, it is rather a positing of all the properties and characteristic marks of the thing, without which these remain merely abstracted concepts.

"Existence must rather be defined, they go on – –"[1] However, existence might remain undefined. You know how disinclined I am, when it comes to the same perception of the inner sense, to wrap it up in words. It is enough that we all nearly have the same representation alongside these words. For all of us, the concept has arisen in similar ways inasmuch as we sought out a characteristic mark that is common to all our own actions and passions, and because this characteristic mark has such universality, it is only with difficulty, if at all, that it can be further analyzed or be reduced to its component parts. Be that as it may, it is nevertheless still right for our opponents to maintain that existence has its own identifying marks by means of which it is distinguished from all the characteristic marks and constitutive features of things, and that we may not help ourselves to it so baldly in order, as it were, to enumerate completely the sum-total of all the properties of the most perfect being.

I can concede this. Let actual existence be not a property but instead the positing of all the properties of a thing, or else let it be something indefinable that is familiar to all of us. It is enough that I can think the contingent without this positing. I can omit existence from the idea of the contingent without canceling the idea itself out. It remains a concept without a thing. Such is not the case, however, with regard to the necessary being. I cannot [153] separate existence from the idea of that being without annihilating the idea itself. I must think the concept and the thing, or let go of the concept itself. On this important distinction everything rests, and this distinction rests in no way on an arbitrary definition; it follows from the concept itself and cannot be cast into doubt by the most obdurate of adversaries.

In an earlier writing[2] I advised anyone whom indefinable existence still causes hesitation to steer clear of this word and to begin from nonbeing, which seems to pose less difficulty. "What is not," so it is said in that writing, "must be either impossible or merely possible. In the first case, its inner determinations must contradict themselves, that is, they must affirm and deny the same predicate of the same subject at the same time. However, in the latter case, they will not, to be sure, contain any contradiction but on the basis of them it will not be intelligible why that same thing should be rather than not be. One [determination] as well as another will be able to obtain with the essential part of the same thing, on the grounds of which the thing is called possible. The existence of such a thing does not belong to its inner possibility, not to its essence or even to its properties, and it is therefore a mere contingency (*modus*), the actuality of which cannot be conceived other than through another actuality. For a contingency is a determination that neither follows nor can be conceived from the mere possibility, [and] the actuality of it [such a determination]

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[1] Evidently, Mendelssohn cuts off his imaginary opponents at this point and interjects the ensuing remark.

[2] *Von der Evidenz* ["On Evidence in Metaphysical Sciences" (1764), see *Philosophical Writings*, 281 (translation slightly altered)].

can be explained in no other way than on the basis of another actuality. – Such an existence is dependent, not self-sufficient. This requires no further proof. – Now such an existence cannot pertain to the most perfect being, since it would contradict its essence since everyone recognizes that an independent existence is a greater perfection than a dependent one. Hence, the proposition 'the supremely perfect being has a contingent existence' contains an obvious contradiction. The supremely perfect being is thus either actual, or it contains a contradiction. Because it cannot be merely possible, as was proven before, consequently, nothing remains for it except actuality or impossibility."

In short, as mere thoughts, contingent beings can [154] still be thought without actual existence; with the predicate of nonbeing they contain no contradiction. The idea of the same thing can be a mere thought, a concept without the thing, alteration of a thinking being without an objective existence. Your essence does not combine all of the affirmative characteristic marks, and it combines none of them in the highest degree. You could have these thoughts and omit the affirmative characteristic mark of existence from them. The necessary being, on the contrary, combines all affirmative characteristic marks and constitutive features to the highest degree. One of them cannot be thought without all of the rest. Therefore, the infinite being, without the affirmative predicate of existence, is something contradictory. It can either not be thought at all, or not otherwise than with the predicate of actual existence. The representation itself, the idea of the necessary being is an absurd thought as long as we separate existence from it. Either we think the concept and the thing at the same time or the concept itself vanishes. Either we cannot think the necessary being at all or we must ascribe actual existence to it.

"But do you not in the end," the adversaries continue, "infer from your thought to actuality, from your capacity or incapacity to conceive to the nature of things? It is said that the necessary being must actually be on hand because a human being cannot think of it otherwise. Is this also in keeping with our short-sightedness? Who gives us the guarantee that that thing which we must *think as actual* also *is actually on hand?*"

I answer: How fortunate it would be for us if we are given so much already from the start, if our opponents grant that human beings *must think* a divinity as *actually on hand*. The step would be of great importance. At that point, everything would be won for the entire system of human discernments, dispositions, and actions, for what more can a human being do than to seek conviction through human powers and to act in accordance with his conviction? But for now, as a favor to speculative philosophy, I would go a step further and, to what has been admitted thus far, I would add that not only the short-sighted human being alone but every thinking being, whatever the scope and field of vision of its intellectual powers, must think the necessary being to be actually on hand. The opposite is unthinkable, not only for us but in and [155] for itself. Something that is contradictory, that cancels and annihilates itself, cannot be thought by any thinking being. If the proposition 'A *is not actual*' is unthinkable and thus not true, then either the subject A is unthinkable or the opposite proposition 'A *is actually on hand*' must be admitted; it must therefore be the truth. Now it is proven that the negative proposition '*the necessary being*

is not actual' would be unthinkable since the negative predicate contradicts the subject outright. This proposition thus can be thought to be true neither by us nor by any thinking being. The opposite of this or the affirmative proposition 'The necessary being is actually on hand' must be accepted by every thinking being; it is a consequence of the positive power of thinking and, hence, the *truth*. And now the victory for our side would be complete. For what more could we wish for than to prove that the proposition '*the supremely perfect being is actually on hand*' is a consequence of our positive power of thinking and thus a truth not merely subjectively but also objectively irrefutable? The assurance that all thinking beings, by virtue of their power of thinking, agree in one proposition of reason, provides the utmost conviction of its truth. What all rational beings must think in just this way and not otherwise is true in just this way and not otherwise. Whoever demands more than this conviction seeks something of which he has no conception, something of which he can never attain a conception, and has himself to blame when he finds in the end that his efforts were in vain.

