Potentiality as the Basis of Reality

A Speculative Approach

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Abstract

Is reality the basis of everything or has reality itself an other basis? What makes reality – not the real things – to be active, to exist? The question of what is real seems to be an easy question, because in our daily lives we are and must be naive realists. We ourselves, the things around us, the world, the facts, all that is real.

But as soon as reflection begins, we get into troubles. On the one hand we have to admit that there must be several concepts of reality if we want to say that not only physical or material things of everyday life are real, e. g. numbers, π, Dr. Faustus, thoughts, emotions and other things. On the other hand, given the difference of classical physics and modern physics, we see that even that form of knowledge, which seems to be most responsible for reality, natural science, cannot give the desired uniqueness in terms of what itself wants or needs to understand as real.

Alternatively, when we see that nothing can be and nothing can be real without being in a world, and when we understand the world as the order of things, which I call world$_I$, then this leads us to the speculative answer that it is exactly the "unreal" world$_I$ which is the reason why the everyday reality, world$_{II}$, is real. The world$_I$ is the basis for the reality of our empirical world$_{II}$.

The considerations presented here have nothing to do with the idealistic conception of possibility, founded in the power of the subject, nor with the existential concept of potentiality, founded in the *Entwurf des Daseins*.

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Keywords

Reality, potentiality, world as totality of things, world as order, realism, speculation, many worlds

1 What is real?

1.1 Reality is the most clear and the most simple thing

The question "What is real?" can be asked in two directions: First, which things are real or do exist? and second, what is that: reality? Normally we do not ask such questions because we have real things around us all the time, we can handle them without insurmountable difficulties, we can reasonably interact with our fellow human beings. We have clear ideas what reality, what fiction and dreams are, we have no doubts about what can be and what cannot be. Each of our statements presupposes the reality of many things.

If, what we are saying, should be founded and true, we cannot miss the reality of the things we are talking about. Even if we want to deceive and lie, the reality and the truth remain the standard. Someone who wants to say that there is no truth at all, is compelled to set something as real to ground his argument, for instance his inner reality against the external reality. Reality is indispensable; whatever we are doing, experiencing, saying – reality is presupposed. It is very easy to test whether something is or is not in our real world, it is even easy to distinguish and to accept the reality of material things, numbers, or fictional things. You have just to see whether it is there and how it is.

We distinguish between reality and real things. The things are the given, they are what we experience, reality is a quality of them, independent of us, of our experience; things exist without us. Maybe that 'quality' is not quite the appropriate term, because "to be" is not a predicate, but no more than the act to put a thing as existing.[1] We could say that reality designates the fact, that something is there, that something exists. But the word 'reality' is ambiguous insofar as it designates also all thing together, the totality of things.

In our everyday life we are realist and we must be realist. We cannot decide what is or what is not, things are as they are, as we see and experience them. We only have to accept the given. Of course, we can act and change things, but that is possible only in the realm of reality, we must orient ourselves to reality, if we oppose reality, reality gets us back. We can be wrong, then we need to fix the deception by seeing what is real and true.

1.2 Some doubts

Many think that sciences are the most suitable means to find out what is real. But there are some doubts. Science does not deal with all beings or with all that can be real. It deals only with material things, with their characters, with the powers acting on them etc. There are no methods of natural science to find out something about π, about Zeus, about Dr. Faustus, about centaurs. It would not be right to say that these things are not in any sense or in any way, their reality is only of an other form than that of material things.

I can sit on my material chair, I can take its measures, I can take it to pieces, I can burn it – nothing of all I can do with the concept of the chair, but I can think of and I can conceive of actions that I can perform with the material chair. So these concepts and thoughts must *be* also in some sense. Further, relations, propositions, logical entities in a broad sense, can not

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[1] See I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 626.

be treated by means of natural science. So there are things which *are* and of which we must think they are real, but not in the way of the objects of natural science. The scientific concept of reality is not applicable to everything that is.

Let us take an other start. Natural science has a history. In the course of this history different things were considered to be real. The concept and the criteria of reality undergo changes. What is real depends on the 'State of affairs at the moment.' Of course, we think that our knowledge about nature is superior to the former and more objective, but a hundred years later, scientists will say the same about us.

Natural science has presuppositions, which it can neither conceive of nor control. I. Newton was well aware of that, he gives an example of this in the Note on the Explanations concerning space and time in his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, 1687. Some of the presuppositions of natural science stem from the Philosophy of Science, but there are even more fundamental ones which originate from the *Lebenswelt*, as E. Husserl has pointed out. If science makes use of theoretical entities, this means that it makes use of things which are not directly observable but which nevertheless must be taken as real.[2]

To be clear, all this is not a criticism of science, it just shows that science is one of different forms to see the facts, and that science does not deal with all things.

