

Part I
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ENTIRE
SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE

§ 1. FIRST, ABSOLUTELY UNCONDITIONED PRINCIPLE.

I, 91 Our task is to *discover* the primordial, absolutely unconditioned first principle of all human knowledge. This can be neither *proved* nor *defined*, if it is to be an absolutely primary principle.

It is intended to express that *Act* which does not and cannot appear among the empirical states of our consciousness, but rather lies at the basis of all consciousness and alone makes it possible.¹ In describing this *Act*, there is less risk that anyone will perhaps thereby *fail* to think what he should—the nature of our mind has already taken care of that—than that he will thereby think what he should not. This makes it necessary to *reflect* on what one might at first sight take it to be, and to *abstract* from everything that does not really belong to it.

I, 92 Not even by means of this abstracting reflection can anything become a fact of consciousness which is inherently no such fact; but it will be recognized thereby that we must necessarily *think* this *Act* as the basis of all consciousness.

The laws (of common logic) whereby one must straightway think this *Act* as the foundation of human knowledge, or—what amounts to the same thing—the rules whereby this reflection is initiated, have not yet been proved to be valid, but are tacitly assumed to be familiar and established. Only at a later point will they be derived from that proposition whose assertion is warranted only if they are warranted also. This is a circle, though an

¹This has been overlooked by all who insist at this point, either that what the first proposition asserts is *not included* among the facts of consciousness, or that it *contradicts* them.

unavoidable one. (cf. *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, § 7). But since it is unavoidable, and openly acknowledged, we may appeal to all the laws of common logic even in establishing the highest fundamental principle.

In proceeding to the required reflection, we must set out from some proposition that everyone will grant us without dispute. And there should doubtless be many such. Reflection is free; and it matters not from whence it starts. We choose that which offers us the shortest road to our goal.

So soon as this proposition is conceded, we must simultaneously be granted, as an Act, what we seek to set at the basis of the whole Science of Knowledge. And reflection must confirm that this Act is granted as such *along with the proposition*. Let any fact of empirical consciousness be proposed; and let one empirical feature after another be detached from it, until all that remains is what cannot any longer be dismissed, and from which nothing further can be detached.

- I, 93 1. The proposition *A is A* (or $A = A$, since that is the meaning of the logical copula) is accepted by everyone and that without a moment's thought: it is admitted to be perfectly certain and established.

Yet if anyone were to demand a proof of this proposition, we should certainly not embark on anything of the kind, but would insist that it is *absolutely* certain, that is, *without any other ground*: and in so saying—doubtless with general approval—we should be ascribing to ourselves the power of *asserting something absolutely*.

2. In insisting that the above proposition is intrinsically certain we are *not* asserting that *A is the case*. The proposition *A is A* is by no means equivalent to *A exists*, or *there is an A*. (*To be*, without a predicate attached, means something quite different from 'to be' with a predicate; of which more anon.) If we suppose that *A* signifies a space enclosed by two straight lines, the first proposition still remains perfectly true; though the proposition that *A exists* would obviously be false.

On the contrary, what we are saying is: *If A exists, then A exists*. Hence there is simply no question here as to *whether A*

actually exists or not. It is a matter, not of the *content* of the proposition, but simply of its *form*; not of that *about which* you know something, but of *what* you know about anything at all, whatever it may be.

Thus in claiming that the above proposition is absolutely certain, what is established is that between that *if* and this *then* there is a necessary connection; and it is the *necessary connection between the two* that is posited *absolutely*, and *without any other ground*. To this necessary connection I give the preliminary designation X.

3. But with respect to A itself we have thereby said nothing, as yet, as to *whether* it exists or not. Hence the question arises: Under what condition, then, *does A exist?*

I, 94 a) X is at least *in the self*, and posited *by the self*, for it is the self which judges in the above proposition, and indeed judges according to X, as a law; which law must therefore be given to the self, and since it is posited absolutely and without any other ground, must be given to the self by itself alone.

b) *Whether*, and *how*, A is actually posited we do not know: but since X is supposed to designate a connection between an unknown positing of A and an absolute assertion of that same A, on the strength of the first positing, then *at least so far as this connection is posited*, A is *in the self* and posited *by the self*, just as X is. X is possible only in relation to an A; now X is really present in the self: and so A must also be present in the self, insofar as X is related to it.

c) X is related to that A which occupies the logical position of subject in the foregoing proposition, just as it also is to that which stands as predicate; for both are united by X. Both, therefore, so far as they are posited, are posited in the self; and given that the A in the subject position is asserted, that in the predicate is asserted absolutely; hence the above proposition can also be expressed as follows: if A is posited *in the self*, it is thereby *posited*, or, it thereby *is*.

4. Thus the self asserts, by means of X, that *A exists absolutely for the judging self, and that simply in virtue of its being posited in the self as such*; which is to say, it is asserted that within the

self—whether it be specifically positing, or judging, or whatever it may be—there is something that is permanently uniform, forever one and the same; and hence the X that is absolutely posited can also be expressed as $I = I$; I am I.

5. By this operation we have already arrived unnoticed at the proposition: *I am* (as the expression, not of an *Act*, to be sure, but nonetheless of a *fact*).

For X is posited absolutely; that is a *fact* of empirical consciousness. But now X is equivalent to the proposition 'I am I'; hence this, too, is asserted absolutely.

I. 95 But the proposition 'I am I' has a meaning wholly different from that of 'A is A'. For the latter has content only under a certain condition. *If A* is posited, it is naturally posited *as A*, as having the predicate A. But this proposition still tells us nothing as to *whether* it actually is posited, and hence whether it is posited with any particular predicate. Yet the proposition 'I am I' is unconditionally and absolutely valid, since it is equivalent to the proposition X^2 ; it is valid not merely in form but also in content. In it the I is posited, not conditionally, but absolutely, with the predicate of equivalence to itself; hence it really *is* posited, and the proposition can also be expressed as *I am*.