Let us summarize the result of our concluding discourse in a few words. In order to maintain through reason the actuality of a thing, the truth and supreme goodness of that thing must be given. The former as a requirement of the faculty of knowledge, the latter as a requirement of the faculty of approving. Truth makes it into a *concept* capable of being thought, into a modification of the thinking being, giving to it an ideal presence. Supreme goodness makes it into a *thing*, imparting actual existence to it. *Everything that is has truth and supreme goodness* just as, conversely, everything that has truth and supreme goodness must also *actually* be.

Contingent beings possess what is requisite for the faculty of thinking, they have truth, but they do not under every circumstance also possess supreme goodness. They can be thought as mere thoughts, as *concepts*, and modifications [156] of the thinking being, without actual existence as a thing. Because they are only conditionally the best (*secundum quid*), their existence as a thing depends on this condition. As soon as the circumstances or the conditions of time and space bring it about that a contingent thing attains the highest good, as soon as *somewhere* and at *sometime* it becomes best, then it actually comes about, and the *thing* also corresponds to the *concept*, actuality corresponds to the ideal existence.

The necessary being is, however, in and for itself supremely perfect; it does not depend on circumstances and conditions; it possesses not only everything required in order to be thought, but must also be thought as actual by every thinking being. It is absolutely unthinkable as a concept without the thing, as a modification without its own existence, as possible without actuality, because it is just as perfect as it is true, under every circumstance and condition, just as necessarily actual as it is necessarily possible, no less necessary as a *thing* than as a *thought*.

And in the intellect of this supreme being, the contingent is necessary conceptually but not as a thing; independent as a truth but dependent on time and space in regard to its goodness and perfection. As soon as the circumstances of time and space are fulfilled and the conditions on which the contingent depends become actual, the existence of the contingent becomes the truth and it *comes about*. It belongs among these conditions that the contingent, *then* and *there*, is also the best

and thus becomes not only an object of divine knowledge but also of divine approval. The knowledge of the infinite is vital to the highest degree, its approval efficacious to the highest degree. As soon as the contingent becomes an object of divine approval, it becomes actual. What God thinks as the best, exists! *He speaks and it becomes, he commands and it exists*.

Thus, it is no immodest presumption on the part of a son of the earth if he dares to infer from his finitude to the existence of the infinite, from his limitedness to the actuality of the supremely perfect. It is utterly befitting for the immortal spirit of a human being to believe himself so related to the divinity that from each of his thoughts a way is to be found to the divinity. Notwithstanding his short-sightedness, he is granted the privilege of discerning [157] the great truth that he himself depends upon the divinity in a twofold relation as *concept* and as *thing*, that as a *concept* he has been an object of divine knowledge from eternity and as *a thing* he has received actuality at the very moment that the conditions of space and time made him into a worthy object of divine approval; when *somewhere* and at *some time*, belonging to the *best*, he himself became *best*.

Remarks and Additions

One of the most rigorous philosophers of this era, who was friendly enough to read through these essays, shared some remarks with me about them that I will not withhold from my readers.[1]

Page 32: "can only disapprove." This remark is quite correct and fruitful! Yet could one not explain it through the following? – As soon as we have learned to judge of distances through comparison of feeling, etc., the visual and auditory representation is not at all *in* but instead *outside* our body – there on the wall – there in the lane. If, however, the stimulus is not so strong that it borders on pain and thus belongs to feeling (to which the sensation of those born blind who see for the first time must also be reckoned), we will know nothing of the actual sense organ. If we did not notice the boundaries or did not ascertain it by holding our hands in front of us, we would not know where sight and hearing were actually situated. We do not have any sensation of the inverted images in both eyes, and still less of the stimulus of the nerves that continues on to the brain: everything seems to be [part of] an illumination that is not merely within us but also extends far around us. So it is only by covering the ear that we ascertain whether we can hear with this, or with that, or with both ears. – Here, then, the illusion regarding the spatial is obvious and, consequently, the representation of place does not indicate that the sensation is concealed *there itself* in the parts set apart from one another.

Page 38: "not binding." Very well explained! and in fact the image in the water or in the mirror was just as unstable and illusory as that of the rainbow, since it also only relates to the position of the [160] viewer. Thus, to speak generally, we tend to suppose an object is *there* where the straight line of the ray touching our eye leads. Hence, we will err in a place when the ray is broken. If a ray we call coloured is split in this way and comes in contact with us, we tend to presume a certain property of the surface or of the transparent matter of a body [and] thus we ascribe the colour to that place from which the ray comes in a straight line to us. – The process of correction is, as always, that prescribed in the text.

[1] The philosopher to whom Mendelssohn is referring is J.A.H. Reimarus, son of the "Fragmentist" H.S. Reimarus; see the Translators' Introduction, footnote one. Page numbers in these "Remarks and Additions" refer to pages of the *Jubiliäumsausgabe*, Band 3.2.

M. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*,
Studies in German Idealism 12, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0418-3,

Page 42. If the *lasting* sensory impressions in the brain and what is pretended of their use could otherwise be proven, Helvetius (whom I have not read) might yet say in his defence that we perhaps secretly attribute a specific image to each word that is supposed to indicate a universal concept and that we do just this when we represent it to ourselves *intuitively* since we cannot, for example, represent to ourselves a tree or a human *in genere*. Now, as concerns words that do not admit of images – signs of combination, separation, and relation, and so forth, such as =, +, ÷, ∧, √, : and the like which Abbé de l'Épée also expresses for deaf-mutes with his sign language.[2] – It is undeniable that, even without words, an abstracted concept already lies in every memory. The deaf-mute is as familiar with Voltaire's face as Voltaire himself is, recognizing it, presented from left or right or from the front, as the same person since the images of the senses only agree in general. Though not signified through words, the same melody is recognized even by those who do not understand the common signs of the notes: it might be sung in a higher or lower tone, more slowly or more quickly, played on violin, clavier, flute, or bells, which are still very different sensory impressions. – What then do words contribute to abstraction or distinct thought for which they would appear to be so necessary? It seems to me that they serve to enclose abstracted concepts (that would otherwise drift indeterminately) in certain boundaries by means of which species, genus, class, degree, property, relation, and so forth are distinguished and determined (e.g., human, animal, body, thing; hut, house, [161] dwelling; hot, burning, and so forth). Hence, language is surely a splendid gift without which we would be kept from enjoying not only communication but also comprehension of determinate concepts and, thus, thinking in a distinct way. The visible signs of l'Épée, or of his Viennese apprentice whom Nicolai describes, are much less perfect since they cannot be distinguished so determinately (e.g., together or next to one another, combined, connected, glued, pasted, nailed, attached, and so forth). If, after having been taught the language, the deaf-mute could tell something of his previous manner of thinking – though one says that they preserve no distinct recollection of their previous actions – then, I believe, they would come rather close to the animal – with mostly individual representations – although the faculty of comparison, proper to the power of reason, is already secretly at work – and with immediate connections of consequences, relations, and the like.