If we want to continue to speak of any kind of reality of Zeus, of π, of propositions, of sense and meaning etc., then we must ask who or which knowledge is proper for such things and which form of reality applies to them. Truth can become diffuse; there are situations in which the same thing to the one seems to be true, to the other not. Maybe they have not the same level of information, or they have different interests, or they consider the case under different conditions. Other restrictions may result when reality is considered within a limited scope of content, within the narrow individual range. Up to a certain point we accept that each person has his own world, then it may be that each has his reality and that he has his own view of things. Such factors concern courts, even sciences, not only humanities but exact sciences as well.

It seems to follow that reality is not absolutely and clearly determined, even the realist does not have the stark reality he would like to have. One could argue that the facts are as they are but that our knowledge of it is murky or deficient. But, what is the use of an absolutely determined

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[2] Jan Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Natural Science*, Cambridge University Press 1983: Theoretical entities are things that are postulated by theories, but can not observed directly.

reality when we are not able to know it nor to estimate how close we are to the truth? Even in our everyday life we feel that such a limited reality and truth is not satisfying.

1.3 An alternative concept of reality

The meaning and the use of the concept of reality seems to be not so clear and distinct as we would like. What to do?

We can not attribute priority to one of the many concepts of reality, to the religious, the aesthetic, the economic, the scientific or whichever else. We can not favor one area of beings and knowledge over all others, there is no reason to do so, except, one of them is linked with power. When the world is dominated by economy, economy can impose its idea of reality as well as religion in a world dominated by religion. But, that way we loose the strict concept of truth and reality and the applicability of the concepts to all beings.

We could try to look for an other and superior world, which would be quasi over or beyond all, daily life, theology, philosophy, economy etc., something like Plato's ideas which are 'the one over the many.' Such attempts have been made but no consensus resulted, what exactly can be considered real, and the concept of reality remained ambiguous. We see naturalistic-materialistic approaches and idealistic variants, both in milder and in harder forms. Some take only perceptible objects as real, for others perception is an illusion.[3] The first view can include the thesis that only corporeal things in space in time are real, the second can lead us to Berkeleys' extreme position that our perceptions are due to divine intervention. Some try to justify that all knowledge stems from experience, others think that experience too is based on a not empirical form of knowledge. Kant takes a middle position between them,[4] but, when he says that the experienced is real, he means something else than Locke.

The possible views of reality are not exhausted by the opposition of materialism and idealism. Pragmatism has shown that our view of reality is guided by interests and values. Some philosophical movements of the 20th century pointed to the social, linguistic, historic basis of knowledge and truth; what is believed real and true, is correspondingly different. Even so we are not at the end of possible positions how to take reality, I will refrain from further comments on this.

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[3] Cf. Platon, *Sophist*, 246, Gigantomachy.

[4] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 882: "The former asserted that reality resides in sensuous objects alone, and that everything else is merely imaginary; the latter, that the senses are the parents of illusion and that truth is to be found in the understanding alone." Translation by J. M. D. Meiklejohn.

For quite some time philosophers are searching for a concept of reality which is neither realistic nor idealistic. A very old example is Aristotle's energeia, which does not mean existence or availability, the ready-to-hand (*Vorhandenheit*), but the akme in the growth of a being, the point where the being has acquired all its determinations.

In the 20th century too there are many approaches to an understanding of experience and reality beyond the opposition of materialism and idealism. We can mention Wittgenstein's logical space of which he spoke in the *Tractatus*[5] or the *Sprachspiel*, the language-game, as a basis or condition of reallity in his late work. E. Husserl called the experiential world in the natural approach (*natürliche Einstellung*) the *Glaubensboden* and the horizon of our experience,[6] it is the place where the „*Generalthesis der natürlichen Einstellung*" has its rights, according to which all that is real and true what we experience ordinarily in a naive realistic sense. But, for the reflecting approach we have to bracket this *Generalthesis*. Heidegger combines the insights of hermeneutics with the Aristotelian legetai ti kata tinos, which means that 'to speak' means 'letting see something as something' and understanding has the structure 'to understand something *as* something.' He repeats an insight that already Husserl attained: "Any pre-predicative and simple sight of a being at hand is itself in a modus of understanding and explaining."[7] That means that even the naive and realistic seeing something includes the hermeneutic 'as.' The simple perception which seems to be realistic without any deception implies distinctions, and so it transcends pure perception and is already a specific form of understanding.

Furthermore, Putnam, Goodman, Abel, Gabriel, have developed many arguments showing that the given in the experience has a basis that precedes and guides the experience. Following some hints and arguments of them I propose an alternative concept of reality according to which

all that and only that is real, which is in a world.

This concept of reality seems to have the advantage that all other concepts must include it, because nothing can be said about something without or beyond a world. Both realist and idealist statements and arguments have a sense only in a world.