This proposition, 'I am', has so far been founded merely on a fact and has no more than factual validity. Should the proposition $A = A$ be certain (or, more precisely, what is absolutely posited therein, namely X), then the proposition 'I am' must also be certain. Now it is a fact of empirical consciousness that we are constrained to regard X as absolutely certain; and so too with the proposition 'I am', on which X is founded. Hence it is a ground of explanation of all the facts of empirical consciousness, that prior to all postulation in the self, the self itself is posited. —(I say of *all* the facts: and this depends on proof of the proposition, that X is the highest fact of empirical consciousness, underlying and contained in all others; which might well be conceded without any

²i.e., in plain language: I, who posit A in the predicate position, necessarily know, because *the same was posited in the subject position*, about my positing of the subject, and hence know myself, again contemplate myself, am the same with myself.

proof, even though the whole Science of Knowledge is occupied in proving it).

6. We return to the point from which we started.

a) The proposition 'A = A' constitutes a *judgment*. But all judgment, so empirical consciousness tells us, is an activity of the human mind; for in empirical self-consciousness it has all the conditions of activity which must be presupposed as known and established for purposes of reflection.

b) Now this activity is based on something that rests on no more ultimate ground, namely X = I am.

I, 96 c) Hence what is *absolutely posited*, and *founded on itself*, is the ground of *one particular* activity (and, as the whole Science of Knowledge will show, of *all* activity) of the human mind, and thus of its pure character; the pure character of activity as such, in abstraction from its specific empirical conditions.

The self's own positing of itself is thus its own pure activity. The *self posits itself*, and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it *exists*; and conversely, the *self exists* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and the product of action; the active, and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same, and hence the 'I am' expresses an Act, and the only one possible, as will inevitably appear from the Science of Knowledge as a whole.

7. Now let us consider once more the proposition '*I am I*'.

a) The I is posited absolutely. Let it be assumed that what is *absolutely posited* is the I occupying the place of formal subject³ in the above proposition; while that in the predicate position represents that which *exists*; hence, the absolutely valid judgment that

³This, at all events, is what the logical form of every proposition tells us. In the proposition 'A = A', the first A is that which is posited in the self, either absolutely, like the self itself, or on some other ground, like any given not-self. In this matter the self behaves as absolute subject; and hence the first A is called the subject. The second A designates what the self, reflecting upon itself, discovers to be present in itself, because it has first set this within itself. The judging self predicates something, not really of A, but of itself, namely that there is an A in it; and hence the second A is called the predicate. —Thus in the proposition 'A = B', A designates what is now being posited; B what is already encountered as posited. —*Is* expresses the passage of the *self* from positing to reflection on what has been posited.

both are completely identical, states, or absolutely asserts, that the *self exists because* it has posited itself.

- I, 97 b) The self in the first sense, and that in the second, are supposed to be absolutely equivalent. Hence one can also reverse the above proposition and say: the self posits itself simply *because* it exists. It *posits* itself by merely existing and *exists* by merely being posited.

And this now makes it perfectly clear in what sense we are using the word 'I' in this context, and leads us to an exact account of the self as absolute subject. *That whose being or essence consists simply in the fact that it posits itself as existing*, is the self as absolute subject. As it *posits* itself, so it *is*; and as it *is*, so it *posits* itself; and hence the self is absolute and necessary for the self. What does not exist for itself is not a self.

(To explain: one certainly hears the question proposed: *What was I, then, before I came to self-consciousness?* The natural reply is: *I did not exist at all; for I was not a self.* The self exists only insofar as it is conscious of itself. The possibility of this question is based on a confusion between the self as *subject*, and the self as *object* of reflection for an absolute subject, and is in itself utterly improper. The self presents itself to itself, to that extent imposes on itself the form of a presentation, and is now for the first time a *something*, namely an object; in this form consciousness acquires a substrate, which *exists*, even though without real consciousness, and thought of, moreover, in bodily form. People conceive of some such situation as this, and ask: *What was the self at that time, i.e., what is the substrate of consciousness?* But in so doing they think unawares of the *absolute subject as well*, as contemplating this substrate; and thus they unwittingly subjoin in thought the very thing from which they have allegedly abstracted, and contradict themselves. You cannot think at all without subjoining in thought your self, as conscious of itself; from your self-consciousness you can never abstract; hence all questions of the above type call for no answer, for a real understanding of oneself would preclude their being asked.)

8. If the self exists only insofar as it posits itself, then it exists only *for* that which posits, and posits only for that which exists.

I, 98 *The self exists for the self*—but if it posits itself absolutely, as it is, then it posits itself as necessary, and is necessary for the self. *I exist only for myself; but for myself I am necessary* (in saying ‘for myself’, I already posit my existence).

9. *To posit oneself and to be* are, as applied to the self, perfectly identical. Thus the proposition, ‘I am, because I have posited myself’ can also be stated as: ‘*I am absolutely, because I am*’.

Furthermore, the self-positing self and the existing self are perfectly identical, one and the same. The self is that *which* it posits itself to be; and it posits itself as *that* which it is. Hence *I am absolutely what I am*.

10. The Act now unfolded may be given immediate expression in the following formula: *I am absolutely*, i.e., *I am absolutely BECAUSE I am; and am absolutely WHAT I am; both FOR THE SELF*.

If the account of this Act is to be viewed as standing at the forefront of a Science of Knowledge, it will have to be expressed somewhat as follows: *The self begins by an absolute positing of its own existence.*⁴

We started from the proposition $A = A$; not as if the proposition ‘I am’ could be deduced therefrom, but because we had to start from something given with *certainty* in empirical consciousness. But it actually appeared in our discussion that it is not the ‘I am’ that is based on ‘ $A = A$ ’ but rather that the latter proposition is based on the former.