Page 44: "not thinkable without something enduring." I once hastily looked at something in the *Museum about the I* which I put aside for further consideration and which I have since neglected.[3] As far as I then understood, and can now recall, the author wanted to arouse doubt in the following way about the certitude of our enduring. – Our consciousness of personality or of enduring rests only on recollection or supposed recollection of what has been previously sensed. If this memory is extinguished, then we cannot convince ourselves that we are the same being that

[2] Charles-Michel de l'Épée, 1712–89, a pioneer in the education of the deaf.

[3] Jakob Mauvillon, "Ueber das Ich, in Briefen an Hrn. Prof. Tiedemann. Zweiter Brief" *Deutsches Museum* 2 (1778): 395–419.

existed in the former state and experienced that alteration: if, through madness, another series of ideas arises in us, the human being believes himself to be another being, a king or an animal, even an utterly lifeless thing, a barleycorn, and so forth. Now if, conversely, one were to insert another thinking being into the container of ideas of the previous person who represents his images to that thinking being, then the latter will believe himself to be the very same being who formerly experienced that and now recalls it. Every piece of the container of ideas can be substituted for others meanwhile and, as a consequence, everything can be altered; if it has merely occurred so gradually that roughly the same order remains or the same image is reflected, as in running water, then the effect will remain identical. Accordingly, the imagined consciousness of a being enduring in us [162], which would be the abiding subject of alteration, could be an illusion! – I would not know how to answer this if I did not believe myself to have demonstrated that it is impossible for enduring impressions or similar alterations in parts separate from one another but placed together to exhibit the appearances of memory, since the former [i.e., the impressions] must necessarily be individual, local, and heaped together in innumerable quantities, but the latter [i.e. memories] call us back to an *abstraction* from what was seen or heard, and so forth.

One might permit me to add a few words to my friend's remark in order to illuminate them better for myself. I do not at all promise much clarification of such adventurous hypotheses, since one obviously supposes the possibility of impossible things in order to investigate what the result would be. In my estimation, such hypotheses serve more for amusement, and maybe for the exercise of wit or the power of invention, than for the discovery of the truth. What would result if we could place the head of a lion on the trunk of a hare, or if the ground should suddenly became lighter than air, or if we could on a whim impart life and sensation to a statue, or if we could remove the entire nervous system from one body and implant it in another, similarly de-nerved body? – The hypothesis of the *Museum* seems to me something from a world of fairies.

If, as some philosophers would have it, the soul stands there before its container and has nothing more to do than merely to read off the signs and impressions it finds there, then of course, it matters little which container of letters or signs it is placed before. It can quite readily be moved from one to another and carry on its business without difficulty, just as a typesetter can with equal facility set up the writings of a Reimarus or of a Schwedenborg provided only that the handwriting is equally legible. But this, it seems to me, is not the way the soul of a living thing is constituted. It does not merely have to *trans-literate* [*abzusetzen*] but must also, so to speak, *translate*, transcribing, explaining, and interpreting from the idiom of the body into its mental language. The soul must therefore be thoroughly familiar with the turns-of-phrase and usages of the original manuscript, and must be, as it were, generated, nourished, raised, and tutored along with the author which the soul [163] calls *its* body, if the soul is to understand him correctly and translate him faithfully. In a new soul-container, the soul is not at home, but among a foreign people: it does not understand and is not understood.

If the Almighty should join another soul to the body I now call mine then, one asks, how would the newly-betrothed pair behave?

To the initial proposal, I would answer much like the comic poet's penny-pinching tutor did to the proposal of his smitten charge: *how much does she bring with her*?[4] – The new soul that is supposed to become one with my body surely cannot be so utterly bare; it must have already acquired something somewhere or otherwise received something for a dowry. Empty of all concepts, it would not suit this new body, it would not understand its language, would not have the least capacity for it, and there would be just as little possibility of any connection between them, if it were not perfectly identical to the soul that now inhabits my body. Only this soul agrees in all its characteristics with my body in the most exact way and, without the most exact harmony, no connection between body and soul can be thought. – When someone investigating nature promotes some unnatural combination, he can, at least now and then, compel nature to bring forth a mongrel in the place of one of her perfect works. However, when soul and body are not made for one another, there is absolutely nothing to start with. They will never couple or procreate, and so the connection that is supposed to have been established between them by the Almighty is empty talk.

As long, then, as my body remains the same, no spirit differently constituted (from the spirit that is actually mine now) can be breathed into it. In order to make this connection actual and to suit the new soul, the Almighty would have to refurbish my body according to the new soul's requirements, as it were tailoring the body to it. But if this should happen, then another human being, another body, and another soul come to be; no longer the previous *I*, no longer, too, what was previously *mine*, and this new human being will also not fit into the same combination of space and time in which I find myself, since I alone, [164] belonging to the best [possible world], have found my *where* and *when* in this combination.

If we suppose, however, that the new soul were perfectly identical with the one that now inhabits me and thus would agree just as well as it does with my body, then the connection would no doubt go quite well. Yet then it is also no *other* soul that is imparted to me; it is indistinguishable from my present soul, and what is *indistinguishable* cannot also actually and in fact *be distinguished*. Therefore, it is and always still remains *the same* soul that we have merely in words called an *other* one. That the Almighty should again create and produce the soul would not cancel the identity. If, apart from this, the Almighty must unceasingly produce contingent beings for them to endure, then this is done without their identity suffering under this or being cancelled through the continuous creation (as the Scholastics refer to the conservation of things).