Nevertheless it needs a complement. We can ask whether the extension of the two concepts, to be real and to be in a world, are identical or not. If the two are not extensionally identical, it may be that all real things are in a world and never without a world, but that also other

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[5] But see also *Logische Untersuchungen*, § 36.
[6] Husserl, 1950, I, § 1, § 27, § 30; id., 1948, § 7
[7] Heidegger, 1967, § 32.

things are in that world beside them. So it could be that other than real things are in the world, e. g. the possible things. So, the proposition "To be real means to be in a world" were not a definition but a statement about a part of the things in a world. I think that is right, because also the possible can "be the case." Then it belongs to the world, if the world is all that is the case. If we want to include the possible and generally the modalities we must transform the proposition about reality:

Only thanks to the world something can *be*.

2 What does 'world' mean?

If only that can be which is in a world we have to be clear about the term 'world.' The word 'world' is not so rare in our daily speaking, we use it in many idioms, a few examples.

– What in the world is that supposed to be?
– We talked about God and the world.
– There is a small world angry.
– She belongs to the demimonde.
– He is a man of the world.
– The world of finance has got completely out of hand.
– Who in the world was that guy?
– He lives in his own world.

Never in such idioms we mean by 'world' a single thing, always it means a frame for things, more or less comprehensive, a definable area of that what is. The world of fashion, of finance, demimonde etc. are parts of a more comprehensive world. These restricted worlds have their own activities, rules, players. It is normal and even necessary for us to play along in several worlds, we must play different personas in our life. Such partial worlds are respective wholes which help us to orient ourselves. They enable us to order things and experiences so that they make sense and that we can act appropriate to given situations. They are comparable to Husserls *Regionen*, for which he outlined specific ontologies.[8] Worlds of this kind are unities which are parts of a more comprehensive unity, that we call world likewise.

The more comprehensive world has the same function even in a stronger way. So the world is neither one thing among things nor the amount of all things or appearances; the amount of all

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[8] Husserl, 1950.

things is not the order of these things. We attribute such worlds to human beings, whether also animals live in such worlds we can leave open, although it seems plausible to me that animals also live in worlds.

Some religious texts use the word 'world.' A very old use of *mundus* is found in the *New Testament* and then with the Fathers.[9] *Mundus* desigantes in the *ecclesiasticus usus loquendi* an opposition to God, the Creator; it means the fallen, sin-ridden world, which the believer must renounce as far as possible in order to participate in the true and eternal world (see Augustinus). In the sentence

> God created the world

'world' seems to mean a whole; but we must not forget that the real whole would be only God and world together. It is one of the major problems in Christian theology to explain how it is possible that God and world are two, but not in the sense of a dualism which would lead to an all too independent world.

But also in philosophy the word 'world' is of great importance. I will mention some a few examples. 'World' often means the totality of beings. One says "The world is all that is."[10] The world is an idea of reason, Kant says, in contrast to the categories of the mind. This idea is indeed indispensable if knowledge must have an end, but this idea leads the mind to dialectical illusion. The idea only gives an end to the series of conditions. The idea of the world is necessary for the unity of experience, but there is no object that could correspond to it. The dialectical illusion is inevitable but it can be solved so that we are conscious of it.[11] Schopenhauer has the word in the title of his chief work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Wittgenstein uses it in the first sentence of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*: „1. *Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist.*" Husserl writes in *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 1948, 23: „§ 7. *Die Welt*

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[9] See for example the beginning of the Gospel of John, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 1: *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. ...In mundo erat, et mundus per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognovit. In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt.*

[10] See Quine, „On What There Is": "A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word — 'Everything' — and everyone will accept this answer as true."

[11] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 436: „Die Vernunft fodert dieses nach dem Grundsatze: w e n n d a s B e d i n g t e g e g e b e n i s t , s o i s t a u c h d i e g a n z e S u m m e d e r B e d i n g u n g e n , m i t h i n d a s s c h l e c h t h i n U n b e d i n g t e g e g e b e n , wodurch jenes allein möglich war."
    idem, B447: „Die Ideen, mit denen wir uns jetzt beschäftigen, habe ich oben kosmologische Ideen genannt, teils darum, weil unter Welt der Inbegriff aller Erscheinungen verstanden wird,..., teils auch, weil das Wort Welt , im transzendentalen Verstande, die absolute Totalität des Inbegriffs existierender Dinge bedeutet, ..."

als universaler Glaubensboden für jede Erfahrung einzelner Gegenstände vorgegeben." Heidegger says in *Sein und Zeit*, p. 64: „ *‚Welt' ist ontologisch keine Bestimmung* des *Seienden, das wesenhaft das Dasein* nicht *ist, sondern ein Charakter des Daseins selbst."*