I, 99 If we abstract from ‘I am’ the specific content, namely the self, and are left with the mere form that is given with this content, *the form of an inference from being posited to being*, as for purposes of logic we are compelled to do (cf. *Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, § 6), we then obtain ‘ $A = A$ ’ as *the basic proposition of logic*, which can be demonstrated and determined only through the Science of Knowledge. *Demonstrated*, in that A

⁴To put all this in other words, which I have elsewhere employed: *the self* is a necessary identity of subject and object: a subject-object; and is so absolutely, without further mediation. This, I say, is what it means; though this proposition has not been so readily understood as one might have thought, or weighed according to its high importance, which, prior to the Science of Knowledge, has been treated with utter neglect; so that the preceding discussion of it cannot be dispensed with. [Note of 1802, Tr.]

is A, because the self that has posited A is identical with that in which A has been posited; *determined*, in that everything that exists does so only insofar as it is posited in the self, and apart from the self there is nothing. No possible A in the above proposition (no *thing*) can be anything other than something posited in the self.

By making a further abstraction from judging, as a specific activity, and having regard only to the general *mode* of action of the human mind that this form presents, we obtain the *category of reality*. Everything to which the proposition 'A = A' is applicable, has reality, *insofar as that proposition is applicable to it*. Whatever is posited in virtue of the simple positing of some thing (an item posited in the self) is the reality, or essence, of that thing.

(The scepticism of Maimon is ultimately based on the question of our right to apply the category of reality. This right can be derived from no other—we are absolutely entitled thereto. The fact is, rather, that all other possible rights must be derived from this; and even Maimon's scepticism inadvertently presupposes it, in that he acknowledges the correctness of ordinary logic. —But we can point out something from which every category is itself derived: the self, as absolute subject. Of every other possible thing to which it may be applied, it has to be shown that reality is transferred to it *from the self*: —that it would have to exist, provided that the self exists.)

I, 100 That our proposition is the absolutely basic principle of all knowledge, was pointed out by *Kant*, in his deduction of the categories; but he never laid it down specifically *as* the basic principle. *Descartes*, before him, put forward a similar proposition: *cogito, ergo sum*—which need not have been merely the minor premise and conclusion of a syllogism, with the major premise: *quodcumque cogitat est*; for he may very well have regarded it as an immediate datum of consciousness. It would then amount to *cogitans sum, ergo sum* (or as we should say, *sum, ergo sum*). But in that case the addition of *cogitans* is entirely superfluous; we do not necessarily think when we exist, but we necessarily exist whenever we think. Thinking is by no means the essence, but merely a specific determination of existence; and our

existence has many other determinations besides this. —*Reinhold* put forward the principle of representation, and in Cartesian form his basic proposition would run: *repraesento, ergo sum*, or more properly: *repraesentans sum, ergo sum*. He makes a notable advance over Descartes; but if his intention is to establish simply knowledge itself, and not merely a propaedeutic to the same, it is not enough; for even representation is not the essence of existence, but a specific determination thereof; and our existence has still other determinations besides this, *even though they must pass through the medium of representation, in order to attain to empirical consciousness*.

Our principle has been overstepped, in the sense ascribed to it, by *Spinoza*. He does not deny the unity of empirical consciousness, but pure consciousness he completely rejects. On his view, the whole series of presentations in an empirical subject is related to the one pure subject as a single presentation is to a series. For him the self (what he calls *his* self, or what I call *mine*) does not exist absolutely *because* it exists; but because *something else* exists. —The self is certainly a self *for itself*, in his theory, but he goes on to ask what it would be for something other than the self. Such an 'other' would equally be a self, of which the posited self (e.g. *mine*) and all other selves that might be posited would be modifications. He separates *pure* and *empirical* consciousness. The first he attributes to God, who is never conscious of himself, since pure consciousness never attains to consciousness; the second he locates in the specific modifications of the Deity. So established, his system is perfectly consistent and irrefutable, since he takes his stand in a territory where reason can no longer follow him; but it is also groundless; for what right did he have to go beyond the pure consciousness given in empirical consciousness? —It is easy enough to see what impelled him to his system, namely the necessary endeavor to bring about the highest unity in human cognition. This unity is present in his system, and the error of it is merely that he thought to deduce on grounds of theoretical reason what he was driven to merely by a practical need; that he claimed to have established something as truly given, when he was merely setting up an appointed, but never attainable, ideal.

We shall encounter his highest unity again in the Science of Knowledge; though not as something that *exists*, but as something that we *ought to*, and yet *cannot*, achieve. —I further observe, that if we go beyond the *I am*, we necessarily arrive at Spinozism (that, when fully thought out, the system of Leibniz is nothing other than Spinozism, is shown in a valuable essay by Solomon Maimon: *Über die Progressen der Philosophie, etc.*); and that there are only two completely consistent systems: the *critical*, which recognizes this boundary, and the *Spinozistic*, which oversteps it.

§ 2. SECOND PRINCIPLE, CONDITIONED AS TO CONTENT.

The same reason which made it impossible either to prove or derive the first principle also applies to the second. Here then, as before, we proceed from a fact of empirical consciousness, and deal with it, on the same terms, in a similar fashion.

1. The proposition that ' $\sim A$ is not equal to A ' will undoubtedly be accepted by everyone as perfectly certain and established, and it is hardly to be expected that anyone should demand proof of it.
- I, 102 2. Yet, if such a proof were possible, it could not be derived in our system (whose inherent correctness still remains problematic, indeed, until the science is completed) from anything else but the proposition that ' $A = A$ '.
3. No such proof is in fact possible. For assuming, at the utmost, that the above proposition were equivalent to ' $\sim A = \sim A$ ' (and hence that $\sim A$ is identical with some Y posited in the self), and that it were now to amount to: '*if the opposite of A is posited, then it is posited*', we should then be asserting absolutely the same connection ($= X$) as before; and it would in no sense be a proposition derived from and proved by means of ' $A = A$ ', but just that very proposition itself . . . (And hence, too, the form of this proposition, so far as it is a purely logical proposition, is really comprehended under the highest of forms, the condition of *having form* at all, namely, the unity of consciousness).

4. But this has no bearing whatsoever on the question: *Is* the opposite of A posited, and under what condition of the *form of mere action* is it posited as such? It is this condition which would have had to be derived from 'A = A', if the foregoing proposition were itself to be considered a derived one. But such a condition simply cannot be obtained from 'A = A', since the form of counterpositing is so far from being contained in that of positing, that in fact it is flatly opposed to this. Hence it is an absolute and unconditional opposition. $\sim A$ is posited absolutely, *as such*, just *because* it is posited.