Page 47: "For the same reason ... madness." Mystics today call it "withdrawing oneself from sensibility"; in common parlance one would otherwise speak very aptly of "losing one's sense." This, incidentally, is a troublesome case for the insistence

[4] Cf. Lessing, *Der Schatz* in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann and Franz Muncker, vol. II (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 125–70 (especially the first scene 127–31).

on the truth of what is sensed, namely, if the inner senses deceive us. Just recently a man died here who, on account of much misguided study, had come to believe that he often heard voices from the wall that dictated to him, for instance, what he had just read or otherwise conversed with him. – What recourse do we have here or what sort of test might we set up against this? The powers of the soul set the internal organs of the representations in the very same motion as happens otherwise, coming from an external source, and now, since the soul only perceives its own work, it ascribes its work [i.e., what it perceives] to the typical external impression. Nothing but the investigation of the agreement of all external circumstances remains. This sort of person would no doubt find thereby that he was not in a dream, since everything outside of him otherwise presents itself in the proper order, but that this particular effect of his representation does not agree with the other effects of nature, and thus he would be suspicious of its correctness. – The most unfortunate thing is that the sick individual is un-inclined or incapable of putting himself to this test.

Here I must recall that, even in a dream, the internal marks of agreement or those marks relating to us, comparison [165] of multiple senses, testimony of others, and so forth, do not suffice to dispel the illusion, since we believe also to feel what we see and to hear the same from others. – Is a friend of mine then actually still alive? – Of course, everyone present in the dream says: "Here he comes, I'm running to him, I'm embracing him," and so on. But if we compare the *external* circumstances among themselves, we find enough of a difference from the representations that we have while awake. There, all the things that we represent as being outside of us (time, place, the mass of the force in relation to the imagined effect, and so on) are in little agreement with one another. Here, everything remains in agreement: today like yesterday we find the same house, neighbourhood, and people; nothing [is] merely on account of the series of thoughts; nothing appears without *external cause*: nothing exceeds the force of the cause and so forth. Now because different appearances must also have a different ground, we can readily cite this experience of the obvious difference of representations in the dream and in the waking state as proof that the latter are not, like the former, merely subjective alterations of our thinking but instead must have a ground outside of us. – But does not this difference also tell against the learned opinion that everyone actually develops his representations merely from out of himself without one in fact having an effect on the other, since indeed those representations that we spin out of ourselves are constituted and connected with one another in such a completely different way?

Page 54: "… if we want to take it as exhibiting the region." The representation of perspective illumines quite well the ground of what it is true in diverse imaginings. Permit me to give an example I have used to make the matter more intuitive for myself.

Let a four-sided pyramid A [Fig. 1] hover in the air so that it is equally illuminated on all sides and thus does not offer the eye the suggestion of a corporeal bulk, and let it be considered from diverse standpoints. One observer looks at it from directly underneath it [as] in C and says: "It is a mere square"; another who looks directly at it from one side [as] in B, says: "It [166] is a triangle" (with the sides

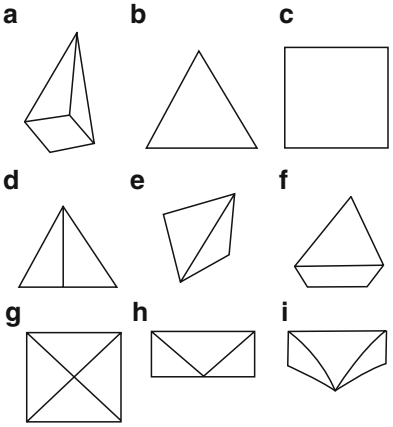

Fig. 1

equal in length or shortened, depending upon whether it is viewed more vertically or from top to bottom); a third sees two sides [as in] D: "They are two right-angled triangles joined together." – No: according to E they are rather two unequal triangles – according to F a triangle with an attached trapezoid – according to G a crossed-out square – according to H an elongated rectangle divided into three triangles – according to I three unequal triangles. All these variations, and still more, can be represented perspectivally and thus each has its own truth. However, only the person who compares all of these and finds their agreement in the first figure can surmise the actual ground of the appearances. Thus, the diverse representations in no way prove that a common, objective, true ground of them all is not on hand. – Far enough, my friend, –[5]

Page 60. In logic, *questions* deserve special consideration, just as they tend to be expressed in a special way in language. In his *Hermes, or philosophical consideration of the general doctrine of language*, Harris mentions them and notes the following about them[6]:

> "It may be observed of the INTERROGATIVE, that as often as the *Interrogation* is *simple* and *definite*," he says, "the Response may be made in almost the same words by converting them into a sentence affirmative or negative, according as the truth is one or the other. For example – *Are these verses of Homer*? – Response: *These verses are of Homer*. *Are these verses of Virgil?* – Response: *These verses are not of Virgil*. And here, the artists of language, for the sake of brevity and dispatch, have provided two Particles to represent all such Responses: *Yes*, for all the affirmative; *No* for all the negative.

[5] At this point, the editors of the *Jubiläumsausgabe* contend, J.A.H Reimarus' comments conclude and the remaining remarks are by Mendelssohn himself; cf. JubA 3.2: 311 remark for page 166, line 13.

[6] James Harris, *Hermes: or, A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London: H. Woodfall, 1751); cf. 151–4 note f. Translators' note: Harris' original text is cited here; Mendelssohn's translation, while not literal, is fairly close to the original.