Kant has seen that the representation in its different forms is the basis of our understanding the world, Schopenhauer shows that even this basis is based on a deeper fundament, the will is the being. Wittgenstein tried to escape the logical atomism, putting "what is the case" in the place of isolated objects. Those who take the given as the true and real end all too quickly with naive realism and other aporias, because we neither can understand nor say something about an absolutely singular object without any reference to anything else. In the search of a *fundamentum inconcussum* of our knowledge Husserl found first, that this fundament can only be immanent in our consciousness, and we must refrain from all assertion about the outer world (*Epoche*) and second, that even science, attributed normally with objectivity, finally is based on the knowledge of our everyday life, and this knowledge too is based on more fundamental conditions, namely on the *natürliche Einstellung* und its *Generalthesis*, ultimately constituted by the *transzendentales Ego*. We must bracket this *Generalthesis* in order to find the world as correlate of the pure consciousness, finally of the transzendental Ego which is origin and source of the work of our senses. In Heideggers argument the concept of world is central because the *Dasein* above all else is 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-Sein*). It is the world that gives us the totality of involvement (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) and the coherence of referring to …(*Verweisungszusammenhang*) which enables us *to be*, of course, worried (*besorgt*, Heidegger, 1967, § 18).

The pairs in which the world plays a role can show us other aspects of the world. It is not the same when world is the counterpart of God, of nature, of culture, of things. God is the creator, the world its creation.

Kant says about World and Nature (KrV, B 446):

> We have two expressions, **world** and **nature**, which frequently run in to each other. The first denotes the mathematical total of all phenomena and the totality of their synthesis of large and small in its progress whether by composition or division. That world, however, is called nature if we look upon it as a dynamical whole, and consider not the aggregation in space and time, in order to produce a quantity, but the unity in the e x i s t e n c e of phenomena. (Translation Max Müller)
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> Wir haben zwei Ausdrücke: **Welt** und **Natur**, welche bisweilen ineinander laufen. Das erste bedeutet das mathematische Ganze aller Erscheinungen und die Totalität ihrer Synthesis, im Grossen sowohl als im Kleinen, d. i. sowohl in dem Fortschritt derselben durch Zusammensetzung, als durch Teilung. Eben dieselbe Welt wird aber Natur genannt, so

> fern sie als ein dynamisches Ganzes betrachtet wird, und man nicht auf die Aggregation
> im Raume oder der Zeit, um sie als einen Grösse zu Stande zu bringen, sondern auf die
> Einheit im D a s e i n der Erscheinungen siehet.

In this text, world is the mental and conceptual structure of intuition as a whole (*Anschauung*), nature designates the existence of this whole, the epitome (*Inbegriff*) of the phenomena. In the pair of world and things, juxtaposed with each other, world means the articulated or structured unity of things which are the elements in this structure.

Often world and culture are used as synonyms. But we must distinguish between the two. Culture, as well as nature, are sectors in the world. Culture, as a the realm of things, designates the things that are formed or made by men. But, what does it mean 'things made by men'? Man does not create things out of nothing, in any case not material ones, he only transforms given materials. He takes things from nature (the matter) that he can transform with different methods and techniques, trickier and trickier ones. An early technique was cooking, in modern times it became possible to produce things from petroleum. Whatever he does he can do it only with recourse to what nature gives or presents. Natural materials (as wood, petroleum, plants etc.) that he forms, works, cultivates, belong to culture. This leads to a second meaning of culture, namely to the activities to do this, of course, with many subsections (dance, pray, plow, build etc.).

Up to this point, we have been talking about the use of the term world in different areas, in everyday life, in Christian theology, in philosophy. Let us now ask into which world the thing must enter in order to be real. This world would be the one that makes possible real things.

Is this world one of the before mentioned worlds or have we to seek for an other world, which would be beyond everyday life, theology, philosophy, just something above all that? We can imagine such a world in different ways. It can be the world of realists and relativists; this world would be absolutely determined and given, however only recognizable in approximation. But, such a world can not be the *basis* of reality because it already *is* the reality, the totality of real things.

The realist says that the order which we see in the things is not our mental construct imposed onto things but that things *have* this order. Things are so as we perceive them. This attitude is right in everyday life, even in science, but, it does not stand up to examination and reflection. It disregards that our knowledge is conditioned in many ways or it simply negates the sensual and mental conditions which are obviously necessary to see, to perceive, to understand something.

Instead of contending simply the perceived reality of things in our world we can ask the question how the world affects the perception of things. Asking this question we find that the partial worlds and the world as a whole must be described by such concepts as order, structure, totality, hierarchy, relations.

It is typical for a world to present distinctions like living–without life; material–mental and so on; but also within the groups formed by these distinctions the individuals are in manifold relationships to each other. The way beings in the group stand to each other in various worlds can be very different. But anyway, the world has an organizing function on the level of the groups and on the level of the individuals.

We find worlds with these characteristics in any human communities of sufficient size. Field research in ethnology has shown that at different times at different places in different communities there are considerable differences in the manner to group things together in unities, to see relations between the unities and between the elements of those unities and the order they finally form. The findings of ethnology are all the more important as a lot of them concern differences of worlds, not only differences of cultures.