As certainly, therefore, as the proposition ' $\sim A$ is not equal to A' occurs among the facts of empirical consciousness, there is thus an opposition included among the acts of the self; and this opposition is, as to its mere *form*, an absolutely possible and unconditional act based on no higher ground.

(The *logical form* of the proposition *as such* (if stated in the form ' $\sim A = \sim A$ ') presupposes the identity of subject and predicate (i.e., of the *presenting* self, and the self *presented as presenting*: cf. note p. 99). But even the possibility of counterpositing itself presupposes the identity of consciousness; and the procedure of the self in acting thus is properly as follows: A (absolutely posited) = A (the object of reflection). By an absolute act this A, as object of reflection, is opposed to $\sim A$, and this latter is judged to be also opposed to the absolutely posited A, since both A's are the same: a likeness based (§ 1) on the identity of the positing and the reflecting self. —It is further presupposed that the self which acts in *both* cases, and judges in both, is the same. If it could be opposed to itself in the two acts, $\sim A$ would be equal to A. Hence even the transition from positing to counterpositing is possible only through the identity of the self).

5. By means, therefore, and only by means, of this absolute act, the opposite is posited, so far as it is *opposed* (as a mere contrary in general). Every opposite, so far as it is so, is so absolutely, by virtue of an act of the self, and for no other reason. Opposition in general is posited absolutely by the self.

6. If any $\sim A$ is to be posited, an A must be posited. Hence the act of opposing is also conditioned in another respect. Whether such an act is possible at all, depends on another act; hence the act is

materially conditioned, as being an act at all; it is an act in relation to some other act. That we act *so*, and not otherwise, is unconditioned; *formally* (as to its *how*) the act is unconditioned.

(Opposition is possible only on the assumption of a unity of consciousness between the self that posits and the self that opposes. For if consciousness of the first act were not connected with that of the second, the latter would be, not a *counterpositing*, but an absolute positing. It is only in relation to a positing that it becomes a counterpositing).

7. So far we have spoken of the act as a mere act, of the *kind* of act it is. We now proceed to its outcome = $\sim A$.

I, 104

Again we can distinguish two aspects in $\sim A$, its *form* and its *matter*. The form determines that it is in general an opposite (of some X). So far as it is opposed to a specific A, it has *matter*; it is not some specific thing.

8. The *form* of $\sim A$ is determined absolutely by the act; it is an opposite, because it is the product of an opposition. Its *matter* is governed by A; it is not what A is, and its whole essence consists in that fact. —I know of $\sim A$ *that* it is the opposite of some A. But *what* that thing may or may not be, *of* which I know this, can be known to me only on the assumption that I am acquainted with A.

9. Nothing is posited to begin with, except the self; and this alone is asserted absolutely (§1). Hence there can be an absolute opposition only to the self. But that which is opposed to the self = the *not-self*.

10. As surely as the absolute certainty of the proposition ' $\sim A$ is not equal to A' is unconditionally admitted among the facts of empirical consciousness, *so surely is a not-self opposed absolutely to the self*. Now all that we have just said concerning opposition in general is derived from this original opposition, and thus holds good of it from the start; it is thus absolutely unconditioned in form, but conditioned as to matter. And with this we have also discovered the second basic principle of all human knowledge.

11. Whatsoever attaches to the self, the mere fact of opposition necessitates that its opposite attaches to the not-self.

(The concept of the not-self is commonly taken to be no more

I, 105 than a discursive or general concept, obtained by abstraction from everything presented. But the shallowness of this explanation can easily be demonstrated. If I am to present anything at all, I must oppose it to the presenting self. Now within the object of presentation there can and must be an X of some sort, whereby it discloses itself as something to be presented, and not as that which presents. But *that* everything, wherein this X may be, is not that which presents, but an item to be presented, is something that no object can teach me; for merely in order to set up something as an *object*, I have to know this already; hence it must lie initially in myself, the presenter, in advance of any possible experience. —And this is an observation so striking, that anyone who fails to grasp it, and is not thereby uplifted into transcendental idealism, must unquestionably be suffering from mental blindness).

By abstraction from the content of the material proposition *I am*, we obtained the purely formal and logical proposition 'A = A'. By a similar abstraction from the assertions set forth in the preceding paragraphs, we obtain the logical proposition '¬A is not equal to A', which I should like to call the *principle of opposition*. We are not yet in a position to define it, or express it in verbal form; the reason for this will appear in the paragraphs that follow. If now, we finally abstract entirely from the specific act of judgment, and look merely to the form of the inference from counterposition to nonexistence, we obtain the *category of negation*. But of this, too, a clear conception can only be gathered from the next section.

§ 3. THIRD PRINCIPLE, CONDITIONED AS TO FORM.

With every step that we advance in our science, we approach the area in which everything can be proved. In our first principle it was neither possible nor incumbent on us to prove anything at all; it was unconditioned as to both *form* and *content*, and certain without recourse to any higher ground. In our second, the *act of counterpositing* was admittedly unprovable; but though uncondi-

tionally asserted in respect of its mere form, it could be rigorously demonstrated that *what was counterposited* must = the not-self. Our third proposition is susceptible of proof almost throughout, because, unlike the second, it is determined, not as to content, but rather as to form, and not by one proposition only, but by two.

I, 106 In describing it as determinate in form and unconditioned only as to content, we have in mind the following: The *task* which it poses *for action* is determinately given by the two propositions preceding, but not the resolution of the same. The latter is achieved unconditionally and absolutely by a decree of reason.

We begin, therefore, with a deduction leading to the task, and proceed with it as far as we can. The impossibility of carrying it further will undoubtedly show us the point at which we have to break off and appeal to that unconditioned decree of reason which will emerge from the task in question.

A)

1. Insofar as the not-self is posited, the self is not posited; for the not-self completely nullifies the self.

Now the not-self is posited in the *self*; for it is counterposited; but all such counterpositing presupposes the identity of the self, in which something is posited and then something set in opposition thereto.