> "But when the *Interrogation* is *complex*, as when we say '*Are these verses of Homer or of Virgil?*' – much more, when it is *indefinite,* as when we say in general – *Whose are these Verses ?* – we cannot then respond after the manner above-mentioned. The Reason is, that no Interrogation can be answered by a simple *Yes,* or a simple *No,* except only those, which are themselves so simple, as of two possible Answers to admit only one. Now the least complex Interrogation will admit of four Answers, two affirmative, two negative, if not perhaps of more. The reason is, a complex Interrogation cannot consist of less than two simple ones; each of which may be separately affirmed and separately denied. For instance – *Are these Verses* Homer's, *or* Virgil's ? (i.) *They are Homer's – (2.) They are not Homer's – (3.) They are Virgil's* – (4.) *They are not Virgil's* – we may add, *(5) They are of neither.* The indefinite Interrogations go still farther; for these may be answered by infinite affirmatives, and infinite negatives. For instance – *Whose are these Verses?* We may answer affirmatively – *They are* Virgil's, *They are* Horace's, *They are* Ovid's, *&c.* – or negatively – *They are not* Virgil's, *They are not* Horace's, *They are not* Ovid's, and so on, either way to infinity. How then should we learn from a single *Yes,* or a single *No,* which particular is meant among infinite Possibles? These therefore are Interrogations which must be always answered by a *Sentence.* Yet even here Custom hath consulted for Brevity, by returning for Answer only the *single essential characteristik Word,* and retrenching by an Ellipsis all the rest, which rest the Interrogator is left to supply from himself. Thus when we are asked – *How many right angles equal the angles of a triangle ?* – we answer in the short monosyllable, Two – whereas, without the Ellipsis, the answer would have been – *Two right angles equal the angles of a triangle.* The ancients distinguished these two Species of Interrogation by different names. The simple they called *Erotema*, *Interrogatio*; the complex *Pysma*, *Percontatio*." Thus Harris.

While these distinctions are by no means incorrect, they do not seem to go deep enough or shed any light on the matter. A distinct nominal definition will help us unpack the concepts better and make it possible to indicate the logical ground for these remarks by the English author. Thus: what is a question?

It is obvious that any questioner is seeking to find out something through which a sentence lacking in some way is fulfilled and rendered complete. The answer replaces this lack and thereby transforms a given incomplete sentence into a complete one. [168]

For example – *Who is the author of the Iliad*? – The interrogative term *Who* here stands in the place of the unknown subject. The answer names the subject, *Homer*; and now the sentence is complete: *Homer is the author of the Iliad*. – *What is the Iliad*? – The little word *What* stands in the place of the unknown predicate. The answer names the predicate –*An epic poem of Homer*, and thereby completes the sentence – *The Iliad is one of Homer's epic poems*. Thus, it is not necessary to assume with Harris an ellipsis. The answerer need only supply that part of the sentence that the questioner lacks. The questioner expresses this unknown part through the interrogative term, just as in algebra an unknown quantity is indicated by X, Y, or Z. The answerer shows the value that must be set in place of the sign in order to make the sentence complete and determinate.

The case of the interrogative pronoun presents the part of the sentence that is lacking in completeness. The nominative *Who? what?* signifies a chief part of the sentence, subject or predicate, as we saw in the examples cited. The accusative *Whom? what?* indicates that the object is lacking for completeness of the sentence. *Whom did Homer take as the hero of the Iliad*? – Answer: *Achilles*. The ablative signifies the destination-point *whence?* as does the dative, *whither?* and the genitive

signifies the *relation* in which subject or predicate stand to another substantive. – For example *Whose epic poem is the Iliad?* Answer *Homer's*. The sentence that the question poses was – *The Iliad is an epic poem of X*. Subject and predicate were already determined and given. But the substantive with which the predicate stands in a determinate relation was missing. The question expresses this through a mere sign or through the *interrogative pronoun* in the genitive case, i.e., *Whose?* – The answer follows in the same case: *Homer's*, and now the sentence is complete – *The Iliad is Homer's epic poem*.

In all of these instances, a chief part of the sentence, subject or predicate, remains either wholly unknown or indeterminate in some consideration or other, thanks to which the sentence must still be expressed incompletely. The answer that is supposed to make up for this lack could thus be absent in as many ways as the multitude of [169] objects among which the questioner permitted doubt to vacillate. If he alleged that the missing part or the omitted determination is completely unknown, then there were *infinitely many* possible answers. For example – *Who composed these verses?* – So many names are possible, so many answers can be given here. However, if the questioner has limited the doubt to a determinate number of objects, then there is also no greater number of answers. Instead, there will be just as many affirmative and just as many negative answers as there are objects to which the question has limited the doubt. – *Are the verses by Horace, Virgil, or Ovid?* – The question here does not leave the determination of the predicate complete unknown, but instead limits the doubt to three persons, and the answer can take one of six forms, of which three are affirmative and three negative. In addition, Harris includes the answer: – *They are by none of these.* Yet, it seems to me that this is not so much an answer as it is a declaration that the question is itself absurd or improper since it would limit doubt more narrowly than could accord with the truth. It has cited one of the three as the author of the verse, when in fact it is none of them.

This is, accordingly, that species of question which the ancients called *erotema* (*interrogatio*). It is not, as Harris believes, composite or complex, rather it is in and for itself quite simple and the plurality of answers lies in the nature of the concepts. It consists in the *expression of a sentence that is lacking a chief part for its completeness, a subject or predicate, either wholly or in one of its determinations, along with the desire to make up for this void through the answer*.

If however the chief parts of the sentence are given and determinate, and the doubt lies merely in the quality [*Qualität*] of the sentence, namely, the questioner wants to know whether the sentence is to be affirmed or to be denied, then naturally only two answers are possible, an affirmative and a negative. Without a dubious dodge on the part of the inventors of language, as Harris would have it, without any ellipsis, the answer can thus consist in that little part of speech that remained doubtful in the question, in mere affirmation or denial. – For example – *Are these verses Homer? – Have you seen the white bears?* Subject and predicate are here provided and determined; only the quality [170] of the copula remained doubtful, and thus the answer can hardly do otherwise than provide this quality; *affirming* or *negating*.

The ancients called this species of questions *pysma*, *percontatio*, or as one could say in German, *inquiry*. *Socrates* helped himself to these when he sought to interrogate his students and guide them to the truth. He always determined the subject

and predicate of the truthful sentence as precisely as possible and brought the question back to it, so that the student had only to answer *Yes* or *No*. This method also tends to be used in court, during the examination of witnesses and often during the questioning of the criminal, with the questions broken down to their simplest parts, and every element of the sentence cited distinctly, down to its quality, so that the answerer has only to affirm or deny it.