If we call our world of experience world$_{II}$ and its structure world$_{I}$ we can state:

World$_{I}$ differs from world$_{II}$ like the order from the ordered.

3 World$_{I}$

3.1 What is world$_{I}$?

Well, what is this world$_{I}$, what do we know about it, what can we say about it, where does it stem from? "Where" is it? – anyway it can not be part of world$_{II}$. In order to find answers we need to reverse the orientation of our view, To find answers to such questions we need to change the direction of vision, away from the given towards the principles of the given.

But, what is the given? The realist says that things and facts are simply given. But, this claim does not take into account that things and facts can only be something for us, if they are integrated into our world. Without world no things, no facts. There is no 'absolutely given,' that means there is nothing without any relation and connection with other things, these relations and connections constitute a world, so any given is a given in a world. Things and facts are what they are only on the basis of determinations of a world. These determinations

are the effect of distinctions in a net, they define a certain point in that net where the thing can be, this point enables us to have a knowledge or an opinion about the thing. Opinions in this sense about things are more fundamental than things, because a thing without an opinion about it is not part of the net and therefore not in a world.

Everyone, even if he or she proceeds scientifically, expresses an opinion by saying something about things. Of course, this opinion can be well founded, it can be based on methodical principles, it can be confirmed by experience etc., nevertheless any statement is at first the expression of an opinion. Such surface opinions, what we normally think about things and facts can be reduced to fundamental opinions. The staring point is empirical, the method is analytic reflection.

Living in a certain world we think and act in accordance with the fundamental opinions of that world, reflecting on them we can articulate the principles of our specific world. In our everyday life we presuppose the fundamental opinions without any question, even without knowing them. But, we can reverse our look, instead of acting transitively we can think reflexively. We can ask for the fundaments of our acting and thinking. In the reflecting mode we are not obliged to let stand the claims and beliefs of our world, we can bracket them as Husserl said in order to search for their fundaments.

The basic opinions can be classified into fundamental concepts, fundamental distinctions, fundamental values. They can be ordered in lists which show also the hierarchy of the concepts, distinctions, values. I summarize all this under the term 'basic opinions.' A specific world can be represented as a set of such basic opinions. That I call a *Meinungswelt*, a world based on opinions, and that is the meaning of the term world$_I$.

The term opinion can be easily misunderstood and may bother someone. Normally we mean by opinion that someone contends something without having sufficient reasons or knowledge about the object.[12] We can form opinions about important areas of life like politics, family, behavior; acquired from experience and deliberation, we get convictions we stand for. On the other side we recognize that such opinions have only limited validity. We say "In my opinion …" Opinions of this form are reversible and can be put up for disposal, even if not very easy or quickly. Also doctrines and what Th. S. Kuhn called paradigm is of this character.

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[12] Kant, *KrV*, B 850, says about opinion distinguishing three forms of 'to hold true': To have an opinion is to hold true something knowing to have not enough reasons to do so.
„M e i n e n ist ein mit Bewusstsein s o w o h l subjektiv, als objektiv unzureichendes Fürwahrhalten."

The basic opinions which we are now talking about differ form such opinions. They are not part of the everyday nor of the scientific world, we find them only reflecting on such worlds. These opinions are not necessarily conscious, nevertheless they have an impact on our thinking and acting, they guide our thinking and acting. The surface opinions we have about things are based on less visible convictions, the belong to that which is the self-evident in a certain world (often we say 'epoch' instead of 'world'). That can be opinions about the difference between work and leisure, between male and female, between private and public and many other pairs.

Today, we think to have a self-evident entitlement to mobility or energy consumption, or, that democracy is the best form of government. Convictions of this type are typical for different worlds. Of course, in antiquity everyone had slaves, even freed slaves bought slaves. To have a slave was normal. Such basic opinions are not introduced by someone or decided by a community. They concern everything which is important in a community, the life, the acting, the values, the culture, how nature is perceived.

The most fundamental and the least known opinion of all is that about *to be*, Plato had shown this in his *Sophist*. To be does not have the same sense in every world, it is the job of philosophy, to find this out in its specific world. From this it follows that philosophy has a history.

The *Meinungswelt* constitutes what can *be* in a specific world.

So the *Meinungswelt* is the necessary condition that something can be real, in this sense the *Meinungswelt* as world$_I$ constitutes reality. It needs at least a world based on opinion for that something can be. This world determines what can be, without it there is nothing. The world based on opinions is also a sufficient condition for something to be. In a given *Meinungswelt* all that can be, what is scheduled in the basic opinions. The world$_I$ is the order of the world$_{II}$ which we experience in a realistic manner; in world$_{II}$, that which can enter or have a place in a world$_I$ is real. Taking together all that we can say:

The *Meinungswelt* as world$_I$ is the necessary and sufficient condition that something *is* in world$_{II}$.