Thus the self is not posited in the self, insofar as the not-self is posited therein.

2. But the not-self can be posited only insofar as a self is posited in the self (in the identical consciousness), to which it (the not-self) can be opposed.

Now the not-self is to be posited in the identical consciousness

Thus, insofar as the not-self is to be posited in this consciousness, the self must also be posited therein.

3. The two conclusions are opposed to each other: both have been evolved by analysis from the second principle, and both are thus implicit therein. Hence the second principle is opposed to itself and nullifies itself.

4. But it nullifies itself only insofar as the posited is annulled by the counterposited, which is to say, insofar as it is itself valid.

Now it is supposed to have annulled itself, and to have no validity.
Thus it does not annul itself.

The second principle annuls itself; and it also does not annul itself.

I, 107 5. If this is how things stand with the second principle, it cannot be otherwise with the first as well. It annuls itself and also does not annul itself.

For, if $I = I$, everything is posited that is posited in the self.

But now the second principle is supposed to be posited in the self, and also not to be posited therein.

Thus I does not $= I$, but rather self $=$ not-self, and not-self $=$ self.

B) All these conclusions have been derived from the principles already set forth, according to laws of reflection that we have presupposed as valid; so they must be correct. But if so, the identity of consciousness, the sole absolute foundation of our knowledge, is itself eliminated. And hereby our task is now determined. For we have to discover some X , by means of which all these conclusions can be granted as correct, without doing away with the identity of consciousness.

1. The opposites to be unified lie in the self, as consciousness. So X , too, must exist in consciousness.

2. Both self and not-self are alike products of original acts of the self, and consciousness itself is similarly a product of the self's first original act, its own positing of itself.

3. Yet, according to our previous arguments, the act of counterpositing that results in the not-self is quite impossible without X . So X itself must be a product, and of an original act of the self at that. Hence there is an act of the human mind $= Y$, whose product is X .

I, 108 4. The form of this act is completely determined by the task referred to above. The opposed self and not-self are to be unified thereby, to be posited together, without mutual elimination. The opposites in question must be taken up into the identity of the one consciousness.

5. But it is thereby left quite open *how* this is to happen, and in what fashion it is to be possible; the task itself provides no

answer, nor is there any way of evolving one from it. Hence, as before, we must make an experiment and ask: How can A and \sim A, being and nonbeing, reality and negation, be thought together without mutual elimination and destruction?

6. We need not expect anyone to answer the question other than as follows: They will mutually *limit* one another. And if this be the right answer, the act Y will be a *limiting* of each opposite by the other; and X will denote the *limits*.

(I must not be understood to maintain that the idea of a limit is an analytical concept, inherent in the combination of reality and negation, and capable of being evolved from this. To be sure, the opposed concepts have been given by our two first fundamental principles, while the demand for their unification is contained in the first. But the manner of their possible unification is by no means implicit in these principles, being governed, rather, by a *special* law of our mind, which the foregoing experiment was designed to bring to consciousness).

7. But the concept of a limit contains more than the required X; for it also involves the concepts of reality and negation, as requiring to be united. So in order to obtain X alone, we must make a further abstraction.

8. To *limit* something is to abolish its reality, not *wholly* but in *part* only, by negation. Thus, apart from reality and negation, the notion of a limit also contains that of *divisibility* (the *capacity for quantity* in general, not any *determinate* quantity). This idea is the required X, and hence by the act Y *both the self and the not-self are absolutely posited as divisible*.

9. *Both self and not-self are posited as divisible*; for the act Y cannot *succeed* the act of counterpositing, cannot, that is, be considered as if it was only this latter act that made it possible; for, by the foregoing argument, mere opposition alone destroys itself and thus becomes impossible. But the act Y cannot *precede* either; for it is undertaken simply to make opposition possible, and divisibility is nothing without something to divide. Hence it occurs immediately, within and alongside the act of opposition; both are one and the same, and are distinguished only in reflection. Just as a not-self is

opposed to the self, so the self which is opposed, and the not-self which opposes it, are posited as divisible.

C) It now remains only to inquire whether the supposed act represents a genuine resolution of the problem, and unites all the opposites in question.

1. The first conclusion is now established as follows: The self is *not* posited in the self to the extent, i.e., with that measure of reality, wherewith the not-self *is* posited. A measure of reality, i.e., that attributed to the not-self, is abolished within the self. This proposition is not contradicted by the second. Insofar as the not-self is posited, so must the self be also; for both in general are posited as divisible in respect of their reality.

I, 110 Only now, in virtue of the concept thus established, can it be said of both that they are *something*. The absolute self of the first principle is not *something* (it has, and can have, no predicate); it is simply *what* it is, and this can be explained no further. But now, by means of this concept, consciousness contains the *whole* of reality; and to the not-self is allotted that part of it which does not attach to the self, and *vice versa*. Both are something; the not-self is what the self is not, and *vice versa*. As opposed to the absolute self (though—as will be shown in due course—it can only be opposed insofar as it is presented, not as it is in itself), the not-self is *absolutely nothing*; as opposed to the limitable self it is a *negative quantity*.

2. The self is to be equated with, and yet opposed to, itself. But in regard to consciousness it is equal to itself, for consciousness is one: but in this consciousness the absolute self is posited as indivisible; whereas the self to which the not-self is opposed is posited as divisible. Hence, insofar as there is a not-self opposed to it, the self is itself in opposition to the absolute self.

And so all these oppositions are thus united, without detriment to the unity of consciousness; and this, in effect, is proof that the concept we proposed was the correct one.

D) Since, according to our presupposition, which only the completion of a Science of Knowledge can demonstrate, there can be no more than one absolutely unconditioned principle, one condi-

tioned as to content, and one conditioned as to form, no other principle is possible apart from those established. The resources of the unconditioned and absolutely certain are now exhausted; and I would wish to express the outcome in the following formula: *In the self I oppose a divisible not-self to the divisible self.*

No philosophy goes further in knowledge than this; but every thorough-going philosophy should go back to this point; and so far as it does so, it becomes a Science of Knowledge. Everything that is to emerge hereafter in the system of the human mind must be derivable from what we have established here.