These subtleties, which *Laurence Sterne* with his example of the *white bears* has made so ridiculous, nonetheless lead to useful results. All questions must be answerable, they must contain incomplete sentences that can be transformed into complete, intelligible and thinkable sentences through some possible answer. As soon as it can be demonstrated that the sentence that is supposed to give a complete answer to the question can in no way do so, that the desired completeness cannot be thought in and for itself, then the question itself must be rejected as impermissible. It seems to me that a number of questions that philosophers tend with all due diligence to investigate belong to this class. They demand of a sentence completeness that in and for itself cannot be given. Accordingly, they seek something that must fall not only outside the sphere of human knowledge, but also outside any knowledge at all. In the text to which this remark refers, one will find many examples of questions of this sort that appear to me to be impermissible. Allow me to cite a few instances.

First Instance

What are things in and for themselves, outside of all sensations, representations, and concepts? This question belongs, as I believe, to the class of unanswerable questions. The incomplete sentence that it contains is: – *Things outside of all sensations* [171], *representations, and concepts are in and for themselves* = X. If the question is to be valid, this sentence must be made more complete, the unknown in it must be capable of being transformed into something known, the X into A, and the sentence thereby capable of being thought in its completeness. Suppose therefore: *Things outside of all sensations, representations, and concepts are* = A. Now, in such a case, A obviously does not provide any more to think than X does, since insofar as A can somehow be thought, sensed or represented, it does not satisfy the question. Thus, the sentence that is passed off as incomplete cannot be made complete through any possible answer. The question is in and for itself unanswerable.

Second Instance

What is the substratum of all the accidents that can be known of a substance? This question, too, on which Locke expanded so extensively, is, it seems to me, unanswerable for the same reason. Suppose that the substratum sought is A. Insofar as A signifies something that can be thought, conceived, or represented, it belongs to

the accidents and does not satisfy the question. Hence, there is no answer possible in which this substratum can be provided.

Third Instance

Is the universe as a whole capable of local motion? A question raised by Newton. *Can this universe move from its position and change its location in empty space?* – If this question should be answerable, then the sentence: *this universe has changed its place* must be distinct from the sentence *this universe has not changed* and capable of being distinguished from it by some thinking being. Now this is impossible, given the presupposition. For there are absolutely no characteristics in the infinite void, by means of which the parts or the diversity of places could be distinguished by any thinking being. The question is thus rightly rejected by Leibniz as unanswerable. There is a similar make-up to the question in regard to empty time. Could this series of things not have arisen earlier in the same way as it has now actually come to be? – For the very same reason the answer falls into the class of the impossible. [172]

Fourth Instance

I take it that the familiar physiological investigation of the vehicle of our sensory feelings are subject to the same reservation and ultimately lead to a question that is in and for itself unanswerable. *What is the vehicle*, one asks, *by means of which the sensory qualities of objects are transmitted*? It is a fluid matter, some say; they are elastic fibers, answer others: one time it is supposed to be fine matter, like aether; another time it is identified as an electrical matter. Yet all agree that this vehicle is matter. Now this matter cannot be known other than through sensory qualities (*qualitates sensibiles*). What we can know and experience of it, then, consists in the sensory feelings it affords us and in the characteristics that we have abstracted from them. Thus, we want to know the vehicle of all sensory qualities through sensory qualities themselves. We want to know the being that supplies us with these sensory qualities and admit nonetheless that this being cannot be known other than through these same sensory qualities. – Yet I do not trust myself when I find such a vicious circle in this investigation. So many acute minds have occupied themselves with it that I always remain afraid I have not appreciated the question itself properly. Whoever takes the trouble to teach me a better way and to place this famous controversy in the proper light will earn my gratitude.

Fifth Instance

A noteworthy example of this kind, it seems to me, is the doubt aroused by some philosophers concerning the endurance of a substance. What telling marks can be given of this, they ask, that a substance remained the same in successive moments?

Even in the case of a spiritual being, they say, it is not possible to get any assurance of this, since the consciousness and the recollection of the previous state provide no certainty of this. This consciousness, this recollection, always remains something present that now inhabits the mind, and would just as well occur, for example, in a substance that has been switched [for an enduring substance] as in an enduring one. Thus it cannot be a criterion [173] for distinguishing the former from the latter.

To this, I answer: precisely for this reason, because such a criterion cannot be found, it can also not be sought. It is absurd to want to distinguish things that one is convinced are in and for themselves indistinguishable. If all the characteristics and identifying marks of the switched substance are so perfectly constituted as would be the case if the substance would have endured, then it could not be distinguished from an enduring substance and the most perfect being itself would have to consider them one and the same, which is to say they would be one and the same. The substance would have remained the same and not have been exchanged. What is not to be distinguished must also in fact not be distinguished. What cannot be known is also not [known]. Here, what is sought lies outside not only the sphere of knowledge of limited human beings but also the sphere of any knowledge whatsoever, and [so] falls into the absurd [class of questions].

Page 131. Now the words of my unforgettable friend, the last written in his hand and delivered to me by a traveller, pierce my soul. For some years neither I nor our mutual friend Nicolai had received any letter from him, and he owed us a response or two. This hardly served to estrange me since, as is known to his friends, he was never the most energetic correspondent, nor was he even punctual in his replies when it was merely a matter of reassuring me of his friendship, without extensive content. Thus, I opened all the more eagerly the little letter that the unknown messenger handed over to me. Now, for as long as I was acquainted with him and in such diverse external circumstances and situations, L. had never complained of the ingratitude of his contemporaries, never lamented that injustice had been done to him, that he would not be given his due, or made any other such grumblings as are heard from many with much less right to make them. I was accustomed to hearing the words *I* and *Mine* as seldom as possible from his mouth. His letters were always lively, thoughtful, and upright in their content. – I was used to all manner of moods from him yet never despondency or sullenness. He was at all times the consoling friend, never himself seeking to be consoled. And now – I can hardly describe the adverse sensation [174] that I had as the following lines revealed to me a completely different man, a bowed, careworn, ultimately defeated fighter, like a buck hunted to exhaustion and languishing in pain, who finally succumbs and lays its noble crown of antlers in the dust:

> Dearest friend,
>
> The traveller whom you sent me some time ago was a *curious traveller*. The one through whom I now respond to you, is an *emigrating one*. This class of traveller, to be sure, is not to be found among Yorick's classes[7]; of these only the *unfortunate and innocent traveller*

[7] See Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, by Mr. Yorick* (London, 1768), pp. 27–8.

would in any case be suited here. Yet why not make a new class instead of trying to manage with one named so inaptly. For it is not true that the unfortunate traveller is completely innocent. He may well be lacking in cleverness.