Something can only be real in a world$_{II}$ if it can enter in a noetic world$_I$. *To be* does mean both, to be real and to be possible, it includes all categories, modalities etc. The *Meinungswelt* is a noetic world, on the basis of that noetic world the real and possible things in the empirical word are possible and real. Whatever *is* is in an *Meinungswelt*.

3.2 Where are the origins of the world$_I$?

It is one thing to ask how we can grasp and describe our world, it is something else to ask how it came that the things in a specific world are arranged as they are. Obviously, things are arranged in many ways, i. e. the order is different in different worlds$_I$, so we can ask for the reason of these differences. Realists and those who think that all our knowledge originates from experience will say that the order, the world$_I$, can always only be determined in *ex post*.

Of course, that is right, we have to live in a world$_{II}$ to be able to reflect on a world$_I$. That is the *quaestio facti*. But, for asking the *quaestio iuris*, when we seek for a systematic answer, wherefrom, how, why, the things have the actual order, when we ask what gives order to things, we need an other answer. The realistic answer, that the order is simply given with the things is not plausible, because the order of the things is not a thing beside the things. And, if the order were given with the things, and the things, as realists say, are everywhere the same, then the order also should be the same everywhere, which contradicts experience, we find different worlds$_I$.

But, there are other answers beside the realistic one. The order can be attributed to God.[13] Emergence and evolution are further attempts to give an answer. We will use none of them.

We have seen that the basis of world$_I$ lies in the basic opinions. Wherefrom do these basic opinions originate? Long ago philosophers have asked the question about the structure and the origin of this order. What can we know about the world which is before the world we experience? How can we get knowledge about that?

Plato's ideas, Aristotle's categories, are examples of such attempts, Kant's analysis of the pure reason is another example in a different world – always "philosophy is its time comprehended in thought."[14] That means that it was always the task of philosophy to ask for the fundamentals of what seemed to be the self-evident in a given world. When we want to avoid answers like the theological one (the basic opinions are given by God, *ideae innatae*, or otherwise) or the empirical one, when we consider the answers given by Plato, Aristotle, Kant, then we see that finding the origin of the basic opinions is a very difficult task. Plato tells us a mythical tale; our pre-existent soul has seen the ideas in a place over all heavens and now we can remember them in a concrete situation (anamnesis). Aristotle does not treat the question explicitly, but, at the end of the *Second Analytics*, B 19, he gives some hints about the origin of our knowledge.

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[13] Georg Wieland, „Die Ordnung des Kosmos und die Unordnung der Welt," in: *Vorträge und Forschungen: Ordnungskonfigurationen im hohen Mittelalter*, Bd. 64 (2006), 19–36.

[14] Hegel, 1970, 26.

He explains by an image how knowledge emerges from experience: It is like in a battle, when, in a fleeing army, a first soldier stops, then a second and a third, after that further soldiers will stop until at last the whole army has stopped and resists anew (100a12). Singular experiences become knowledge if they are kept in the memory and reinforce each other. Aristotle's methodic means to ask the question about the principles and origin of our knowledge are epagoge, theoria, topical attitude. He deals with this question in detail in the *Topics*, in *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*.[15]

Kant thinks that the basic beliefs (the categories and the ideas) belong to the intellectual basic equipment of all human beings. Deviating from Kant, we have to say that the basic beliefs are not the same for all human beings or for all societies. We may use a comparison from the linguistic field to illustrate the fact of the different 'choice' of basic opinions by different societies. We take together all the sounds used in human languages throughout the world. May be that there are more than hundred such sounds. Each language uses perhaps two or three dozens of them. These sounds form a system, some sounds make probable that some other are used too, some other sounds block certain other sounds. We substitute the sounds by basic opinions. All sounds together correspond to all basic opinions, the set of sounds of a certain language corresponds to the set of basic opinions which constitutes a certain word$_I$. And, what happens to sounds, which change over time, can also happen to basic opinions.

From the body of possible basic opinions a particular world uses a part, a certain set. In this set some are the same as in an other particular world, but, eventually, in a different hierarchy. So it is possible, that different worlds can communicate via such common basic beliefs and it is possible to understand a foreign world to a certain extent. The actual set of basic opinions of a world can only be determined empirically.[16]

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[15] See *Topics*, A 12, *De Anima*, Γ 4–8, *Metaphysics*, Θ 10.

[16] Examples for basic distinctions:
  Gods and men,
  human being and Mensch and non-human beings,
  man and woman,
  Master and servant,
  alive and dead,
  work and leisure,
  thought and emotion,
  Own and foreign,
  nature and culture,
  heavens and earth,
  space and time,
  body and mind,
  motion and rest.

Basic opinions grow up with a community at a certain place at a certain time. Obviously the place on earth where the community lives plays an important role. In Greenland there are other priorities than under the equator. The set of basic opinions develops over time due to the interaction between environment and society.