I, 111 1. We have unified the opposing self and not-self through the concept of divisibility. If we abstract from the specific content of self and not-self, leaving only the *mere form of the union of opposites through the concept of divisibility*, we obtain the logical proposition known hitherto as the *grounding principle*: A in part = \sim A, and *vice versa*. Every opposite is like its opponent in one respect, = X; and every like is opposed to its like in one respect, = X. Such a respect, = X, is called the ground, in the first case of *conjunction*, and in the second of *distinction*: for to liken or compare opposites is to *conjoin* them; and to set like things in opposition is to *distinguish* them. This logical proposition is *demonstrated* and *determined* by the material principle we have established.

Demonstrated, for

a) Every counterposited \sim A is posited counter to an A, and this A is posited. By positing of a \sim A, A is both annulled and yet not annulled. Hence it is annulled *only in part*; and in place of the X in A, which is not annulled, we posit in \sim A, not \sim X, but X itself: and thus A = \sim A in respect of X. Which was our first point.

b) Everything equated (= A = B) is equal to itself, in virtue of its being posited in the self. A = A. B = B. Now B is posited equal to A, and thus B is not posited through A; for if it was posited thereby, it would = A and not = B. (There would not be two posits, but only one).

But if B is not posited through the positing of A, it to that extent = \sim A; and by the equation of the two we posit neither A nor B,

but an X of some sort, which = X, =A, and = B. Which was our second point. From this it is evident how the proposition A = B can be valid, though as such it contradicts the proposition A = A. X = X, A = X, B = X. Hence A = B to the extent that each = X: but A = \sim B to the extent that each = \sim X.

I, 112 Only in *one* particular are equals opposite, and opposites equal. For if they were opposed in many particulars, i.e., if there were opposing characteristics in the opposites themselves, one of the two would belong to that wherein the equals are alike, and so they would not be opposed; and *vice versa*. Every warranted judgment, therefore, has but one ground of conjunction and one of distinction. If it has more, it is not one judgment but many.

2. The logical grounding principle is *determined* by the above material principle, i.e., its validity is itself restricted; it holds only for a part of our knowledge.

Only on the assumption that different things are in general equated or opposed are they opposed or equated in any particular respect. But this is by no means to assert that everything that may occur in our consciousness must absolutely and unconditionally be set equal to some other, and in opposition to a third. A judgment concerning that to which nothing can be equated or opposed is simply not subject to the grounding principle, for it is not subject to the condition of its validity; it is not grounded, but itself is the ground of all possible judgments; it has no ground, but itself provides the ground for everything that does have a ground. The object of such judgments is the absolute self and all judgments of which it is the subject hold absolutely and without any ground at all; of which we have more to say below.

I, 113 3. The act of seeking in things equated the respect in which they are *opposed*, is called the *antithetic* procedure; commonly described as the *analytical*, though this expression is less convenient, partly because it allows you to suppose that you might perhaps evolve something out of a concept which was not previously put into it by a synthesis, and partly because the former term indicates more clearly that this process is the opposite of the *synthetical*. For the *synthetic* procedure consists in discovering in opposites the respect in which they are *alike*. In regard to their mere logical form, whereby we abstract completely from all cognitive content and from the

manner in which it is arrived at, judgments obtained in the first way are called antithetic or negative, and those yielded by the second, synthetic or affirmative judgments.

4. The logical rules governing all antithesis and synthesis are derived from the third principle of the Science of Knowledge, and from this, therefore, all command over antithesis and synthesis is in general derived. But in setting forth that principle we saw that the primordial act it expresses, that of combining opposites in a third thing, was impossible without the act of counterpositing; and that this also was impossible without the act of combination; so that both are in practice inseparably united, and can be distinguished only in reflection. From thence it follows that the logical procedures based on this primary act, and which in fact are but special, more precise determinations of the same, will be equally impossible one without the other. There can be no antithesis without a synthesis; for antithesis consists merely in seeking out the point of opposition between things that are alike; but these like things would not be alike if they had not first been equated in an act of synthesis. In antithesis *per se* we abstract from the fact that they have first been equated by such an act: they are simply taken to be alike, without asking why; reflection dwells solely on the element of opposition between them and thereby raises it to clear and distinct consciousness. —And conversely, too, there can be no synthesis without an antithesis. Things in opposition are to be united: but they would not be opposed if they had not been so by an act of the self, which is ignored in the synthesis, so that reflection may bring to consciousness only the ground of connection between them. —So far as content is concerned, therefore, there are no judgments purely analytic; and by them alone we not only do not get far, as *Kant* says; we do not get anywhere at all.

5. The celebrated question which Kant placed at the head of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?—is now answered in the most universal and satisfactory manner. In the third principle we have established a synthesis between the two opposites, self and not-self, by postulating them each to be divisible; there can be no further question as to the possibility of this, nor can any ground for it be given; it is absolutely possible, and we are entitled to it without further grounds of any kind. All

other syntheses, if they are to be valid, must be rooted in this one, and must have been established in and along with it. And once this has been demonstrated, we have the most convincing proof that they are valid as well.

I, 115 6. *They must all be contained in it:* and this at once indicates to us in the most definite fashion the course that our science has now to pursue. There have to be syntheses, so from now on our whole procedure will be synthetic (at least in the theoretical portion of the Science of Knowledge, for in the practical part it is the other way round, as will appear in due course); every proposition will contain a synthesis. —But no synthesis is possible without a preceding antithesis, from which, however, we abstract, so far as it is an act, and merely seek out the product thereof, the opposite in question. In every proposition, therefore, we must begin by pointing out opposites which are to be reconciled. —All syntheses established must be rooted in the highest synthesis which we have just effected, and be derivable therefrom. In the self and not-self thus united, and to the extent that they are united thereby, we have therefore to seek out opposing characteristics that remain, and to unite them through a new ground of conjunction, which again must be contained in the highest conjunctive ground of all. And in the opposites united by this first synthesis, we again have to find new opposites, and to combine them by a new ground of conjunction, contained in that already derived. And this we must continue so far as we can, until we arrive at opposites which can no longer be altogether combined, and are thereby transported into the practical part of this work. Hence our course is fixed and certain, and prescribed by the subject-matter itself; and we can know in advance that, given due attention, we simply cannot stray from our path.