In fact the name of this emigrant is ****, and I can attest that our people have treated him quite hatefully in order to stir up yours. From you, dear Moses, he wants only one thing, that you recommend to him the shortest and securest way to the European country where there is neither Christian nor Jew. I am loathe to lose him, but as soon as he has safely arrived there, I will be the first to follow him.

I continue to chew over and savor the brief note of yours that D. Flies brought to me at that time. The juiciest word here is the noblest. And truly, dear friend, I find myself very much in need of such a brief note from time to time, if I am not to grow completely despondent. I do not believe that you know me to be someone with a burning hunger for praise. But the coldness with which the world tends to assert of certain people that they can do no right in its eyes is, if not deadly, still chilling. That *not everything* I wrote some time ago *pleased them*[8] does not surprise me in the least. It would not have been necessary for anything to please them since nothing was written for them. At most, somehow in the course of this or that passage, the recollection of our better days could have deceived them. I too was once a healthy, slender sapling, and now I am but a rotten, knotted stump! O dear friend! The scene is over! How much I would like to speak with you but one more time!

Wolfenbüttel, 19th of December, 1780.

[175] How happily I would have afforded you this consolation, dear soul! How fervently I wanted to tear myself from my affairs and from my family to rush to you and speak with you one more time. But alas! I did what we so often tend to do when we have made a good beginning of something. I put it off and delayed – until it was too late. Oh! they were the last words I heard from him!

[8] This translation reads 'Ihnen' as referring – despite the capital 'I' – to 'certain people' (*gewissen Leuten*) in the previous sentence. So, too, in the following sentences 'them' – rather than 'you' – is employed to translate 'Sie,' under the supposition that Mendelssohn is still referring to those 'certain people', despite the unorthodox spelling, i.e., 'Sie' instead of 'sie'.

Glossary

abandon	verlassen, sich überlassen
abhor	verabscheuen
absurdity	Unding
accident, by	von Ungefähr
accrue	zukommen
acknowledge	eingestehen, zugeben
act	würken, handeln
actuality	Wirklichkeit
accurate	treffend
adequate	hinlänglich
advisable	dienlich
affirm	bejahen
afford	gewähren
agree	übereinstimmen
aim	Absicht
aim to please	Gefälligkeit
allege	angeben
allow	gestehen
alter	verändern
alterable	abänderlich, veränderlich
alteration	Abänderung, Veränderung
amount	Menge
analyze	zergliedern, auflösen
applaud	Beyfall geben
approbation	Beyfall
approval	Billigung
arise	entstehen
ascribe	zuschreiben
assembled	sämmtlich
assurance	Versicherung
aware	kennen

balance	Gleichgewicht
baldly	schlechterdings
be apprised of	kennen
being that is on hand	Vorhandensein
being	Wesen, Sein
bewitchment	Bethörung
bind up	verbinden
boundary	Gränze
bounds	Grenzen, Gränzen
break down	zergliedern
bring forth	hervor-, herausbringen,
cancel	aufheben
capability	Fähigkeit
capacity	Vermögen
capacity of choosing	Willkür
case	Fall, Vorfall
certainty	Gewissheit
change	Abwechselung
changing	abwechselnd
characteristic	Merkmal, Kennzeichen
characteristic mark	Merkmal
chore	Verrichtung
co-exist with	bestehen mit
coincidence, coinciding	Zusammentreffen
confined	begrenzt, begränzt
craziness	Wahnwitz
criterion	Probierstein
crystal clear	deutlich
collaboration	Mitwürkung
combination	Verbindung
combine	verbinden
common sense	Gemeinsinn
compel	zwingen
compelling constraint	Zwang
complete	vollständig
composure	Gelassenheit
comprehend	begreifen, umfassen
compulsion	Zwang
concede	zugeben
conceive	begreifen
concur	zusammenstimmen
condescension	Herablassung
confirmation	Bestätigung
conjecture	Vermutung

connection	Zusammehang, Verbindung, Verknüpfung
connect	verbinden
consist	bestehen aus, in
constancy	Bestandheit
constitutive features	Beschaffenheiten
constraint	Schranken
contemplation	Beschauung
conviction	Überzeugung
convincing corroboration	Überzeugung
copy	Abbild
correspond	übereinstimmen
deceit	Betrug
deceive	trügen
deception	Betrug
deception by the senses	Sinnesbetrug
declare	erklären
decisive factor	Ausschlag
deficiency	Mangel
define	erklären
delude	täuschen
delusion	Wahn
demonstrate	dartun
depiction	Abbildung
desire	Begehren, Begierde
destiny	Schickung
develop	entwickeln
discern	einsehen
discernment	Einsicht
discord	Mißhelligkeit
disposition	Anlage, Lage, Gesinnung
dispute	Streit
distinct	deutlich
diverse	verschieden
do	würken
duty	Pflicht
eccentric move	Verrückung
efficaciousness	Würksamkeit
efficient causes	Wirkursachen
encompass	umfassen
encounter, to	antreffen
encounter, unforeseen	Begegniss
endeavor	Bestreben
endowed	begabt
endorse	Beyfall geben