4 What is the meaning of "Something is *in* a *Meinungswelt*"?

What does it mean 'Something is *in* a world$_I$'? In which sense of *in-esse* can something be in a world or, asked an other way, in which sense does something enter in a world in order *to be*?

Evidently the *in* is not to be understood spatially. The world$_I$ is neither a geometrical nor a natural space wherein the world$_{II}$ could be put. The world$_I$ contains all possible spaces, if it were in a space it would be set in itself. Neither that *in* has a temporal meaning like 'in spring,' because 'in a world' is not an indication of a time. We know further uses of *in*: the predicate is in the subject; the species is in the genus; the accidents are in the substance; the part is in the whole. In these cases that what is *in* the other thing is a determination of that thing, of course, in different ways. Aristotle gives the example "the statue is in the bronce," which should illustrate the manner in which the potential form is in an underlying matter (hypokeimenon). We see a modal sense in expressions like "in a happy mood." Heidegger spoke comprehensively about *In-Sein*.[17] Some of his statements are relevant for our question, but, his interest is different from ours, he wants to show that the *In-der-Welt-Sein* is an essential determination of the *Dasein*, whereas we seek to understand how something, beings, can *be* by or through the fact that they enter in a world$_I$.

We have a long list of usages of *in*, but, none of them seems to fit the sense of *in* in the expression 'to be *in* a world$_I$.'

An example will illuminate the meaning of the term *in*. What are the necessary conditions for experience and what happens when I experience something? This question is not asked in the Kantian sense in order to understand the subjective conditions of experience, but in order to understand the conditions of the givenness of the things.

I see something with a certain behavior, a typical form, but realized in different sizes with different individuals; by such observations it quickly becomes clear that the being I see is

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God (MA) – ego (Descartes) as *fundamentum inconcussum*
[17] Heidegger, 1967, §§ 12 and 28.

neither fish nor bird, but it is not a cat either, it is a dog. The dog I encounter is not alone, not given in an absolute way, without any connections with other things. I can distinguish it from fish and bird, it is before me on the same ground as I, he is breathing air, the dog is with many things around it from which it is different. All that is present with the dog. I am focused on the dog itself, but its environment is given at the same time and this has an impact on what and how the dog is. The environment can transform the dog to a street dog, a lap dog, an avalanche dog or a guide dog. The dog is, what it is in an environment, under conditions, determined by many distinctions. It depends on what you want to know how far you want to go into detail. He stands in a net of many relations, all together form a world and in this host of relations he is what he is. The more we take away some of them the more the dog gets abstract. This dog, of course, is not the first dog I have seen, I have experiences with dogs. But there must be a first experience of a dog, I have been guided and introduced to this. Why my trainers of dog-experience did know what a dog is? What is the origin of dog-knowledge? It is not about my first personal experience nor about the experiences of my educators, those are personal beginnings. Neither the individual who begins to experience nor the genus are alone or at an absolute beginning. Always an experience is embedded in a set of things and relations which determine just that experience. All, the individual and the community, are already in a multitude of relationships, that means, in a world.

In this sense there is no first experience of a dog which would lead with many following experiences to a world as a horizon of experience, already the first experience requires such a horizon. A first experience would be comparable with the a first word in a language. But the language does not arise so that there is a first word, then a second etc., already the first word is 'in a language.' Depending on what we are looking at, the origin lies in the language, the culture, the world. Such unities are ahead of individuals. What I do, what I know, has a meaning only in a net of distinctions, it is under the condition of many preliminary decisions which were not made by me but which are given.

Of course, we say "We are in a world," but in fact the contrary is right, the world is in us as a basic pattern which we follow throughout our lives. This 'in us' designates neither a corporal nor a mental place. Further, this 'in us' is not simply the plural of 'in me' because the *Meinungswelt* is primarily the world$_I$ of a community, not of an individual. Even if someone wants to rebel against something this happens in a *Meinungswelt*. What can be experienced and known must fit in this basic pattern, otherwise it can not be. It must correspond to a node in a network of distinctions.

Therefore, the word *in* in the expression "Something is in a world" means that something stands in a network of distinctions and realizes therein a point or a knot.

There is no need to know explicitly the basic opinions of one's own world to behave sensibly in it; it is just the same with grammar, we speak our language without having an explicit knowledge of its structure. But, we can reflect on the principles of our world$_{II}$, the result of that will be the world$_I$.

That seems to be no more than an other variant of constructivism or interpretative philosophy, it seems that things come to be only if they encounter a human being, a consciousness. But, appearances are deceptive. I want to give two arguments that show the difference of the idea of world proposed here versus all forms of relativism. First of all it should be noted that also he or she who takes notice of something *is* only if he or she encounters the noticed. Without a noticed thing there is no noticing instance. And, also the noticing instance is a noticed thing in any case of noticing, also the noticing is a point in a net of distinctions wherein a world can be realized. To take notice of (to be aware of), and to be noticed are two results, two manifestations, two extremes of one center. Prior to both is the world which I would call *Bemerktheit-überhaupt.* And, second, of course there are things before there is a human being, a consciousness which is aware of them; things do not come into being because they are noticed or thought of by men.