7. Just as there can be no antithesis without synthesis, no synthesis without antithesis, so there can be neither without a thesis—an absolute positing, whereby an A (the self) is neither equated nor opposed to any other, but is just absolutely posited. This, as applied to our system, is what gives strength and completeness to the whole; it must be a system, and it must be *one*; the opposites must be united, so long as opposition remains, until absolute unity is effected; a thing, indeed—as will appear in due course—which could be brought about only by a completed approximation to infinity, which

in itself is impossible. —The necessity of opposing and uniting in the manner prescribed rests directly on the third principle; the necessity of combination in general, on the first, highest, absolutely unconditioned principle. The *form* of the system is based on the highest synthesis; *that* there should be a system at all, on the absolute thesis. —So much for the application of the foregoing to our system in general; but it has yet another and more important application to the form of judgments, which there are many reasons for not overlooking at this point. For, just as there were antithetic and synthetic judgments, so there ought, by analogy, to be thetic judgments also, which should in some respect be directly opposed to them. For the propriety of the two former types presupposes a ground, indeed a double ground, firstly of conjunction, and secondly of distinction, of which both could be exhibited, and both would *have* to be exhibited, if the judgment is to be warranted sound. (For example, a bird is an animal: here the ground of conjunction we reflect upon is the specific concept of an animal, that it consists of matter, of organic matter, of animate living matter; while the grounds of distinction, which we disregard, consist of the specific differences among the various kinds of animal, whether they are bipeds or quadrupeds, and have feathers, scales or a hairy skin. Again, a plant is not an animal: here the ground of distinction we reflect upon is the specific difference between plant and animal; while the ground of conjunction we disregard is the fact of organization in general.) A thetic judgment, however, would be one in which something is asserted, not to be like anything else or opposed to anything else, but simply to be identical with itself: thus it could presuppose no ground of conjunction or distinction at all: the third thing, rather, which as a matter of logical form, it must still presuppose, would be simply the *requirement* for a ground. The first and foremost judgment of this type is 'I am', in which nothing whatever is affirmed of the self, the place of the predicate being left indefinitely empty for its possible characterization. All judgments subsumed under this, i.e., under the absolute positing of the self, are of this type (even if they should not always happen to have the self for logical subject); for example, man is free. This judgment can be regarded, on the one hand, as positive (in which case it would read: man belongs to the class of free beings), and then a

- I, 117 ground of conjunction would have to be given between man and free beings, which, as the ground of freedom, would be contained in the concept of free beings generally, and of man in particular; but, far from it being possible to provide such a ground, we cannot even point to a class of free beings. Alternatively, it can be regarded as negative, in which case man is contrasted to all beings that are subject to the laws of natural necessity; but then we should have to give the ground of distinction between necessary and not necessary, and it would have to be shown that the former is not contained in the concept of man, whereas it is in that of the contrasted beings; and at the same time a respect would have to be pointed out in which they both concurred. But man, insofar as the predicate of freedom is applicable to him, that is, insofar as he is an absolute and not a presented or presentable subject, has nothing whatever in common with natural beings, and hence is not contrasted to them either. For all that, the logical form of the judgment, which is positive, requires that both concepts should be united; yet they cannot be combined in any concept whatever, but only in the Idea of a self whose consciousness has been determined by nothing outside itself, it being rather its own mere consciousness which determines everything outside it. Yet this Idea is itself unthinkable, since for us it contains a contradiction. But it is nevertheless imposed upon us as our highest practical goal. Man must approximate, *ad infinitum*, to a freedom he can never, in principle, attain. —The judgment of taste, A is beautiful (so far as A contains a feature also present in the ideal of beauty), is likewise a thetic judgment; for I cannot compare this feature with the ideal, since the latter is unknown to me. It is, rather, a mental task derived from the absolute positing of myself, to discover this ideal, though one that could only be discharged after a completed approximation to the infinite. —Thus
- I, 118 Kant and his followers have very properly described these judgments as *infinite*, though nobody, so far as I know, has explained them in a clear and determinate manner.
8. Hence, for any given thetic judgment, no ground can be supplied; but the procedure of the human mind in such judgments generally is based on the self's own absolute positing of itself. It is useful, and gives the clearest and most definite insight into the peculiar character of the critical system, if we compare this explana-

tion of thetic judgments in general with those of the antithetical and synthetic judgments.

All the opposites contained in any concept which articulates their ground of distinction concur in a *higher* (more general and comprehensive) concept, known as the generic concept: i.e., a synthesis is presupposed in which both contain and, so far as they are alike, are contained in, each other. (For example, gold and silver are alike contained in the concept of metal, which does not contain the concept wherein they differ—in this case, say, their specific color). Hence the logical rule of definition, that it must furnish the generic concept, which contains the ground of conjunction, and the specific difference, which contains the ground of distinction. —As against this, all comparisons are opposed in respect of a *lower* concept, expressing some specific feature from which abstraction is made in the conjunctive judgment, i.e., every synthesis presupposes a prior antithesis. For example, in the concept of body we abstract from differences of color, individual weight, taste, smell, etc., and now everything can be a body which occupies space, is impenetrable, and has some weight or other, however opposed it may be to other bodies in respect of these characteristics. (*Which* features are more general or more special, and hence *which* concepts are higher or lower, is determined by the Science of Knowledge. In general, the fewer the intermediate concepts whereby a given concept is derived from the highest, that of reality, the higher it is; the more intermediaries, the lower it is. Y is assuredly a lower concept than X if, in the course of its derivation from the highest concept, X appears; and *vice versa*.)