entangle	verwickeln
enterprise	Vorhaben
enthusiasm	Begeisterung
equanimity	Gleichmutigkeit
equilibrium	Gleichgewicht
equivalent	gleichgeltend
errant by-way	Abweg
errant path	Irrweg
ethics	Sittenlehre, Sittlichkeit
ethical life	Sittlichkeit
everlasting	unvergänglich
evidence	Evidenz
exhaustive detail	Ausführlichkeit
exhaustively	ausführlich
exhibit	darstellen
exhibition	Darstellung
existence	Dasein, Existenz
exist	dastehen
expand	dehnen
expanded	ausgebreitet
expanse	Ausbreitung
explain	erklären
extension	Ausbreitung, Ausdehnung
faculty	Vermögen
facility	Fähigkeit
fact of the matter	Sache
familiarity	Kenntnis
fanaticism	Schwärmerei
fancy oneself	sich einbilden
feeling	Gefühl
final purpose	Endzweck
firm belief	Überzeugung
force	Kraft
fundamental principle	Grundsatz
governance	Regierung
grant	gestehen
ground	Grund, Boden
guide	Führer, Wegweiser
here	hier, vorhanden
humbling	Herablassung
humility	Herablassung
identifying marks	Kennzeichen
illumination	Beleuchtung

illusion	Täuschung
illusion of the senses	Sinnenschein
image	Bild, bildliche Vorstellung
image-like	bildlich
imagine	sich vorstellen
imagistic	bildlich
immutable	unveränderlich
impart	gewähren
impose	sich aufdrängen (aufdringen)
impression	Eindruck, Abdruck
imprint	Abdruck
incapacity	Unvermögen
individual	einzeln
inhere or be inherent in, to	zukommen
instance	Fall
intellect	Verstand
intention	Absicht
intentional	absichtlich
intensity	Intension
intimacy	Vertraulichkeit
isolated	isoliert, abgesondert
join	verknüpfen
judiciousness	Billigkeit
justifiably	füglich
justify	begründen
lack	Mangel
lackadaisical moods	Gemächlichkeit
leap	springen, Sprung
legitimacy	Recht
lethargy	Trägheit
limit	Grenze
limitation	Schranken
limited	eingeschränkt
limitedness	Eingeschränktheit
link	verknüpfen
lucid	deutlich
lucidity	Deutlichkeit
make-up	Beschaffenheit
madness	Verrückung
mark	Merkmal
matter	Materie
measure	Maß
memory	Gedächtnis

mighty	mächtig
mind	Geist
motivation	Beweggrund
mutable	veränderlich
mutation	Veränderung
news	Zeitungen
non-deceptive	untrüglich
number	Anzahl
object	Gegenstand, Vorwurf
obligation	Verpflichtung
obtain	bestehen, vorhanden sein
obvious	augenscheinlich
on hand	vorhanden
on the basis of	aus
opinion	Meinung
outcome	Ausschlag
overly subtle	überfein
peace of mind	Ruhe
paradigm	Vorbild
penchant	Hang
perfect	vollkommen
perfection	Vollkommenheit
pertain	zukommen
portrayal	Darstellung
power	Kraft
power of choice	Willkür
predisposition	Anlage
preeminence	Vorzug
preeminently	vorzugsweise, vorzüglich
preference	Vorzug
present	gegenwartig
present, the	Gegenwärtige, das
presupposition	Voraussetzung
principle	Principium
profess	vorgeben
properly	gehörig
proportional to	sich verhalten zu
propose	aufwerfen
proposition	Satz
prototype	Urbild
purified	geläutert
purpose	Absicht, Zweck
pusillanimity	Kleinheit des Geistes

quality	Qualität, Beschaffenheit
querulousness	Zweifelsucht
ratio	Verhältnis
real existence	Realexistenz
real beings	reale Wesen
reason	Grund, Vernunft
reason, i.e., ground	Grund
reality	Realität
recollection	Erinnerung
reduce	auflösen
refined	verfeinert
rejection	Verwerfung
repertoire	Inbegriff
represent to oneself	sich vorstellen
repugnant aspect	Widerwärtigkeit
resolution	Vorsatz
resolve (n)	Vorsatz
resolve (v)	auflösen
restlessness	Unruhe
right	Recht
rigorous	gründlich
saying	Redensart
scholastic	schulgerecht
self-opinionatedness	Rechthaberei
self-sufficient	selbständig
semblance	Schein
sensation	Empfindung
sentiment	Empfindung
sense	Sinn
sensible	sinnreich
separate	abgesondert
single	einzeln
situation	Lage
sole	einzig
sound human understanding	gesunder Menschenverstand
spontaneous	freywillig
standpoint	Standort
state	Zustand
steeply sloping surface	abschüssige Fläche
steer clear of	ausweichen
strength	Stärke
stretch	ausdehnen
strictures	Strenge
striving	Bestreben

subject	Subjekt
subsist	bestehen, subsistieren
subsistence	Subsistenz
suffer	leiden
sum-total	Inbegriff
support	gewähren
supposition	Vermutung
sureness	Sicherheit
surface	Fläche
surreptitious	erschlichene
take root	sich festsetzen
testimony	Zeugnis
theorem	Lehrsatz
there	vorhanden
thing	Sache, Ding
thoroughgoing and fundamental	gründlich
thoroughness	Ausführlichkeit
tie up with	verknüpfen mit
topple	einstürzen
touch	Gefühl
tranquility	Beruhigung
transparency	Augenscheinlichkeit
transparent	augenscheinlich, deutlich
trenchant	bündig
tribunal	Richterstuhl
trounce	stürzen
unalterable	unveränderlich
unbiased	unbefangen
unclear	undeutlich
unchangeable	unwandelbar
undergo	leiden
understanding	Verstand
undertaking	Vorhaben
unfathomable	unergründlich
unique	Einzig
unpack	auseinandersetzen
unravel and develop	entwickeln
unqualifiedly	schlechterdings
uplift	erheben
uplifting, i.e., sublime	erhaben
urgency	Noth
verbal dispute	Wortstreitigkeit
verbal pomposity	Wortgepränge

wayward path	Abweg
viewpoint	Gesichtspunkt
weakness	Schwachheit
well-being	Wohl
wooly	vielschichtig

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