I would like to follow the speculative insight of Plotinus which said that "all things strive for contemplation (theoria)," that is said not only concerning gods or men, but also concerning animals, plants and stones. Even stones and rocks are in a world.[18] Some of the basic distinctions which determine a world, are properties that physics treats, such as mass, volume, density, physical state, pressure, temperature, position, motion etc. But what the stone is in his world must not be identical with what it is in my world, nevertheless it *is* only by being in a world.

To be in a world applies for all things but in different ways.

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[18] This against Heidegger, 1983, § 42; Plotin, *Ennead* III 8.

5 What is the reality of world$_I$?

If world$_I$ enables or makes things to be, but only real things can transform possible things into real things,[19] then world$_I$ as condition of the reality of world$_{II}$ must be real itself. In which sense world$_I$ is real?

At the beginning of this paper we have set

   i that to-be-real means to-be-in-a-world,

  ii that the world in which things are real is a *Meinungswelt*, a world constituted by opinions, we name it world$_I$,

 iii that world$_I$ is the order of all things, real and possible, in the world$_{II}$.

Everything that is, is in a world, but world$_I$ as order of things in world$_{II}$ can be neither in world$_{II}$ nor in any other world. It must be a beginning without an other beginning before. In world$_{II}$ we can distinguish between different modes of reality. First, we call material beings real, things which exist, which are perceptible in space and time, which are verifiably effective. But, we also call real such things as numbers, as π, as Zeus, centaurs, electrons, possibilities, these are things in our world. The reality of such things obviously is different from the reality of material things. If in our world$_{II}$ there are different modes of reality, we can assume that the reality of world$_I$ as order of things in world$_{II}$ has even a more different mode, the reality of world$_I$ can not have the form of reality of something in world$_{II}$.

So again we have to ask the question in which non-mundane sense world$_I$ is real. The answer to this question must be non-mundane (*nicht innerweltlich*), so it can not be an answer of physical, psychical, mental character nor otherwise of any kind in world$_{II}$. The answer must be speculative.

The world$_I$ as the order of a specific world$_{II}$ is a potentiality, something realizable that not yet is realized. An only potential thing in world$_{II}$ can not transform something into a real thing. But world$_I$ is not a thing in world$_{II}$, it is the condition of possibility for all things in world$_{II}$. World$_I$ is not, like hyle or chora *all things in the mode of potentiality*, it is *the potentiality for all things*, that is, the enabling, *Ermöglichung* for all things. That seems to correspond to the insight of Plotinus, who called the First the δύναμις τῶν πάντων, dynamis ton panton.[20]

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[19] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Λ 6.

[20] Plotinus at many places speaks about the First, that should be the origin (ἀρχή) of all, at some point he calls it δύναμις τῶν πάντων: *Enn.* III 8.; III 8, 10.27; III 9, 4.3–9; V 1, 7.9–10; V 2, 2.2; V 3, 11. 14–21; V 3, 13.2–3; V 4,1; V 4, 1.36; V 4, 2.38; V 4, 2.39–42; V 5, 13. 33–36; und 15; V 3,15; 10,1. – For further places see Gerson, 2013, 233. –

Perhaps, the relation between world$_I$ and world$_{II}$ can be understood by analogy to the relation between the eidos and the thing having this eidos. World$_I$ corresponds somehow (not definitely) to the eidos of the world$_{II}$. We can recognize world$_I$ *ex post* by analysis, reflection, speculation from a given world$_{II}$. World$_I$ which we have found as the order of world$_{II}$, is comparable to the eidos *ex ante*. As the eidos is the last for our mundane understanding, so it is the first with respect to being. That corresponds to the Aristotelian distinction between that which is first known to us and which is first known in itself. The eidos is prior to the thing as its formal cause without being its *causa efficiens*.

The world$_I$ is the condition of the reality of world$_{II}$. That means nothing else than that the world$_I$ is the *Ermöglichung* of the reality of world$_{II}$. The reality of world$_I$ consists in making possible, in enabling world$_{II}$, it is its necessary and sufficient condition.

As such world$_I$ is not present, it is not existent as things are in world$_{II}$, but even so it is more real than any real thing in world$_{II}$.

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May be we can compare this with what the guest from Elea says in *Sophist*, 247e1–4: …τίθεμαι γὰρ ὅρον ὁρίζειν τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις, I put as a limit to define that the beings are nothing else than dynamis.

Before that he has set out the opinions of those who take as real only corporal things, and of the friends of ideas; then he says that all things can be only under the condition that it has the ability to suffer or to cause something. From this we can conclude that being is nothing else than dynamis, abilitiy or potentiality.

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