I, 119

With the absolutely posited, namely the self, things are very different. In the very act of opposing a not-self to it, the latter is simultaneously equated thereto, but not, as with all other comparisons, in a *higher* concept (which would presuppose both contained in it, and a higher synthesis, or at least thesis), but rather in a *lower* one. The self as such is degraded into a lower concept, that of divisibility, so that it can be set equal to the not-self and in the same concept it is also opposed thereto. Here, then, there is no sort of *upgrading*, as in every other synthesis, but a *downgrading*. Self and not-self, as equated and opposed through the concept of their

capacity for mutual limitation, are themselves both something (namely accidents) in the self as divisible substance; posited by the self, as absolute, illimitable subject, to which nothing is either equated or opposed. —Hence all judgments whose logical subject is the limitable or determinable self, or something determining the self, must be limited or determined by something higher: but all judgments whose logical subject is the absolutely indeterminable self can be determined by nothing higher; for nothing higher determines the absolute self, since it absolutely grounds and determines such things on its own account.

I, 120 Now the essence of the *critical* philosophy consists in this, that an absolute self is postulated as wholly unconditioned and incapable of determination by any higher thing; and if this philosophy is derived in due order from the above principle, it becomes a Science of Knowledge. Any philosophy is, on the other hand, *dogmatic*, when it equates or opposes anything to the self as such; and this it does in appealing to the supposedly higher concept of the *thing (ens)*, which is thus quite arbitrarily set up as the absolutely highest conception. In the critical system, a thing is what is posited in the self; in the dogmatic, it is that wherein the self is itself posited: critical philosophy is thus *immanent*, since it posits everything in the self; dogmatism is *transcendent*, since it goes on beyond the self. So far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical outcome. If we now proceed with dogmatism according to its own principles, as one ought anyhow to do, we inquire of it why it now assumes its thing-in-itself, without any higher ground, when it demanded such a ground in the case of the self; why *this* should now rank as an absolute, when the self was not admitted to be so. But for this no warrant can be produced, and we are thus quite justified in demanding, on its own principle of assuming nothing without a ground, that it should again furnish a higher genus for the concept of thing-in-itself, and another higher one for that, and so on without end. Hence a thoroughgoing dogmatism either denies that our knowledge has any ground whatever, that there is any kind of system in the human mind; or else it contradicts itself. Thoroughgoing dogmatism is a skepticism which doubts whether it doubts; for it must do away with the unity of consciousness, and thereby with the

- I. 121 whole of logic; hence it is no dogmatism at all, and contradicts itself in purporting to be one.⁵

(Thus Spinoza grounds the unity of consciousness in a substance wherein its unity is necessarily determined alike as to matter (the determinate series of presentations) and as to form. But I ask him what it is, once more, that contains the ground for the necessity of this substance, both as to content (the various series of presentations it contains), and again as to form (whereby *all possible* series of presentations are alleged to be exhausted in it, and to form a completed *whole*). But for this necessity he offers me no further ground, telling me merely that it is absolutely so; and this he says because he is compelled to assume some absolutely primary, ultimate unity. But if this is what he wants, he ought to have stopped forthwith at the unity given him in consciousness, and should not have felt the need to excogitate a higher one still, which nothing obliged him to do.)

There would, moreover, be absolutely no explaining how any thinker should ever have been able to go beyond the self, or how, having once done so, he could ever have come to a standstill, if we did not encounter a practical datum which completely accounts for this phenomenon. It was a practical datum, not, as seems to have been thought, a theoretical one, which drove the dogmatist on beyond the self; namely the feeling that, insofar as it is practical, our self depends upon a not-self that is absolutely independent of our legislation, and is to that extent free. But again it was a practical datum that compelled him to stop somewhere; namely the feeling of a necessary subordination and unity of the entire not-self under the practical laws of the self; though this subordination is by no

⁵There are only two systems, the critical and the dogmatic. Skepticism, as defined above, would be no system at all, since it denies the very possibility of any system. But this it can only do in systematic fashion, so that it contradicts itself and is totally unreasonable. The nature of the human mind has already taken care to ensure that it is also impossible. Never yet, in good earnest, has there been a skeptic of this kind. A critical skepticism, such as that of Hume, Maimon or Aenesidemus, is another matter; for it points out the inadequacy of the grounds so far accepted, and shows in doing so, where better are to be found. And if knowledge gains nothing as to content from this, it certainly does as to form—and the interests of knowledge are but poorly recognized in denying to the sharp-sighted skeptic the respect which is his due.

means anything that exists as the object of a concept, being rather the object of an Idea, viz., something that *ought* to exist, and that we ought to bring about, as will be shown in due course.

I, 122

And from this it finally becomes evident, that dogmatism in general is not at all what it claims to be, that the conclusions we have drawn from it have done it an injustice, and that it is unjust to itself in inviting them. Its highest unity is indeed no other, and can be no other, than that of consciousness, and its thing is the substrate of divisibility in general, or the ultimate substance in which both self and not-self (Spinoza's intellect and extension) are posited. So far from going beyond the pure absolute self, it never even reaches it. At its utmost limit, as in Spinoza's system, it extends to our second and third principles, but not to the first absolutely unconditioned one. Normally, it never rises to anywhere near this level. It was reserved for the critical philosophy to take this final step, and thereby to consummate our knowledge. The theoretical portion of our Science of Knowledge, which will actually be evolved only from the two latter principles, since here the first has a merely regulative validity, is in fact, as will appear hereafter, Spinozism made systematic; save only that any given self is itself the one ultimate substance. But our system adds to this a practical part, whereby the first is grounded and determined, the whole of knowledge is completed, everything encountered in the human mind is exhausted, and whereby common sense, which all pre-Kantian philosophy affronted, and which our theoretical system would seem to have estranged from philosophy beyond hope of reconciliation, is again perfectly reconciled thereto.

9. If we abstract entirely from the *determinate* form of the judgment, as a judgment of *comparison* or *contrast*, based on a ground of *conjunction* or *distinction*, we are left merely with what is common to the type of action involved, namely the limiting of one by another. We thus obtain the category of *determination* (bounding, or as Kant calls it, limitation). For a positing of quantity in general, whether it be quantity of reality or of negativity, is called *determination*.